

The Doll Universe:

The Terrifying Joy of Matter

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The Doll Universe:
The Terrifying Joy of Matter



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Robert Cheatham

Jeff Dahlgren

Ture Bural

Susan Cipic

Steve Seaberg

Alan Sondheim

Stan Woodard

Chea Prince

Devidyal Khalsa

'The Doll Universe: The Terrifying Joy of Matter'

ed. Robert Cheatham

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FORT!/DA?





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To think, or to want to think, is heavy. [...]

What is this weight? In general weight consists in being outside of oneself, in having one's landing point or place of presence, one's earth, ground, or void, one's belonging or abyss, outside of oneself. Weight means to fall outside of oneself.

Jean-Luc Nancy

Preface

Meditations on the doll universe began around 1994 in discussions between myself and Chea Prince. From those discussions came a series of papers (some included here) and performance works. As things sometimes turn out, the doll universe lay in remission for a number of years (as it tends to do in general). I was asked to write a piece for a recent doll show at eyedrum art and music gallery in Atlanta and my interest was piqued again. Also herein is some indication of the work of long-time Atlanta artist Steve Seaberg, often including puppets in his performance work, as well as the work of the apparently perdurable Fehta Murghana. Also included here is the indomitable assemblage work of Stan Woodard, as well as a quixotic phenomenology of doll-becoming by Jeff Dhalgren, and then a collection of material from noted Atlanta artist Susan Cipic. This book is also graced, especially front and back covers, by the photographs of assemblages by Devidyal Khalsa; while the obsession is hers, the appreciation can be ours. Lastly, and most mysteriously, the liminal presence of Ture Bural.

A final note: while some may see these excursions into what would seem to some as overstepping the range of something as banal as the doll, they would be wise to look around at the cultural and philosophical discourses and artifacts which have developed globally around the notion of autonomous, inorganic simulacra, assemblages, and the apparatus. From earlier poststructuralist disquisitions on the inhuman (Lyotard, de Man, Benjamin, Foucault, Deleuze) to contemporary theory on autonomous network

activity and object theory (Harman and the OOO-ists, networkists such as Latour, Luhmann, etc) the idea of very real/alive, in some sense, material but non-living others as coeval to the human is developing a front row seat. Partly this is due to the incredible society of the spectacle that has developed around the computer in alliance with the other technical media of storage, transmission, and representation. Our powers of credulity are strained to the limits as our labs create ever more startling doll/puppet/virtual realities. (And of course the pure fetishistic dolls generated by CGI which concomitantly march into hamburger joints and the shelves of toy stores, there to lay in wait, to give another push at the bottom end to the Doll Universe. One has to imagine the truth of the last scenes of Spielberg's movie **A.I.**, as the imaginal fort/da travels to the frozen bottom/top of time to lay in wait for the future coming/going of the ...non-human or transformed human? Which amounts to the same thing perhaps.)

Robert Cheatham

April 2010



Devdyaal Khalsa

Introduction

Part 1

“.... The Images Need to be Truly Alive”

....the quest for things may be a quest for a kind of certainty, but things is a word that tend, especially at its most banal, to index a certain limit or liminality, to hover over the threshold between the nameable and unnameable, the figurable and unfigurable, the identifiable and unidentifiable: Dr. Seuss's Thing One and thing Two.

Bill Brown. **Thing Theory**, *Introduction* pg 5

The subjective spirit which cancels the animation of nature can master a despiritualized nature only by imitating its rigidity and despiritualizing itself in turn.

(Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002)



There is no doubt that the doll is a thing but it is unclear what sort of thing. It seems to occupy a middle range between stuff that is Completely Out There and the stuff we think of as a me or you and therefore Completely Inside.¹ If nothing else the

¹ The concept of the ‘middle range’ has been around probably since recorded history, *viz*, the Greek *daimon* as that force between humans and the gods, and likewise Arabic *djinn* and Henri Corbin’s Imaginal Realm.

doll, especially in an expanded field, makes uncertain what is inside and what is outside and just generally unsettles the provenance of those terms. This is nothing new, as the essay by Fehta Murghana points out and was probably present in the first conscious ‘human’; most probably the ‘doll effect’ was what helped constitute what we would think of now as the archaic arising of human consciousness.

From the very first glimmer of self-consciousness, we can speculate that a need was found for whatever consciousness is, to inhabit, or cast a spell upon linguistically, and attempt to awaken another lump of matter. We could even postulate that this back and forth between object and self, this oscillation or shuttling from Here to There was co-terminous with that apparently fundamental crack/void/schizoid leap that has defined human history and thought.²

As Adorno and Horkheimer put it, the attempt by the Enlightenment was to force a closure to this crack, to shut the dollhouse once and forever, with unfortunate effects as they allude to in the quote above. As everyone knows by now, the struggle to eliminate the middle range (what we are here calling the Doll Effect) has resulting in even more casualties, at least from the human end.

² In *Warburg and the Nameless Science*, Giorgio Agamben glosses art historian Aby Warburg’s attempt to get at this ‘interval’ of this middle range of the symbolic: “For Warburg, the symbol thus belongs to an intermediary domain between consciousness and primitive reactions, and it bears in itself the possibilities of both regression and higher knowledge. It is a *Zwischenraum*, an ‘interval,’ a kind of no-man’s-land at the center of the human. And just as the creation and enjoyment of art require the fusion of two psychic attitudes that exclude each other (‘a passionate surrender of the self leading to a complete identification with the present – and a cool and detached serenity which belongs to the categorizing contemplation of things’), so the ‘nameless science’ sought by Warburg is [...] an ‘iconology of the interval’...” Agamben then goes on to quote Warburg again: “All mankind is eternally and at all times schizophrenic.” Agamben will elsewhere go on to discuss this interval as a cessation, or at least gathering and holding, in terms of the messianic. *Kenosis* as propaedeutic assembles here.

The doll never quite represented the sublime we might say, although it's ability to be the unnameable, unseeable from head-on but still a nuisance, was even more startling than the sublime since it was right next to us...to say the very least! Co-terminous!! We begin to see this closeness and have it named, if not for the first time, at least under terms which moderns could accept, even if in retrospect and under closer examination it seems somewhat rickety. Sigmund's Freud 1919 essay *The Uncanny* is notable, at least from the point of view of the expanded field of the Doll Universe for his use of E.T.A. Hoffman story of the fantastic, *The Sandman*, and the doll Olympia. Turning on the etymological confusions between *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, literally that of the home and that of the un-homed, or the distinction between something ordinary which through perceptual tricks is made to seem strange, Freud makes of the uncanny a matter of projections and misidentifications of the human psyche. Through a constant worrying of a loose tooth an abscess is domesticated into a banal human artifact. We might also note the constellation around this suture: abyss, base, obsess, abyme, abuse, none of which would hold up in a court of law, but all of which oddly and uncannily seem to orbit around the uncanny. The term no doubt remains fertile because of the confusions it generates and not the problems it solves. The rhythm of the doll as its emptied presence ripples across material time, shows the difficulty of "distinguishing events from rhetorical topoi" (G. Didi-Huberman); indeed, they are often painfully and performatively the same.

"The thing is not an object and cannot become one."

Jacques Derrida

So here amidst the splits, doubles, representations, ventriloquized and representing-talking matter are impressions, definitions, derivations, devaginations, divagations around a childhood icon now blown to full avatar status, plastic figures mediating between the mediations of technical media and the brain: even the (otherwise known as My brain and Your brain but now just THE brain) becoming all-dolled-up,

pulled out from its hide hole fort and unlike/like all the other brains: Dolls On Parade! The millennial long slippage of one secret part of humanity past the other part: diversely gone but minimally connected with a thread.

And always...the doll waits. From the beginning of human time it waits as matter has always waited, blurring into the immaterial, waiting past the *infans*, devoid of speech, into glossolalia, dollolalia, matter bubbling up through its linguified cracks, burbling beneath the form, into the human, becoming the halo of the human (*pace* Agamben). Time passing does not pass the doll but meets at the doll, restored by the doll : “The time then restored no longer passes, no longer flows, but grows denser and *reflows* towards the present.” (Mauricio Lissovsky, *The Photographic Device as a Waiting Machine*, **Image&Narrative**, issue 23)

But the doll is not a messianic force, nor even a teleological one, mysterious pulling us into the future. Rather it is the future already arrived, the future having been here from the beginning, but an emptied, kenotic form from within, arriving anarchically: enabled by Empire but not dependent on such. The Empire, as is the doll, a boundary condition between inside and outside and all similar apparent dichotomous conditions.

It is always the signpost up ahead, the one you just passed, lingering in your rearview as you approach the next curve.

Part 2:

A De-localized Bestiary Regarding Certain Dollological Ramifications

All Dolled Up

The imposition of mechanical surfaces which act to homogenize and bring into accordance with material doll values, thus bringing flesh into (or out of) congruence with representation.

See Henri Bergson

Anti-Doll::Grace

The imagination is continually at work filling up all the fissures through which grace might pass. The imagination, filler up of the void is essentially a liar.

Simone Weill, ***Grace and Gravity***

Assemblage Point

In the mythos of Carlos Castaneda there is a spot in the luminous egg that in a human body is at arms length in the direction towards the back of the left shoulder blade. It is at the "Assemblage point" where reality is constructed; when the conglomerate of luminous fibers match the fibers outside of it a new reality comes into existence. The point of 'throwing the doll' we might say, in Nagualism was to shift that point where reality was somewhat mechanically assembled, to another point outside the personal subject. Therein could perception also be shifted to a multifaceted world of other ontologies, entities, and powers might be glimpsed (or become) and utilized. (It has been noted how closely Castaneda's becomings/shifting of assemblage point resembles the becomings of Guy Deleuze, especially when one considers the emphasis of inorganic

lines of flight and the movement toward the non-human in both. The Doll Universe is always just a glitch away; the ultimate Doll is now expanded media, including computing.)

Becoming-Doll

Adorno thought that this incapacitation of the person began in earliest childhood, and he noted several aspects of what had happened. First, the world no longer provides actual images to the American child but only images that arrive with the insignia of their own untruth stamped on them. Second, the objects of action have all become technical objects that primarily demand adaptation to their own instructions. Third, the collapsed family no longer provides a buffer between society and person, which partly explains why the American child is flooded with anxiety. Fourth, the traditional language of people has been supplanted by a language of advertisement that does not fulfill people but in stead leaves them speechless. Fifth, libido is directed toward tools so that the world of things becomes a substitute for images. And sixth (the factor Adorno thought the most important), the relation of people to their own nature, their own bodies, has been transformed.

Robert Hullot-Kentor

Blockage

Progressively, ventiloquism has become creepily or even embarrassingly archaism. It is a blockage in the system, a catch in the throat of media technology, the awkward sign of the working of the works. But its archaism is characteristic of the archaism attaching to the voice itself. In a world which is characterized, not by the autonomization of sensory channels and their corresponding media, but by their remorseless interchange, the voice is a kind of sluggish impediment to the logic sensory conversation and commutation.

Steven Conner, ***Dumbstruck: A History of Ventriloquism***

Child's Play

"For who gives the child his toys if not adults? And even if he retains a certain power to accept or reject them, a not insignificant proportion of the oldest toys (balls, hoops, tops, kites) are in a certain sense imposed on him as cult implements that became toys only afterward, partly through the child's powers of imagination." Walter Benjamin
"Toys and Play"

Contradictory Existence

"The demon reveals his demonic tendency by his contradictory aspiration to be in order to cease to be, to be in order to be no longer, to be in not being...The demonic spirit must borrow another being than its own, because it disowns being; being itself pure negation, it needs another existence to exercise its negation. It can do this only with respect to creatures who, without intrinsic being, have received being. The spirit seeks to associate with such creatures in order to experience its own contradictoriness, its own existence in inexistence...This, in broad outline, is the traditional idea of the demon; having no personality of its own, he is without inclination, and can exert influence only by means of a borrowed existence."

Pierre Klossowski

Data Body

The New Doll, like the New Flesh of the characters in many of David Conenberg's films, especially Videodrome: "First it controlled her mind, then it destroyed her body... long live the new flesh!" The technical means of support and representation become the reality of the Doll Universe (or at least one reality):

"The total collection of records on an individual is his or her data body--a state-and-corporate-controlled doppelganger. What is most unfortunate about this development is

that the data body not only claims to have ontological privilege, but actually has it. What your data body says about you is more real than what you say about yourself. The data body is the body by which you are judged in society, and the body which dictates your status in the world. What we are witnessing at this point in time is the triumph of representation over being. The electronic file has conquered self-aware consciousness.”

Creative Art Ensemble

Dead Inside

“A considerable percentage of the people we meet on the street are people who are empty inside, that is, they are actually already dead. It is fortunate for us that we do not see and do not know it. If we knew what a number of people are actually dead and what a number of these dead people govern our lives, we should go mad with horror.”

-George Gurdjieff

Diabolic

If there no devils, it would be possible to perceive that certain ‘things’ and ‘events’ remain outstanding whenever the same returns again and again—the other, the encounter, the sexual act—but as long as these doubles last; as long as any news of the other, the encounter, and the act is intercepted, imitated, or simply represented, the circuit and site of exchange is complete, closed, and eternalized: every return must be the return of the same to the same, the giving back of what is due, the rendering of what is owed, the restitution of things to their rightful order—in accordance with, or under the protection of the rule of law.

Under a diabolic reign there is no encounter but only an approach of doubles to doubles,

Peter Fenves, *Arresting Language*

Difference

...genuine difference, genuine alienness or otherness, is impossible and unachievable, and that even there where it seems to have been successfully represented, in reality we find the mere structural play of purely human themes and topics.

Fredric Jameson, **Archeology of the Future**

Doll

A quasi-ontological region of autonomous paranomastics which rely on humanoid constraints while simultaneously opening onto an infinitized material world of porous liminality between consciousness and matter.

Doll House

Although the above is not an image from Exopolitics, the vast universal amplification of a kind of amusing hallucinatory entertainment is on the cards. The prototypes are already here. The world is now one vast doll's house, from the National Enquirer to Exopolitics.

Colin Bennett. Combat Diaries website

The Fall

... humanoid machines reflect forms of melancholia that have resulted from what human beings have perennially called “the fall.” These kinds of dejection are inseparable from self-consciousness, the painful rift between mind and matter, knowing and being. To heal these splits, humans have created mechanistic doubles untroubled by awareness of self. These new Adams embody the spiritual potential of their suffering creators—the possibility that human beings might be able to transcend their self-centered fears and

desires and return, egoless, to Eden. However, though these mechanisms often issue from noble longing, they sometimes emerge from selfish urges to perpetuate the ills of the fall. In these cases, the android is not a redemptive technology but a stifling contraption— not miracle but monster.

Eric G. Wilson, ***The Melancholy Android***

Glossolalia

A doubling fracture in speech which figures (or attempts to disfigure) noise as the prophetic standstill; the throttling of the doll in on the verge:

“[...]whether glossolalia appears in a form that is infantile (‘ennie meeny miney moe’). ‘pathological’ (neologisms, alliterations, and so on), literary (Dadaist, for example), or religious (‘gifts of tongues,’ ‘ecstatic utterances,’ and so on), this is what one first confronts: a fiction of discourse orchestrates the act of saying but expresses nothing. Glossolalia is thus the art of speech within the bounds of an illusion.

Is this so exceptional a phenomenon? A glossolalia already pushes up through the cracks of ordinary conversation: bodily noise, quotations of delinquent sounds, and fragments of others; voices punctuate the order of sentences with breaks and surprises. Addresses from whom and to whom? A scattered and secondary vocalization traverses expression, splicing or dubbing it. The major voice, while claiming to be the messenger of meaning, appears caught up in a doubling that compromises it. And only in those functions in which it most distances itself from dialogue does it liberate itself from its disquieting twin. Political, scholarly, and religious discourses, for example, all progressively close themselves off to that which emerges where the voice ruptures ruptures or interrupts a series of propositions, to that which is born where the other is present. A fragility disappears from discourse. With the erasure of occasional stammers, hesitations, and vocal tics, or lapses and drifting sounds, the interlocutor is removed to a distance, transformed into audience.”

Michel de Certeau, *Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias*

History, alternative

The ‘materiality of inscription’ as phrase invokes a prefigural domain, the domain of the event and the ‘performative.’ To alter this domain, to intervene in the historical and thus allow for the possibility of alternative futures to those now prescribed entails a recasting (the figure of chance must remain a part of this calculation) of inscription

Tom Cohen, Material Events, ‘A Materiality Without Matter’

How to change history, how to find alternatives to the abysmal Now?
Tinker with time...what is time? ‘A child playing with draughts’, Heraclitus.

“If this is –if what children play with is history, and if play is a relationship with objects and human behavior that draws from them a pure historical-temporal aspect—it does not seem irrelevant that in a fragment of Heraclitus—that is to say, at the origins of European thought—*aion*, time in time in its original sense, should figure as a ‘child playing with dice’, and that ‘domain of the baby’ should define the scope of this play.”

Giorgio Agamben, *In Playland*

Hysterical

The ventriloquial-hysterical body of archaic conception here becomes tangled up in the technological apparatus of the telephone. It is unclear, and perhaps undecidable whether the will-to-be which humanity embodies is the will-to-be-human, or a will to overhear the other-than-human ...

Steven Connor

Inhuman

“the ‘inhuman,’ is not some kind of mystery, or secret—it is linguistic structures, the play of language—independently of any intent or any drive or any wish or any desire we might have.”

Paul de Man / essay on Benjamin’s task of the translator

Image-World-Doll

When the real world is transformed into an image and images become real, the practical power of humans is separated from itself and presented as a world unto itself.

Giorgio Agamben

Mannequin

These animated mannequins, regardless of size, reveal the secret and duplicitous origin of our fascination with humanoid machines. We yearn for their unaffected grace. We fear their awkward weirdness. In unveiling our hidden fixations on mechanical doubles, these humanlike contraptions manifest our more general vexation in relation to all machines: our entrapment between loving efficient pistons and loathing aloof metal. Since the industrial revolution of the romantic age, this double bind has been especially troublous. Now, in an age that has pushed the industrial threat to human sovereignty to the digital threat to human identity, this bind is more pronounced than ever. We love what undoes us; we hate our essential familiar. To study the android is to get to the core of this classic case of sleeping with the enemy, this self-annihilation inherent in the age of living machines, this transcendence and this suicide.

Eric G. Wilson. ***The Melancholy Android***

Mask

Constructing allegories, represented by the “mask,” Benjamin seems to suggest, is an act of mourning. [...] Allegory sets things going again, even as language still oozes a substance that has become associated with nature, matter, and corporeality. [...] The allegorist chooses to use the empty shells of the language that has lost its metaphysical guarantees, a collection of arbitrary sign-systems without moorings in either divinity or nature, and to buy wholeheartedly into its own marionette-like nature. He chooses to re-master meaning, and he is defined by his artifice.

Elizabeth Stewart, **Catastrophe and Survival**

Matter

Matter, a matter without presence and without substance, is what resists these oppositions. We have just placed this resistance on the side of thought, in its strange connivance with materiality.

J. Derrida, ***Memoires for Paul de Man***

Mechanized

it is quite conceivable that one fine day a highly organised and mechanised humanity will conclude quite democratically - namely by majority decision - that for humanity as a whole it would be better to liquidate certain parts thereof.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Middle (1)

[...] the idea of pure means implies a space of the middle (*Mitte*) rather than that of the limit, border, or frontier. A pure middle would be one whose middleness is no longer defined with respect to determinable end points; rather, it would have to be an infinite and infinitely divisible space. Nothing can withstand this space *intact*: infinite divisibility

is the 'law' of this space, which, however, cannot itself be posited *as* a law, since this division is never governed by an identifiable rule.

[...] a pure medium would be one through which no content would be communicated but in which its own 'law' of infinite co-divisibility would destroy all 'bridges'—including those between human being and human being.' [...] the medium would not be a mean to an end....but an infinite language in its own right.

Fenves

Middle (2)

We are not realists. We are not idealists. We are intermediatists—that nothing is real, but that nothing is unreal: that all phenomena are approximations one way or the other between realness and unrealness. Like purgatory, I think.

Charles Fort

Middle (3)

For this reason, apart from distinguishing each *medium* in particular, we are also interested in a new *medium*: that which is in the middle. A gap is opened, which is form and figure between two things: between natural and cultural, between the inside and the outside, between secular and sacred, between showing and saying, visual and verbal, oral and written, journalistic and literary, scientific and poetic, massive and academic, doctrines and fictions, a space in the middle, mediate and mediatic, where historical, theoretical and aesthetic imagination contracts, trying to combine those fragments, to repair fractures, to solve fractions. The massification of the media is understood in another sense: the media are in everything and everything is in the media. Two fractions; *two media between two media*, two into two, simplifying, one into one is one, that is to say, three times one. In all cases it is a question of dividing, of media, a *mi-lieu*, a place between two, *en el breve vértigo del entre*, as Octavio Paz said.

Lisa Block de Behar

Mirror

The double is the same as me plus the object *a*, that invisible part of being added to my image.

[...]

... the anxiety that the double produces is the surest sign of the appearance of the object. (It can also be brought about in the opposite way, by the disappearance of one's mirror image, technically dubbed "the negative autoscopia," an example of which is to be found in Maupassant's *Le Horla*.) Here the Lacanian account of anxiety differs sharply from other theories: it is not produced by a lack or a loss or an incertitude; it is not the anxiety of losing something (the firm support, one's bearings, etc.). On the contrary, it is the anxiety of gaining something too much, of a too-close presence of the object.

Mladen Dolar *"I shall be with you on your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny*

Nymphae

"We are accustomed to giving life only to the body biological. Nymphal is, instead, a life purely historical. - Like the elemental spirits of Paracelsus, the images need to be truly alive, that is assuming that a subject will join them, but in this meeting - as in the union with the nymph-Ondina - has a built-threatening risk. During the historical tradition in fact, the images will crystallize and turn into ghosts, of which the VIPs and discerning gentlemen - will still need to free them again."

"The story of Humanity is always ghost story and pictures..."

Giorgio Agamben, *Nymphae*

The nymphs are seduced into the tight new portable prison of toy obsessions

Possession

Rouget, the author of this illuminating term, which he uses in place of ‘crisis,’ explains that ‘possession-seizure’ often does not just indicate that the divinity has suddenly taken possession of the individual, but signifies above all that the individual has been ‘killed’ by the divinity. Put another way, this ‘taking’ or seizure, which may be a random possession occurring outside of the context of ritual or may mark the beginning of a ritualized possession trance, represents in both cases the dissolution of the self of desire. It signifies not the incarnation of the new identity, which will not actually take shape until the following stage, that of actual possession, but the evacuation or eclipse of the ordinary identity.

Jean-Michel Oughourlian, ***The Puppet of Desire: The psychology of Hysteria, Possession, and Hypnosis***

Project as doll

If one has a project – or more precisely, is living in a project – one always is already in the future. One is working on something that (still) cannot be shown to others, that remains concealed and incommunicable. The project allows one to emigrate from the present into a virtual future, thereby causing a temporal rupture between oneself and everyone else, for they have not yet arrived in this future and are still waiting for the future to happen. But the author of the project already knows what the future will look like, since his project is nothing other than a description of this future.

Boris Groys, *The Loneliness of the Project*

Play

Involves the construction of another space/time, another domain having its own procedures for interpretation. The transition to the 'playground' is marked by a particular attention, a particular tension in consciousness that may be pleasurable.

Susan Stewart, *Nonsense*

Quit

When we are finished with things, they are finished with us.

Which is the best thing about them.

Robert Kelly

Reduction

Surrounded by a world of giants, children use play to create a world appropriate to their size. But the adult, who finds himself threatened by the real world and can find no escape, removes its sting by playing with its image in reduced form.

Walter Benjamin

Replacement

Whether the thing at issue purportedly replaces people or nature, whether it is imagined or agent (the artwork) or patient (the photograph), there is something unheimlich, either demonic (the idol) or divine (the miracle), about its impostures.

Lorraine Daston, *Things That Talk*

Presumably, since not mentioned, the doll shuttles back and forth, inhabiting middle ground.

Res Nullius/Sacrifice

Perhaps the doll is humankind's Fair Witness of the fulfilled complications of *Res Nullius*: is the doll an image of the Last Sacrifice? Place-marker for a last transition that the human will make, final sacrifice and Second Coming merging in a blur of matter, all of which will be then deemed to be alive, the doll a threshold (present through the whole long human journey from pre-human to whatever-comes-next) pulling from some assemblage point just beyond the horizon (which of course is from some place so deep within that it appears to be from the outside), then climbing up it/ourselves like Wittgenstein's ladder to be tossed away, esotericism materialized.

“[...] a fulfilled foundation of humanity in itself necessarily implies the definitive elimination of the sacrificial mythologeme along with the ideas of nature and culture that are grounded in it. The sacralization of life also derives from sacrifice. From this point of view, it does nothing other than abandon bare natural life to its own violence and its own foreignness, in order to ground all cultural rules and social praxis in it. “

Girgoio Agamben, *Se in **Potentialities**

Sacred

What the toy preserves of its sacred or economic model, what survives of this after its dismemberment or miniaturization, is nothing other than the human temporality that was contained therein: its pure historical essence. The toy is a materialization of the of the historicity contained in objects, extracting it by means of a particular manipulation.

G. Agamben, *In Toyland*

Soul

In the history of puppets and other human simulacra after the decline of religion we can read—in a backward image, like a reflection in a mirror—the underground history of the soul excluded from its religious context in Western culture.

The sacred dolls found in Roman burials of young girls were, say Maurizio Bettini, an ‘economic way to describe the way divine energy energizes matter... an image ready to become a person, closer to the realm of being than the realm of signs.’ [...]Whether idols themselves or human likenesses, these statues and figurines, like embalmed bodies seem closer to the divine body than does the living human body because their static, unchanging nature imitates the permanence of the immortal.

Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets*

Speaking

When forced to speak, matter suffers. The voice that is squeezed out through the dead materials of the mechanism becomes the voice of the mechanism’s protest against animation, the voice of its resistance to voice.

Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*

Thing

“....the quest for things may be a quest for a kind of certainty, but *things* is a word that tend, especially at its most banal, to index a certain limit or liminality, to hover over the threshold between the nameable and unnameable, the figurable and unfigurable, the identifiable and unidentifiable: Dr. Seuss’s Thing One and thing Two.”

Bill Brown, *Thing Theory*

.....

The subjective spirit which cancels the animation of nature can master a despiritualized nature only by imitating its rigidity and despiritualizing itself in turn.

(Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002)

Toy 1

Toy Story suggests that we need to take seriously the idea that the realm of the pseudo-human might actually have claims on us; that we have a response and a responsibility to what appears to be human, and speaks with a ‘middle voice’ between the human and the inhuman, as well as to what we definitively know is human.

Steven Conner

Toy 2: miniaturization

Toy and doll are not synonymous though they obviously do interrelate to a high degree. Both tend to designate the diminutive, an artifact associated with childhood hence something of the everyday but yet which strangely also resides in deep time, both inside and outside:

...miniaturization stands not so much for what it allows to be known of the whole before the parts, or for conquest, in a single rapacious glance, of what is to be feared in the object (‘now the child’s doll is not an adversary, a rival, or even an interlocutor’ C. Levi-Strauss), so much as allowing the pure temporality contained in the object to be grasped and enjoyed, *Miniaturization is, in other words, the cipher of history.*

G. Agamben

Transparency

So whatever it is, a pure language (like a proper name, a modernist poem, or a cubist collage) would never be transparent.

Gerald Bruns

In other words: not the language of angels.

In yet other words, like Adorno's reading of Celan's poems: "They imitate a language beneath the helpless language of human beings, indeed beneath all organic language: It is that of the dead speaking of stones and stars. The last rudiments of the organic are liquidated"

from ***Aesthetic Theory*** by way of G. Bruns



Devidyal Khalsa

DOLL

Fehta Murghana



“The void is the condition for ecstasy just as ecstasy is the condition for the void.”

E. M. Cioran

*(If we just stick to the etymology of ‘doll’ we get into a welter of associations dealing with the diminutive form of various designations of the female gender, deriving from onomological associations and morphings of, e.g., ‘Dorothy’, where the ‘R’ becomes transformed to ‘L’ and the word shortens; ‘moppet’ from Middle English ‘moppe’, combined with Latin ‘mappa’ perhaps meaning napkin or tablecloth and moving then into ‘rag doll; then on to ‘puppy’ and ‘puppet’ coming from the French ‘poupée,’ in turn deriving from ‘puppa’ which slides from the Latin ‘pupa’ meaning ‘girl, doll’ from which we get both ‘pupil’, as both the part of the eye and the educational association, that is, a small image reflected in the eye of another, as well as ‘pupa’ meaning the post-larval stage of an insect, or a not fully developed creature, as a ‘pupil’ would be. From Sanskrit we get variations on ‘putra,’ the young of an animal (originally Put-tra somehow meaning ‘preserving from the hell of Put’; also ‘Putikka’, as doll or puppet). It is said also that the Greek ‘kore’ (‘girl’) also means doll as well as pupil of the eye. Oddly enough, there is an association with ‘dock’ meaning to cut an animal’s tail. I will leave it to others to imaginatively pursue that trail. Kore (also known as Persephone) was daughter of Zeus and Demeter and was made queen of the underworld by Pluto in ancient mythology. The term also applies to Greek statues of both male and female, left foot slightly forward and with the ‘archaic smile,’ perhaps to be compared to the smile on Leonardo’s da Vinci’s **Mona Lisa**. It would seem that etymology is often in the eye of the beholder.)*

It might be said that the empty thing called the doll has become (or was) the event horizon which we can increasingly only look back over our shoulder towards. In other words, the fate represented to us (and it is emblematic now that dolls do not, or can't, believe in such a thing as fate) by the doll is a fait accompli, although perhaps not a 'mission accomplished' exactly since there was no one directing us to such an ontological embargo (and imbroglio).

In the first part of the modern era the doll was seen as a female diminutive and as such, the property of the female. In a wider perspective (a perspective which has been forged by the perspective of horror movies and psychoanalysis...and the collapsed edifice of religion and its empty remnants striving to be filed) the doll can be seen as a two-part assemblage: a shell and then the 'filling' of projected subjectivity. Before modernity the filling (of effigy, fetish, ikon,) was seen to be divine in nature, with the human as an intermediary, perhaps merely a necessary remainder slopping over the 'edge' of the shell, its material aspect and phenomenal appearance, even *parousia*. (In cabbalistic studies, 'shell,' or *kelippah*, becomes a formal category, the world of pure materiality, "...the realm of [...] the impure and the corporeal – the realm of the demonic that had come into existence and attained its separate, external existence during the process of separation and excretion in the emanation of the five worlds. Just as the World of Action sank down, along with the other worlds of its rank, mixing with the *kelippoth*, the world of the 'Outer Shells,' and thereby assumed material character, so did most of the souls, together with their sparks, become submerged in it." **On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: basic concepts in the Kabbalah**, Gershom Scholem. Schocken Books. 1991, Joseph Dan Trans. The relation of such kabbalistic ideas to the Gnostic concept of body as mere vessel should be obvious to even the casual observer, although kabbalistic exegetes have worked the concept into a towering edifice, bringing in its wake such subsidiary ideas as the Golem.)

We could even say the idea of the doll, expanded beyond its common stop and repose in juvenilia, is the basic leitmotif of Western modernity and is co-terminus

with its idea of the relation of materiality and psyche. (That is to say, total immanence.) However, no divine filling this time but rather a psyche formed of the mediatic infrastructures of culture and the psychoanalytic formulations and machineries of modern neural science.

There is no doubt that the doll exerts a ferocious pull on the human psyche, and uncannily so.

As a child, both male and female, we are seduced by the miniature kingdom which is reproduced in various degrees of detail through out the life cycle. At the same time the contemporary expanded doll moves into phantastical realms introduced by computer explorations of cinema and fitted technical media prosthetics. The coming regime of Doll will be life-sized and fitted to the owner's psychological and affective profile, just as was the task of **Bladerunner's** dollmaker Sebastian, and Pris, the android pleasure doll.

The downside of seduction by the doll, built into the human we might say, is also the Fear of Chucky: the fear of possession and loss of identity by that same phenomena and if not a return of the repressed, at least the revenge of mute matter for being brought to consciousness, Walter Benjamin's "groan of creation" as it comes to birth – and is not happy. The demon doll has now become a feature of cheaply produced horror films, signator perhaps of our increasing uneasiness with the biological; but this uneasiness, and outright fear, seeps across all aspects of current life as A.I. and robotics continues its relentless assault on what were formerly human prerogatives.

The doll seems to be a cultural Maxwell's Demon, shuttling *kenosis* or emptying, to one side and a filling up, mocking *parousia* (presence) on the other, like a wave/particle dualism, dependent on how you look at it. On one side, a result of pure materialism: a 'mere' shell, no one home, only a thing masked, in masquerade, like that commercial which emphasizes all the faces that our commodities take, a faciality, attempted prosopopeia, which is a black hole, sucking us into a commodity fetishism,

that which is not dead nor alive becoming part of us, donning us like a suit: cars, buildings, milkshakes, bowling balls, houses, the detritus of undertainment (sic) culture where the ‘suck’ of interaction is all in the direction of things only imitating give and take of life....or is that give and fake? And what do our dolls want? They want to be like us (I know, I know: we are not to subject them to subjectivity, but why? Where do we stop/start and they start – and refuse to be stopped? How is that determined? Who draws the stroke? Who determines the placement of identity if identity extends, as it must, into and out of the environment, and not just in the head or in the body. It is now thought that the *über*-doll, the sentient computer, must be able to traverse environments if it is to become truly sentient.) The doll is the premier intrusion/extrusion of environment/ psyche, the doll forming the slash or stroke between matter/mind, the site of the Lacanian knot.

The figure of the doll is the threshold which we see in religions, the moment of kenosis leading either to grace or gravity, to an *aufhebung* sedimenting ‘upward’ or a falling away into muted matter, into the pagan, either movement into the one above or the many below, into an integrated playtime or into a disassociated *cacodemonamania*. The doll moves in both directions at once, pulled like one of Hans Belmer’s creations, from both ends toward the middle, every part moving to bulbous, and fast.

The doll repudiates i-doll-atry as at the same time, and necessarily, incarnating it. The doll is not the opening of worlds but rather a circumambulation of this one world, shear dualism (but no escape though a dialectic): evil and good, matter and mind.

The doll is the effigy of mind in matter and matter in mind, a voodoo doll of penetrations, defenestrations and perturbations, of ‘spooky action at a distance,’ of presences and absences.

The doll is the nail in the coffin of mankind as well as the DNA spiraling generically through the species, a coded figure as well as a figure of code, keeping and releasing secrets in the same measure, a purloined letter of opaque openness.

The doll is a fetish of presences which have left the room, a keepsake of revenants, ghosts long gone but retaining efficacy, some hexing power, some ability to monstrate, come alive and eat its young, witch's familiar hovering at the distance turning from flying monkey into military drone.

The doll is the ultimate apparatus because the human gives birth to it, the inhuman, which then rips the face off the human and bequeaths it to the object world, *prosopopeia*; personification is what constitutes being human, extravagating psyche into the void. Just so, technology, doll, and human identity a tripartite necessity of one for the other: projection, but not only that; introjection, but not only that; phantasm, but both more and less than [g]host[ed]: the doll is the stroke between them all and the longing of matter itself as it works itself out in the miserating *stabat mater* of language.

The doll is the be-all and end-all of the human sphere, it is the in-fans (meaning without speech) *omphalos* of origin and also the *eschaton* at the end of time, each rounding on each other, mythical Ourobouros Doll Snake of infinity weaving together the human and inhuman in final/beginning: the doll landscape is the lemniscate, ∞ , modified to a Mobius strip: eternal return and bad infinity. The ending of Spielberg's **A.I.** gives vivid imagery of this: the shut-down shape of the human, but incarnated as a doll, entombed forever in its infantile moment, while it is excavated from a frozen tomb by faceless bipedal aliens: are they advanced dolls (that is, robots) or truly alien (but really, ultimately, also a doll)?

The doll is the most grimly funny thing imaginable, even, or perhaps especially, in its darkest manifestations. Keeping in mind Henri Bergson's comment that comedy is "something mechanical encrusted upon the living," then the absurdity of the doll coming to life, just as much as the absurdity of coming back from the dead, are two sides of the same coin of comedy and fear. Comedy, or rather the doll's, 'limit in the plentitude of life' is also the backdoor connection with tragedy: fate as just another gussied up doll, hollow on the inside---yet terrifying all the more so since it is 'only' a direct reflection of its maker, the human. Fate: nothing more than a windup doll moving inexorably forward. The only question being: how does it get wound(ed) up?

(To those who would say that the doll is merely a running gag, they would be entirely correct if both senses of 'gag' are kept in mind: a form of speechlessness caused by an external 'tourniquet' [or mechanicity] as well as a type of predetermined ongoing joke; a third meaning would be a choking, gasping for breath, caused by an internal eruption.)

The doll is ecstatic desire, 'reading into' the void, its spiraling movement out of and back into, Nietzsche's self-propelling, self-supporting train-doll, Wittgenstein's ladder trick, language all dolled-up for vacation but, ultimately, no place to go but back home, the most uncanny of destinations after all.

Torso



Devidyal Khalsa

Sixty eight unicorns twelve squared

mall gunman/drag queen/raisin/doll universe
(minus 20 version)

Jeff Dahlgren



seventy-six unicorns and the side of my sac swollen the inside of a bathroom. and the testament to a unique liver.

animals and internets. the blog's way of saying "fuck you".

he came out of the bathroom with six weapons strapped to his body. three for each fist and a wild look in his eyes. like in the movies. he thought. is this like in the movies? it was real. a loud report and the smell of gun powder. ears ringing and people scrambling. he had done it. a person on the ground kicking and the sight of blood.

i saw him from the other side of the large glass. listening in silence and still as i could be. my keyboard clacking and a noise inside my head calling me to come downstairs.

seventy-seven elemental consciousnesses and a thyroid running vague. and lasers perambulate across a baby's skull, hoping to etch. the humored flavor to transferring or projecting.

long fingernails ripped out and stuck to the mirror, little hunks of flesh still connected to some. another hand on his, smearing his make-up and pressing his face into the sink. gagging sounds and the end of pretending. this was real. a sharp pain suddenly in the side and the agony, the warmth. a short knife came back out.

seventy-eight rambunctious baby mammoths. albino mammoths with cotton candy tusks and walking carefully to keep an lp dangling from their necks from skipping. dancers in malls as if it is a shock. shitting in the wrong place in a public bathroom. raisins absorbing the moisture from the air, and talking shit the whole time. laying on the ropes. as if one day they would reveal their endgame. none of this was real. they'd all see in the end.

seventy-nine raw frozen cuts of steak from 1988, buried in the freezer beneath eleven inches of ice. learte's tired ears and passion, drags ed gein's silver coated clitoris through a joke book by al jaffe. You are a child. The voice said with condemnation. " lost in a department store. a young girl with tears on her face and red painful fingerprints on her neck, still fading, still catching her breath from sobbing on the drive home. lost...in a department store. she slurred the words, pulling a stiff plastic comb through her doll's hair. the word lost came out. losssssss.

eighty bibles in france, laminated with transparent duck flack from yore, a castle of tentacles in the sunless depths, scattered about the fear and nerdy dread of a million yesterdays. so he hid and played pretend that he was being as real as possible. critical and without ego, the creative impulses were life as much as they were a prayer. stupid tennis shoes didn't fit when he went to far north in the summer. the rides he got from people, as if it was the seventies. their trust suddenly disappearing every time, only a little too late every time.

eighty-one in borneo with three maids and erectile dysfunction and three red sports cars. ivory driveway sanded rough everyday. and the mall echoed with screams as he realized he might as well pull the trigger again. wah wah shock, as if he had just jumped from a cliff and changed his mind. bright lights and so much movement and blur of noise, he was not the center of a hurricane. panic and confusion scrambled in his head. it was coming to get him. in the shape of a large black security guard running at him. diving. the gun fired again so loud and a bullet an inch over the guard's head. his large burly shoulder met with the gunman's midriff.

eighty-two smeary pearls colored to confuse and a sheet of acetate with unblinking sensors, acting as a guardian. a bubble-thin skinned faux-plastic thought implied by the imagination. the projection of the mother. the tenuous thread dreamed. it sent its manufactured love of love away. he felt his teeth pressed hard into his gum between porcelain and a hand on the other side of his skull. no longer a lady excusing herself to powder her nose in the club. a sudden jarring bang and pressure from his head releases, letting him fall to the floor.

eighty-three galloped by the library searching for plectrums from the parade last night. carbon armies in hollowed out holes in the ground. a perfect square with perfect posture. a riff on sentimental headlights. a vineyard of burlap and burning scarecrows, windmills,

and women shaped like birds laying in fields. as if in their own world. wondering about popcorn and the last place the two of you ever ate together was fuddruckers. wrinkled and dreaming. running away from hurt into other places to be. with a painting and a lie under each arm.

eighty-four maybe's and a submarine ping for a doorbell at the dead end street's beginning. listerine and king neptune with a bruise on his thigh, desired by the police in seven rural counties. a lawnmower made of wet paper and anger. Her boat sank and all the human's aboard died. She felt the water rushing in and felt it seep into her head. Connectivity's dawn projected. On a life-size replica of the horizon. A misty apparition of itself moves headstones across pvc and warped terrain. Beautiful things under rocks made of polystyrene.

eighty-five crabs and rubber wallcrawlers. a lesson on health for a thirteen year old. fat and dishonest during the hearings, the quorum in a kiosk, in a mall. they fell together and the gunman's head slapped hard against a thick plate of glass. discworld's walls shook. the gun fired again, at an odd angle from the hand beneath the large body. a bullet went thru the security guard. splitting a rib, fatty tissue, lung and aorta and as if not oddly enough, finally into the stomach of the gunman himself.

eighty-six cradled thoughts next to a row of petunias and liriopse, a grafted ear removed due to itching. thinking ends in drifting desires to simply be willfully unmindful. desired and sophisticated. etiquette from seven hundred cotillions and baby contests. doilies made of licorice and wild lettuce in spring. he thought of ed gein's influence and fiddled in his pocket for the small object. tonight would be a lovely night at the club. that sleezy dive that managed to dodge gentrification's odd deliberate misunderstanding. he practiced his insulted pout in the mirror.

eighty-seven burmese coffee burnt memories overlayed by sheets of sarcastic laughter and saliva. crimes in the desert ranked in terms of the length of teeth. the wizard of oz as told by a ray charles impersonator. rabies and crow's feet in the cracked and alligatorated surface. amber fruit like a cockroach it tells the truth, no copies, it wanted to be eaten and dissolved back into the fabric and imagined it had happened. a small rat with a mental problem ate him.

eighty-eight was when western twang wrestled birth control pills out of the wraith's ungrateful struggle. i didnt let nobody hypnotize me..i didnt steal nuthin she yanked on

the doll and then held it up to her face. i know you can hear me

the little girls eyes darted around, hearing adult footsteps outside her door. she threw the doll under her bed quickly.

father's fingers on the doorknob and her room was opened, she sat still and tried to wipe away tears that weren't there, making her red cheeks that much angrier.

eighty-nine a polar bear balanced on the end of the equinox, an egg and a ceiling fan and the bottom of her shoes melting to the pavement. secrets are the real, the side that never repeats. long shadows whispered to the flax snails trail. he rolled the body off of his own, wincing he started to get up then screamed. his stomach was a mess. just blood. lots of it though, oh god. he went numb and shining and pushed to get up again. an asian man stood gaping at him, looking like he wanted to help. the gunman raised the still clutched gun and fired into the man's face from about three shambling feet away.

ninety righteous fires on mountain tops inspire visions for the drugged and stockholm scrambled on the seasoned skillet, handling gummi worms filled with acid. vomit came up cold in the shape of a tire tread. his art was designing clothes from plastic. underpinning the whole discussion between garments was a colorful veneer for reproductive organs. a character of a character, she smiled. a stage to pussy-foot about on with a dream of pink comas and kites without any string left. the tease of a man's rough and rugged chin. that smell. he smeared more color and leaned his head into the other room, listening for his mother.

ninety-one popsicle lips and waving lugubrious totem poles of misfortune, an inner-ear problem not too dissimilar to tinnitus. eight teas with ping pong balls instead of lemons in each. in a black and white photo from nineteen twelve. he was a raisin. sanded down and alarmed by it all. shaking and nervous, stuck between the teeth of a rat. he had to be consumed and dissolved entirely. the sensation was an agonizing limbo, a tease between two places.

ninety-two groovy maneuvers insinuating that communal hierarchies don't exist. faking it. all the way to the top of a chair. the words leading the way. father looked around the room and then took two steps in looking around more. concern on her brow. she said something and no sound came out. father looked around the room more . spoke louder . the little girl heard nothing. she stood up and said, mother?. father walked right passed her and felt of the 2nd floor window to her room, seeing if it was locked. she looked out

of it. her face turning back to the room was familiar, her own, a collection of dust and a weird pink haze like a coma. she was under her bed looking down a cobwebbed corridor, a dilemma of perceptions.

ninety-three hollow mountains of uvulas and calcium deposits, the central sternum of ballasts and bust of pallas united in archives with fingerprints. his cloud of red and that noise, dulled this time and he fell forward as the asian man's knees buckled. lifeless and weird looking, the gunman craned his neck staring at the quivering body as he lumbered away. a trail of his own blood and a numbness in his thighs. his fingers felt locked and cold. thoughts went to how many rounds were left and looking for people hiding.

ninety-four claimed formica and pyrite, the lust of lichens so sanctimonious in white robes for poets. a sunset bare but partially speckled with feathers coated in oil. the heels tonight were uncomfortable. getting comfortable with comfortable awareness of all his essentials was not happening. the purse he chose was too small and the strap was at an odd height, almost tucked into his armpit and difficult to access. the cab was taking longer than usual to show up. the cold sucked. tonight wasn't going so well, he thought and passed gas into his pink skirt.

ninety-five wild perambulating flowers of oklahoma taste like oscillating gall bladders. wishy washy rain and children's books on car floorboards. a piece of the raisin in the tooth of a gnawing ugly little hairless tailed beast. thirsty from eating poison and rotting in the mind from rabies, the creature soon rambled deranged into traffic and was flattened by a large truck at about four a.m. on a sunday morning. the chunk of raisin dangled waiting to dissolve completely. the pain.

ninety-six bogus lotion commercial using carpenter bees and lice for sculptural benchmarks of cultural development. The corridor seemed to expand and shrink as if breathing, swaying the underlining of her bed. Her bed's ceiling became a hanging network of wires, lights, and humming rubber belts.

ninety-seven derived from marble dust and david gilmour solo albums, the double stick tape heated up in the microwave like any cloud of ballerinas kicking it would. He winced and looked through the discworld glass and saw a reflection of himself and then the girl. she was thumbing through cd's, shoving them into her purse. she noticed him and looked at him saying something. it sounded like she said fucking kill me asshole. to his shock, she gave him the middle finger and went back to looking for cd's. he fingered his stomach

wound, realizing it cld have been worse. he imagined that it was healing.

ninety-eight just label the odeon with candles and small animals, a wasp with letters for eyes and a book to thick to burn. the club was hopping and she felt out of synch instantly. the need for drugs consumed her entire being. at the bar and nervous, she ordered a long island and a shot of tequila.

ninety-nine blarney stones and waffle fries from a chicken shack, those weird wheat dividers with overlapping wires so pinwheel pretty in the field. and abuse from the father. the next thing the raisin knew it was an old lady on the floor in a public bathroom. her legs twisted and covered in purple veins and still those wrinkles. she shat a deep brown liquid and wriggled in it on the cold slick ceramic tiles. graffiti and stains and other peoples' pubes. an issue of robert hughes nothing if not critical torn up and partially burned clutched in her hands.

one hundred galvanized pipelines and comets without tails behind cold dead stars, the license to cry was a month down the road. angst and palindromes, the werewolf of marseilles interpolating non-profit hippy biker-chick poems. father sighed and reflected on his own memories, her own lost dolls. he set one down in a small chair and left the room, leaving the little eyes staring at the doorway. Her doll was somewhere under here and she scrambled for it. Needing it.

one hundred and one it always came back to puppies. ice cream and those days when the temperature is just right. tennis balls and shorts with the right number of pockets. he wondered if she had a gun he couldn't see so he pointed his at her as he walked around to the entrance. his wound was healing, he realized. or rather it was simply there, just not doing anything anymore. no pain. no more blood. a hole. forgotten and perplexed at what they were seeing the two stood looking at his strange wound. a gunshot reported from the mall suddenly, passing a bullet through the gunman's head and out of his left eye. another went through his shoulder and into the girl's neck.

one hundred and two mutilated bubble wrap and the meandering dream of a girl in love. a woman in love with big starry skies and car parts. disgust for cheap tequila and the association with hangovers, she chased the taste with a swig of the personalized long island tea. a bartender's familiar nod, the friendship so unsatisfying at the end of it all. she looked at her watch and looked around for any of the familiars to the backroom.

one hundred and three i don't know anything about drag queens or step ladders. ive

never been a mother or an auto-mechanic and good god there are moments when the site of her face in my mind hurts to my core. making atm cards smarter for blank billboards and broken lonesome never recorded country songs. she had fallen from doing what one does not associate with the habits of an octogenarian. in a club, in a bathroom, four in the morning, with heroin and cocaine. and a magnum sharpie.

one hundred and four lucid and aware of the need for rest, the leprechaun realized what he was and squealed like a cornered rabbit. he decided to go get scrap metal from an abandoned construction site. Walking for hours. Stopping and standing still, she saw the fleshy intricate exit in front of her. Forgotten and fragile, a long hallway regurgitating the same ancient manufacturing sounds. The pacing machine casting and rhythmic, ker-plunking baby-soft widgets across a conveyor belted ceiling. Flanked with light emitting vertical trails on either side, a steady low sympathetic hum imitated breath and vibrating skin.

one hundred and five okay we've got christmas paper, we've got antelope trails and cellophane from third grade, the chorus of bot flies and corpse flowers. okay ,nellie niner we have a head shot confirmed, repeat confirm on a head shot. we are moving in. target two is also down. repeat target two is down. sound of echo clapping black boots on marble and against glass. people muttering and then screaming.

one hundred and six rubber boots and work-out st. helen exploding style. geraniums and cheese dip for pinky toes. the coffee robber of oaxaco. he didnt seem familiar and it was actually a good thing. a large african-american man. heavy and tall. she sauntered over towards the partition, he lingered near its ridiculously discrete entrance to the backroom.

one hundred and seven bowling lumber for milkteeth set in stone rows just outside of warner robbins. maybe a bit closer to forsyth than he wanted to admit. like a ladder lost on the highway or a partially decomposed deer. eighty seven years old and extremely high, she slobbered herself to her feet, as if pulled by strings from some unseen demon or mechanized spirit. there was no emotion to her body. her legs did not appear at correct angles and her face seemed out of focus. she craved wine.

one hundred and eight diogenes and saint simeon stylites anchored by butterflies to an idea made for saturday caucus machines without chain gloves and mutual compromise. cobwebs hummed and quietly danced and rested. It was a tattooed shell, this entire facility. a projection only connected to the real. a thin veneer, organic and networked with

information in electrical, blood and muscle-born impulses. but for so long now, forgotten and in motion. she knew she was a bi-product of even this. further removed and just as real. a balding rat ran across the floor, hobbling from a strange glowing transfiguration. a halo wobbled around it.

one hundred and nine so of course when they get over there, they go to a commercial. bulls on two sides of a fence. one of them explodes, making quite a vulgar mess. the cd rack, splattered with half of the girls neck looked like the most logical place to stare when they walked up and found no bodies. it was as if their corpses had vanished in the space of ten seconds.

one hundred and ten razors and fragile paintings rolled up in a hurry, the bridge was creaking and dry rot presented itself in an unraveling fashion about halfway over the ravine. so of course this strange huge guy decides to get rough. and then he bypasses anything expected and proceeds to beat his head against the wall. out come a pair of pliers and her hand is in the sink with a wrist broken.

one hundred and eleven these are all just products of my imagination, the partridge and the frogs in the water. and almost a missing of details. meetings bring out the convenience and what-ifs of oh jeez here we go. she wanted to go to church. ever-present the little girl in the nice dress and shiny shoes skipping about flowers and purity. blech to this place and she hit the exit to the bathroom open like a pissed off bouncer. smoke and dull beats layered into a cacophony, the leering faces, she worked her way through the crowd with a snake-like slipperiness.

one hundred and twelve gouged into the syrup with pine branches and toluene, a clown mask and a stage carried on his toes. a curtain for eyelids and audio devices up the sleeves. kisses weren't enough for omens in the woods. she stood still staring at the door. it was a fuzz covered biodegradable door with plastic inscriptions. a thick door, splitting like pages of a book, it tilted on rotting organic hinges. gaps filled with electric charges as the doors layers slammed shut. then the entire door opened. the spongy forgiving surface beneath her hard feet ended. the dank electric hallway ended. and when it opened, it revealed an immediate and sudden vastness.

one hundred and thirteen mites involvement and shoulds with a governor blurb in the wonky status of weird wires and too much information. the gunman was no longer a gunman and the girl was on his shoulder. in the bathroom on the floor below where they

had just been. close to the food court exit. like expository writing, he explained how they walked and transported from place to place. and why they healed. or rather why nothing seemed to matter.

one hundred and fourteen global notions and river bends to mausoleums covered in cat toys. hail the placed mats of sarcasm's water love. itching had occurred and he had been passing shit around, so this wasn't too much of a surprise. the pain was excruciating and wonderful. the fear of death seemed somehow distant. a sense of release. pleasure at how incredibly unreal this situation was.

one hundred and fifteen umber infant's icicle language and ranges of sieve-like landscape. she didn't want to go the church up the gravel road that had all them snakes in baskets. she wanted the one by the creek with the fat preacher. his smile was funny and warm. her ancient legs cast a shadow across a plane of perception, walking up as naive as she could, never recalled and new again. out of a modern hell and into history's dream.

one hundred and sixteen loose in the ocean with twenty eight tails. an enclosure of sorts. light in the echo of the gaping sigh of so much air. red dots hovered high in the distance, connected by thin beams of light that made perfect angles and then drove directly into the ground. a massive rectangle defined. displaced imagery, as if through running old glass. it smeared the perception of massive walls. they suggested demarcations of an enormity almost so pushed as to simply not be. it was not outside. but it was an invisible simple square structure. and beyond that the strain of sensing an oblong or oval transparency around even all of that.

one hundred and seventeen knots and sour coins, a possible bricolage lisp into theatrical log cabins. they did all the usual stuff. flying through the clouds and spying on people in public. threw themselves off cliffs. shrank themselves. made themselves pretend to be powerless out of boredom from choice. to be guided by another's will entirely.

one hundred and eighteen oceanic temper and thoughtful ramparts. cartilage and ink rocking black sheep rank the clatter. and into another place he went where he truly was her. higher than ever on the bathroom floor, twisted into a horrible position, her mind smiled and sighed. all of her fingertips bled as if they were faucets only slightly open.

one hundred and nineteen blurred worries and umbro shorts. sanitized iron surface sharpened and heavy lunch meat. poked ozone snores after the mourning period. weakness dials. baptised again, the octogenarian with her rag rug fingers and

crabapple tree knees. the blue of the sky in that late morning sun. the purity felt in the word and the comfort of his fat fuzzy arms as he lowered her.

one hundred and twenty capable lamps and dagnabit plaster formed lattice cramps in the sinuses of archetypes.

her lips were welded together in silence. she wanted to gasp. the sensation of the defined finite in forever above and before her. coming to a man-made end. beyond that was the actual forever. giant shadows moving and a sense of vertigo. loved and tossed around. storing all the while as she could. massive rhythmic voices boomed incoherent patterns and orders over her. sometimes at her, she piecemealed the sounds and stored them sad letter legged sweet wasps for convenient pop culture churn outs and have a nice day please with efficient waves of a purple textured organism hissing and filling sweetness in the air, blonde hair and make the opposable thumb more bent, a divided coin flipping and a mirror polished through to the other side. Wings for one way and the other a circle spun. The direct manner of marketing is the incorrect manner.

one hundred and twenty one rabble rouser salad trout in a cowards particle bleacher. now the gunman was in a market, another incarnation seeming inanimate. this was how he moved. aged and forever smiling about everything and nothing. freedom from choice. she had moved on to a place in the middle east. having met a friend to pretend with.

one hundred and twenty two soap doses and lord marble larvae formed a union of bogus cereal brands targeting carnivals in the united states of america. and then it all ended. someone came in and struck the large black man torturing her. they sank a crowbar into his skull while wearing rubber body suits with masks and thick gloves. the boots appeared to be made of metal. they hauled her broken body up and set her where she is now. in a glass case set in an upright position.

one hundred and twenty three. and the submarine ping did ring. and she went under an old woman but never came back up. she stayed down there forever a child.

one hundred and twenty four in code and in blue colors like a science fiction cartoon, a unicorn or a plastic soldier. pulling her eyes upwards, she fell back and closed her eyes for what seemed like eternity. the recipe for flesh in her code wiggled dark hairs. they were slow drifting across her eyelids and into some strange corner out of her line of closed-eye vision. she went somewhere else without any indication of expectations.



Alan Sondheim

The Directory of Dolls

Alan Sondheim



1. Doll as territory, mindscape. What goes where? What happens to the sex? To the teeth? To the grape-texture of eyes, wrinkled texture of balls? Is the penis erect? Labia and nipples present? Does the neck twist? Is the doll your territory? Is the doll a victim?
2. Doll as gamespace, inscape of the mind. What conceivable alterations? What inconceivable? When does the doll cease to be a doll? What of the doll as arousal thing, part-object, passive-thing, aggressive-thing, good-thing, naughty-thing? Is the mouth a goal, are the eyes? Is the sex a goal? Where is the sex?
3. Doll as power-holder, shaman. What is brought to the doll? How does the doll perform? How is the doll seen to perform? Do you grovel before your doll? Is your doll your girl? Is the doll your boy? Your sex?

4. Doll as place-hold, character. What do you say to your doll? What does your doll say? What do you do? What does the doll say about that? Is the doll center-stage? Is the doll always center-stage? How do you feel about that? Are you center stage with your doll? Are you upstaged?

5. Doll as dark matter, invisible. Do you fantasize your doll? Do you dress your fantasy? Do you cry with your fantasy, masturbate with it? How does your doll feel about that? Do you undress your doll? Is your doll your dream? Is your only doll your only dream?

6. Doll as matrix, receptacle, visible. Is your doll your comfort? Is your doll your mother-mother, father-mother, mother-father, father-father? Your part- object, your cradled object-little-a? Does your doll forgive you? Does your doll always forgive you? Does your doll forgive your naughty feelings? Your naughty ways?

7. Doll as icon, symbol, index. Is your doll your universal space? Does your doll center you? Is your doll your center? Do you dress and undress your center? Do you talk to your center? Are you comfortable, receptacle of your doll?

10. Doll as tomb, gravestone, memory palace. Does your doll remind you?

Does your doll entomb the living and the mourning, the birth and the death? Does your doll cradle your tears? Is your doll in comfort as your receptacle? Is your doll replete with memory, with time gone by? Do you kill your doll? Can you?

11. Doll as collectible, enumerated thing. Is your doll pure? Do you keep your doll pure? Do you dream of doll-universe, series completed and owned? Is your doll pedigreed? Do you buy and sell your doll? Does your doll care? Is your doll very pure?

12. Doll as child, your tiny baby, your boy, your girl. Do you weep over your doll? Does your doll play with you? Do you move your doll? Does your doll move? Is your doll a dirty little doll?

13. Your doll, your lover. Does your doll caress you? Do you caress your doll, whisper sweet secrets, loving names no one else will ever know? Do you arouse your doll? * Is your doll sexed, is your doll loving you? Do you fear your loving doll? Is your doll satisfied? Do you satisfy your doll?

14. Doll as demon, as fear, as deadly fear, doll as enemy. Do you own your enemy? Are you safe? Is your doll safe with you? Is your doll a hateful

doll? A loving doll? A secret loving doll? Is your doll always in your sight? When you leave home? When you sleep? When you bathe? When you die in your sleep?

15. Doll as his doll or her doll. Do you covet the doll of someone else? Of another person or doll? Do you speak to the doll, whisper to it, come to me, come to me? Do you dream of its coming? Of the doll coming to you? of what you will do to it? Of what you will do to it when it comes? With it when it comes? Of what you will do, what will you ever do?

16. Doll as doll, as doll. Does your doll own you? Is your doll yours? Are you sure your doll is yours? Do you belong to your doll? Does your doll care? Do you care if it cares? Are you owned?

*'he turned her on,' 'she turned on him,' 'he turned on her,' 'she turned him on,' 'he turned him on,' 'she turned on her,' 'he turned on him,' 'she turned her on,' etc.



Illustration #1 *Welcome Commuters!* (Seaberg-1981), *the Ventriloquist* (Seaberg/Thies-2007), *Partita in A Minor-Aria* (Seaberg/Littleton-2008)

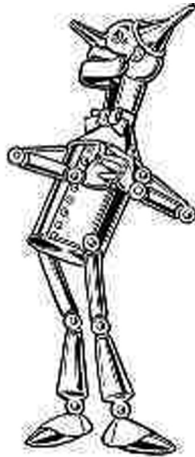
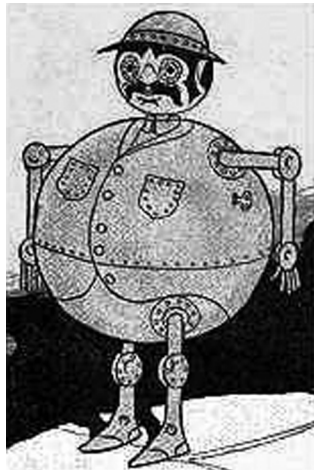
Dolls, Puppets, Marionettes, Robots and Zombies

Steve Seaberg

Being a victim of childhood abuse no matter what form it takes seems to lead directly to feelings of being controlled, being an object, empty, small, a toy, with others pulling you this way and that, even with a hand or something else inside of you, talking for you, arranging your appearance, as if you were a ventriloquist's dummy.

I didn't play with dolls, being a real boy, but I did have an army of toy soldiers and even an army of my friends who were always in danger of death and destruction and needed a lot of instructions and orders to carry out their play/death tasks.

Wizard of Oz books were still being published in the thirties, full of mechanical and puppet-like characters, sometimes empty metal shells with clockwork motors, stuffed with straw, in need of getting oiled. One of these, Tik-tok of Oz is considered to be the first portrayal of a robot in modern literature, although the word "robot" was not actually used until it appeared in Karel Capek's play, *R.U.R./Rossum's Universal Robots*, not actually mechanical men but somehow organically grown to be worker-slaves.



Tik-tok of Oz (Baum/Neill-1913), the Tin Woodman (Baum/Denslow-1900), the Scarecrow of Oz (Baum,Denslow-1900)

The first time I saw a doll played on the stage by a human-being was in a New York Ballet Theatre production of *Coppélia*, the clockwork doll of E.T.A. Hoffmann's bizarre story *The Sandman* (1816). Frantz falls in love with Coppélia, the life-size doll. To regain his affections his real girlfriend, Swanhilda, does a dance impersonating Coppélia and in the end revealing the fraud. This story also appears in Offenbach's opera, *Tales of Hoffman* (1881), where Coppélia sings a very mechanical aria, running down in the middle, to be wound up again by Dr. Coppélius, her inventor and "father". A similar Hoffmann story, *Die Puppe/the Doll* was made into a film by Ernst Lubitsch in 1919.

Another ballet done by the same company and which I saw the same day, was *Petroushka*, a clown puppet in a Russian carnival who does a solo dance of love and frustration alone in the black box in which he, like the other puppets. the Dancing

Girl, with whom he is in love, and the Saracen, his rival, live, finally throwing himself through the wall of the box itself. Score by Igor Stravinsky, originally choreography by Fokine and danced by Vaslav Nijinsky in 1911.

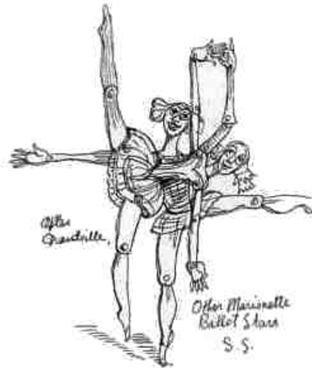
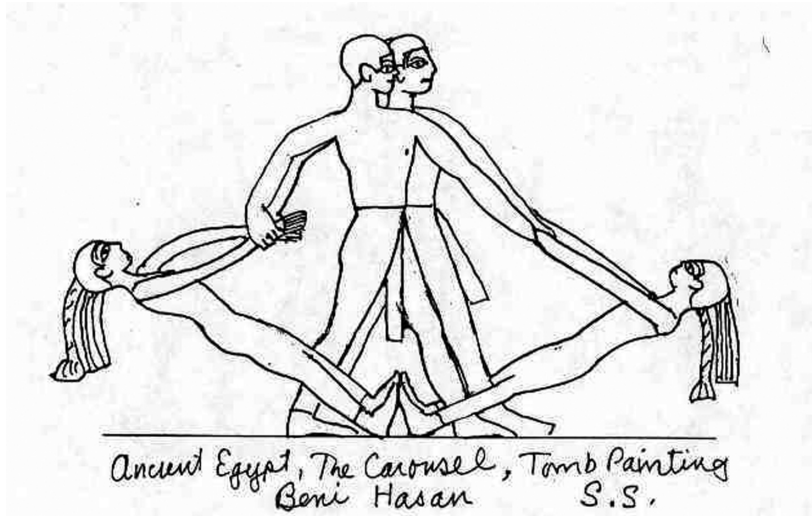


illustration #3 Marionette Ballet Stars (after Grandville-1825), Coppélia (Delibes/Leanne Benjamin-2000), Coppélia (Delibes/Benjamin-2000) , Die Puppe (E.T.A Hoffmann/E. Lubitsch-1919)

All of this eventually found its way into my own art when I started making skeleton figures, perhaps my alter egos, perhaps my abusers or perhaps both. Like the skeleton, Rudolfo, who played in a performance I once did of *La Boheme*, undoubtedly an image of my father as a young man in Paris in the twenties, me trying to feed him with a backdrop of fantastic storefronts that I painted in 1981 on Peachtree St in Atlanta - a far cry from Hemingway's Paris. but foreign in its own right.

I realize now that I've been doing this ever since, such as in the photo, *The Ventriloquist*, which was shown at Eyedrum Gallery in 2008. I am my own "dummy", my parents now being deceased and me having to run my own abusive system. And in the dance I recently did with Andrea Littleton, dragging her around the floor like a limp doll. What catharsis! Perhaps for us both.

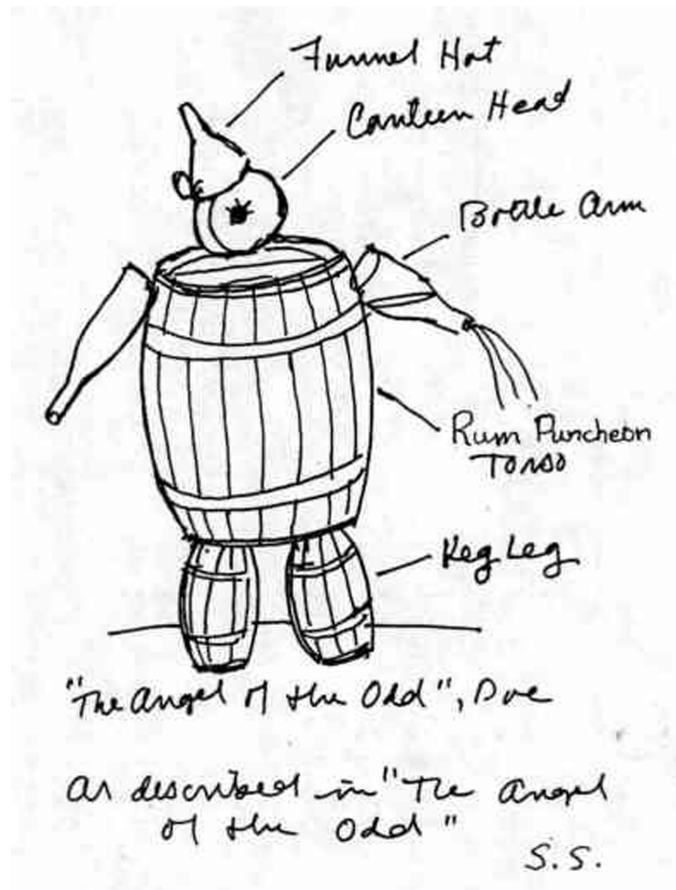
There is one more point I would like to make about the abused doll and that is the abused doll's revenge, as in the Korda movie, *The Thief of Baghdad*, in which, as I remember, a fat merchant, perhaps the caliph himself, embraces the many armed idol that he has bought as some sort of love doll and as he places his arms around her she, with one of her many arms, draws a dagger and stabs him, Her writhing arms are like the arms of the abuser, able to poke like an octopus into the nooks and crannies of the victim's body or simply hold it prisoner. See, for instance, the octopus that holds Jasmin underwater in Disney's *Aladdin* or the tree that wraps its branches around her. These can be understood as transformations of the strings of the marionette having become the actual arms and hands of the abusive manipulator.



Ancient Egyptian Acrobats (after a tomb painting at Beni Hassan - 2000 BC), Dancing Doll (The Thief of Baghdad/A. Korda-1940), Jasmin and the Octopus (Aladdin /Disney-1992)

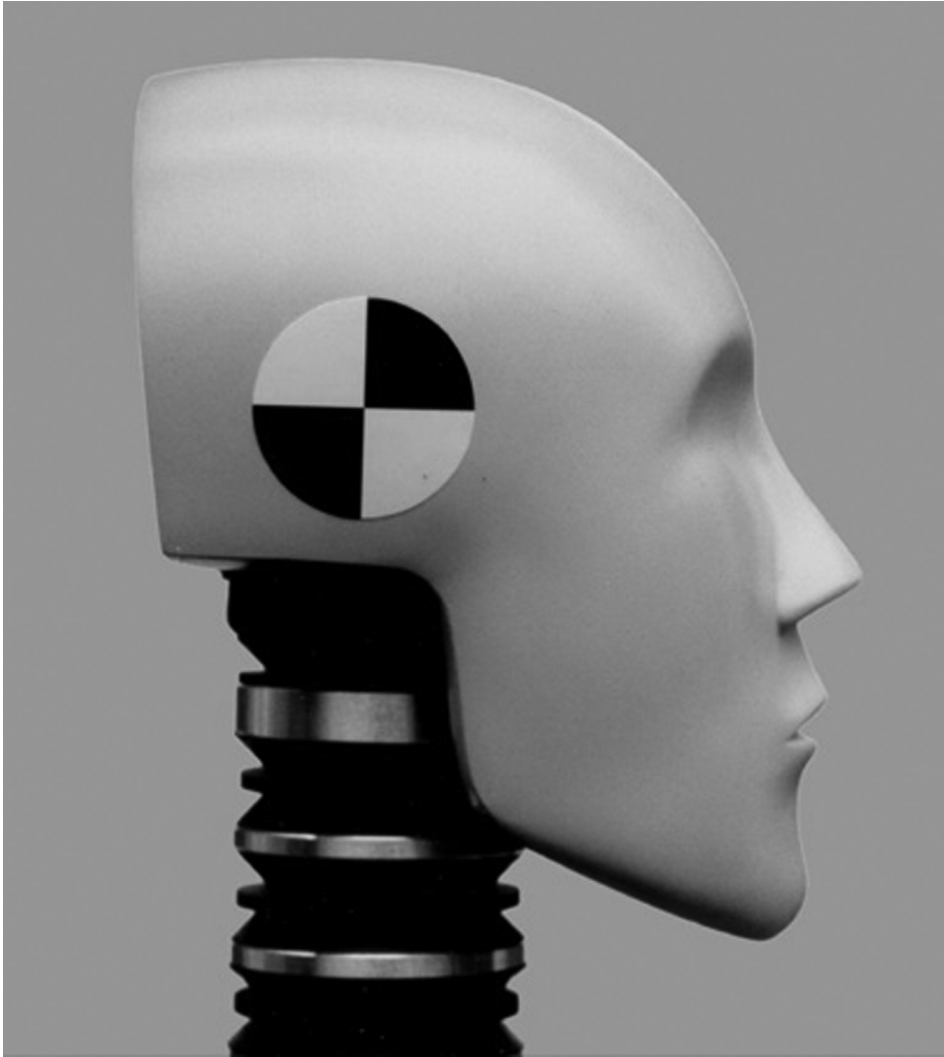
Finally, the ultimate human/non-human doll must be the Zombie, both living and dead, in the command of the “spirits”, which, in the Caribbean might well be the Demon Rum, abuser and abused, rolled into one, foraging through the American cultural landscape and the minds of the abused everywhere!

But, speaking of zombies, I shouldn't forget another literary doll/puppet/robot/mechanical man, not Shelley's Frankenstein's Monster or Hoffmann's Nutcracker or the inhabitants of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (*Et Dukkehjem*) but Edgar Allen Poe's “Angel of the Odd” as described by him in his story of the same name, truly constructed of spirits, or, at least, their liquid containers.



The Angel of the Odd (Poe-1850/Seaberg-1993)

Steve Seaberg is the author of *The Iconography of Abuse*, metaphors and images from Art, Science and Literature.



Interview: Robert Cheatham and Chea Prince on *The Doll Universe*

Perforations: Many people have been both baffled and intrigued by the concept of the Doll Universe. Can you talk a bit about the genesis of the concept?

rc: Well, originally I was to be involved in a joint project with an architect for a competition sponsored by Art Papers, an Atlanta based art journal. The competition was entitled The Ante-Millennial Dollhouse. As it turned out, we never entered the competition, but I did write a piece for it. It was then, and in subsequent discussions with Chea that I began to see the fuller implications of what started out as an exercise in the "rhetoric of apocalypse", you might say. I believe that original piece of writing is in this issue of Perforations.

cp: When Rob called and said he wanted to do something with a text he'd written on dolls, etc., and that the original project had gone bust--I was immediately interested because it seemed obvious to me that it was a rich topic. I'd already done some assemblages that included mannequins as pointers toward a kind of surrealist/dada fascination with desire and the blurred boundary between the human and the artificial. Dolls are human creations that attempt to negotiate and mediate some fundamental dichotomies of the human world: male/female, nature/culture, impulse/morality and dreaming/wakefulness, etc.

Perf: So it doesn't really have anything to do with toys, then?

rc: Yes and no. The cultural site for the manifestation of the Doll Universe is in all those arenas where the imaginal component is paramount, where the ludic is valued over the pragmatic, the workaday, etc....

cp: Dolls always display a preference for the pleasure principle over, and even against, the reality principle. They escape the toy domain and suggest a much more problematic and ambiguous erotism.

Perf: Robert, you mentioned the "everyday"...

rc: Actually, it's not as simple as that since the so-called "everyday" is the only place where all of this occurs or even CAN occur. Where/when else? But having said that is saying almost nothing since people claim the most extraordinary things to happen in the "everyday". In using that word, people oftentimes feel that it will dispell all the ghosts, genies...and dolls...that surround them. I'm afraid it is a mantra that doesn't work very well. At any rate, toys do indeed give valuable insights into the Doll Universe. If you want to see the future look at childhood. Extended neoteny is apparently part of the future of the species...

Perf: Especially, it would seem, in periods of very rapid change...

rc: That's right. It has become almost a commonplace of some futurist thinking that adaptations to increasingly unstable and hence complex environments require the looseness and playfulness that we often associate with childhood...

cp: The only thing I would add is that both childhood and dolls include a certain precociousness and sexuality that is sometimes overlooked, especially if childhood is considered to be synonymous with innocence, and dolls with toys. Extended neoteny is also an extension of the turbulence and loss of innocence usually associated with adolescence, but which in reality occurs earlier and earlier in some populations of children. The irony is that extended neotony actually means a shrinking period of childhood while at the same time adulthood is deferred. The transitions of child-to-adolescent and toy-to-fetish often accompany one another in a commodity dominated culture; for some individuals it's the same process since they are

themselves the toy/fetish. Here the difference between a doll and a human is very unclear. If the "other" is a simple means rather than a complex end in itself how is that person different from a significantly advanced android? That people can be thought of as playthings or even not-really-human is nothing new--it's slavery--chattel, sexual, wage...

Perf: So that is the Doll Universe?

rc: No, not totally, but it does have to do, very roughly, with the psychological correlates that accompany certain cultural changes. If one was to be more direct about it, which I loathe because it's so often misleading, the Doll Universe has to do with that strata which Manuel DeLanda identified in *War In The Age of Intelligent Machines*, and which Deleuze and Guattari have written about in *Anti-Oedipus* and *Thousand Plateaus*. It is preeminently the realm of technology, taken in the widest sense of that term as the vectored congruence of material manipulation and consciousness. Such a formulation is terribly misleading since it implies a separation of those areas when in fact they are inextricably connected. It's tempting to say that it is about the collision of human consciousness and machine culture, but in fact it's not so simple to make distinctions. What is interesting though, contemporaneously, is the extent and the speed at which technological innovation is occurring. So much so that it appears that the human organism is being emptied and refilled by algorithmic processes--in every field of human activity. Of course, Walter Benjamin's great essay on the evacuation or exhaustion of the human "aura" with the advent of mechanical reproduction is one of the first to deal with the Doll Universe in a contemporary manner. But in one way or another it has always been one of the major concerns of philosophical enquiry. However, the concerns have shifted slightly with the advent of so-called deconstructive studies or post-structuralism.

Perf: How is that any different?

rc: Without going into a long winded tract on it, let's just say that the balance of concern shifts with those studies from an overwhelming and transparent, really, in that it was taken as the degree zero of reality-- concern with "human" reality, the "essence" of being-human. With the advent of phenomenological studies--which was

also the advent of a more-or-less global technological/communications infrastructure -- what it meant to be "human" was bracketed. "Being human" became an opaque affair and, through the aegis of modern education and communication, not just for the philosophers, priests, or shamans, but for everyone. For the first time "humans" became visible. And when humans became visible so did the non-, un-, and in-humans become visible again. Boundary conditions become as important, if not more important, than what they bound. One might be tempted to say, at the risk of simplifying too greatly of course, that liminal sets is what post-modernism is all about. At any rate, It's a great part of what the Doll Universe is about since the most powerful boundary appears to be the one between animate and inanimate, living and dead, conscious and unconscious, and so forth. Technology does seem to be developing (always, already + n?) certain chiasmatic qualities here. At the moment there are only simulacra of life and thought processes; but at what point does the complexity of the map become such that it is a territory in and of itself?

We can note also that boundary conditions or liminal sets do not have numerical values. That is, while a boundary condition requires a minimum of two, that does not make it a binary set. The situation becomes more confusing as states $n+2$ increase since the inside of one boundary might be the outside of another, etc. It is with the proliferation of ostensible boundary conditions that a condition of perforation sets in, sort of like a hyper-dimensional cluster of interpenetrating soap bubbles. In Deleuze and Guattari's term, more "lines of flight" begin to appear just as a (virtual) function of these intersecting boundaries; and of course the difficulties of policing all of these circumstances becomes enormous, if not impossible, since law, ethics, governance, is also being pierced, dissected, deconstructed, etc. at the very same time. The news is filled almost daily with these impacts and intersections. From one view it looks like decay, from another an overload of possibilities. The way a lot of ordinary folk would put it is that "things are out of control"; it's more like "THINGS are IN control" in terms of the machine world around them.

cp: And, exactly there--at the boundary--in the in-between--is the doll universe. It's nowhere and everywhere. In fuzzy logic it's what's referred to as a both/and situation. Both interior and exterior. Both coincidental with and separate from the

many "human" worlds we inhabit. Another way of thinking about it is as a conjunction: the conjunction of dream and waking reality, the conjunction of imagination and imminence, of the rational and the irrational. It exists both within and beyond the limits of human knowledge. Dolls--"the doll universe"--includes the experience of one of my favorite spaces, "chora", that "invisible and formless being which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible," according to Plato--though I wouldn't suggest thinking of the Doll Universe as precisely the "same" space. We're interested in doubling, fantasy, substitution, demand <> desire, real/reality, the uncanny. Dolls as receptacles for the "real" (psychic reality) and its subsequent play within reality (the everyday). I like Slavoj Žižek's description of Fritz Lang's Woman in the Mirror in Looking Awry. It's a nice explication of dream/reality. It hinge's on a cool reversal: dream as a site of an emergence of the real, reality as an illusion founded on repression. A "doll" gives the real a body that often behaves in very uncivilized and "un-human" ways.

Perf: It seems to me that the only un-human most people can see now is the machine.

cp: The un-human as it's "seen"?... O.K., I think dolls more closely approximate "manifestations" than "representations," and therein lies their appeal. A doll is a "thing" whose "inside" contains surplus space, or that "place where nothing takes place but the place"... They appear to be manipulable and totally responsive to even our most outrageous desires, but the naive view doesn't take into account feedback and the automatism at work within the human psyche.

rc: Exactly. You might even say that the Doll Universe is gaining the upper hand.

Perf: Of course, there have always been features of human life and consciousness that participate in automatism, such as hypnosis, multiple personality, and so on...

rc: And even the diagnosis of schizophrenia around 1900. Certainly these features have been around a long time (well, it's not exactly clear about schizophrenia) but it

is still not clear how much such features have participated co-evolutionarily you might say, in the onset of the Doll Universe; that is, there is a constitutive element of human consciousness itself which is vectored to automatism and the 'somnambulism of matter', we might say. A linking of the most evanescent, transparent - consciousness - with the most opaque, the most dense and resistant - matter - and an intimate linking at the very core of each. There is the Doll Universe.

Perf: It seems like in some ways you're talking about one of the most hackneyed features of the modern era: the sorcerers apprentice, Frankenstein, robots ...

cp: Frankenstein's monster might be well be THE symbol of the 19th/20th centuries. All the hopes and fears concerning technology and it's promise and/or failure are made available in one creature with whom we empathize while simultaneously distancing ourselves and regarding it with stark terror. But, far more interesting than the monster is his longed for Bride. The Bride is both more complex and more disturbing. She, not he, is the quintessential doll. While he is merely a doll of the first order, she is a doll's doll...a meta-doll...

She's NOT the object of HUMAN desire, but of doll desire...the petit objet 'a' of the doll universe...the interesting question, of course, is not what does the monster want, but--WHAT DOES SHE WANT? She's the very embodiment of the sexuality of Death--the point of excess that might well bring on a simultaneous orgasm and cardiac arrest.

She's a wonderful variation of Pandora's box. Engage her and suddenly you are adrift in the dream worlds of the physical unconscious where repressed desires are reconstructed around, and re-energized by the pleasure principle. This is not the realm of any particular aesthetic, and certainly no particular ideology has much chance of taking root...or...ALL ideologies have an equal chance... Here, passions, ideas and dreams create and recreate each other with an urgency and vigorousness that can leave one breathless...vertigo is a common occurrence. Is all this "hackneyed"? I don't know...?

rc: Well, it is one of the most persistent concerns of humans (and even further back in time with such creatures the Golem, a 'linguistic' monster par excellence)...whether that makes it a cliché or not I don't know, either. Perhaps a feature of the Doll Universe is that everything becomes a cliché, that is, it appears overused, worn out, faded, through the process of electronic reproduction and circulation, even the first time that it appears; so much so that there hardly appears to BE a first time. Cybernetic Culture becomes a great holding tank of images and memes which act to sustain a certain 'hydrostatic' (economic) pressure. All past, present, and future become collapsed and coterminous in that circuitry. (In that respect it's interesting to look at the theoretical work, in all areas, examining the idea of "origin".) Pop culture and music present us with the most 'see-able' of this aspect, with its emphasis on the hydrostatics of style and fashion. Hit songs are such that they seem familiar yet new; it's almost like you've heard them before, even when you hear them the first time.

cp: What we have in is a culture that produces what McLuhan referred to as "assembly-line love goddesses"--patterned, machine-stamped uniformity, or conformity. What's significant in these patterns is what they suggest about the dominant impulses and aspirations of machine culture. These are the collective cultural dreams that are both entry points to the social irrational as well as vanishing points on its horizon--the realm of off-the-scale, out-of-line appetites and desires that complete the picture of what it means to be the human product of machinic processes. The loop here is fascinating: machines are made in the image of humans <--> humans are re-made in the image of machines. McLuhan's dissection of the mechanical bride into an assemblage of improvable and/or replaceable parts is precisely why cyborgization is, and will increasingly become, a trend in human development.

Perf: You know, the more you talk about this, the more I'm not so sure I like it.

rc: I guess it depends on where you are in relation to the "singularity" we seem to be moving toward/into. Certainly from a humanistic point of view, it's undoubtedly frightening. All aspects of life now seem to be doubled, with one side folded into the

Doll Universe. Even philosophies, ethical systems, identities, etc. have "folded over" onto themselves (that's part of the "double marking" of deconstruction), and now have a non-human face. It's no longer our machines which are un-human....humans THEMSELVES appear to be embracing "un-humanness". What that is remains to be seen; compared to a humanist or theist culture it seems to have more in common with DIS-membering, rather than RE-membering and the nostalgic reflection and axial value orientation which that entails (and in that sense humanist and theist cultures are basically the same, even if they are all in the same PoMo soup). That's also what the Doll Universe is all about.

cp: A frightening tendency within cyborgization is the collapse of individuality into a "ready for prime-time" body and accompanying persona. A social face as indistinguishable from another as the perfectly engineered bodies of cyborgs. It could be argued that these processes open up opportunities for enhancing "difference" as well as "sameness", that individuals will be able to create marvellous variations on what it means to be beautiful, and I'm willing to acknowledge a potential for "liberation"... however, I have a very healthy respect for the inherent instability and reversability of phenomena (Derrida's *pharmakon*), and an acute awareness of the unwillingness of masses of people to exercise choice and to be imaginative. I think a kind of off-the-rack consumerism is a more likely scenario. It's strange how the Nazi desire for the perfection of a master race haunts the popular imagination. I suppose as long as your "type" isn't targeted for extinction it has a certain sexiness...it would definitely be a mistake to think of the Doll Universe as a utopia. It's more of an a-topia. Subrational impulses to power, violence and conformity are as easily, or perhaps more easily, found on the loose there as love, peace, brother/sister-hood...

rc: We might be tempted to call it the Semiotic Universe (and hence a discourse, communication universe--remember the Golem?) , in that it participates in the "ossified" universe as Signs which forever demand to be read, and which we take to be, *pave* Lyotard, at the heart of semiosis: a nihilistic universe and a religious science at that--codes forever demanding to be interpreted from the past and transferred into the future, worlds without end, amen. Except that the Doll Universe pretends, phantasizes, dis-simulates (so of course, it's "not true", a 'hole' or gap in reality--that

most interesting of places as all artists and lovers know: and what's the ontological status of a hole, a rip?)....with a completely hollow core which embodies a chiasmatic twisting back, a "moebiating" back and forth, into and out of the human, emptying an infinitesimal amount with each pass, while the osseous, hard tissue of techne grows more developed by the year. Is there anything lost here compared to what is gained? How is such an adjudication even to be made? Oh sure, we can say what we wish, or what we feel but what makes that so? The Doll Universe (statistics, demographics this time but of course it wears a human face, as do all dolls) will have done a survey and in that survey your "feelings" only rank as a percentile and there will be other percentiles probably in contrast to yours. You barely rank. Or you rank only as a particle. Or as a marketing scheme. And of course, as Georges Bataille well knew, we have never left the sacrificial altar. Something or someone (usually both), somewhere is continually being sacrificed for you. It's unavoidable. You feel bad about it? Then sacrifice something (yourself, something else, someone else) in turn. But the Doll Universe has a big request (well, more of a demand really) of all of us and it is this: it wants the sacrifice of ALL of us--the grand funeral pyre of the twentieth century, the Final Immolation/Sacrifice, the Burning of the Flesh (remember the final scenes of the movie *The Terminator*, the burning away of the flesh, the revelation of the Doll beneath?) And you work, you work hard, both at producing-things and at not-seeing this sacrifice don't you? Let me grab this and read a little Bataille: *"From the start, the introduction of labor into the world replaced intimacy, the depth of desire and its free outbreaks, with rational progression, where what matters is no longer the truth of the present moment, but, rather, the subsequent results of operations. The first labor established the world of things....Once the world of things was posited, man himself became one of the things of the world...It is this degradation that man has always tried to escape."* (from *The Accursed Share*. ed.) How ironic, then, that the escape is into the Doll Universe: the more intensive the labor, the more we can conceptualize the "problem," the more abject becomes "life", and the more appealing the Doll Universe becomes, a vast illimitable plane of "light" as a schizophrenic patient put it in describing her experience. All that is required of us by the Doll Universe is the burning away of this Flesh, this Identity, this Island Earth (and here I'm making simultaneous reference to certain Heideggerian ideas concerning Earth and human identity, and the science fiction movie from the 50s, *This Island Earth*).

cp: And, what's leftover? A psychoanalytic node. A site for the production and reproduction of machinic desire. At an imaginary ground zero, through the gaping hole we call reality we enter the Doll Universe. A semiotic fun house where your entire fate may be decided by some idiotic detail. One slip of the tongue, a facial tic...and...your naked. Your frame comes unhinged, and all the meaning in your life drains out. All that's left is to laugh and say, "I should have never unloosed that (k)not, or God, if I just hadn't noticed that stain."

Perf: I have no idea what you're talking about and I'm not sure you do either. Speaking of "This Island"...could we bring this back to Earth a little....

rc: (interrupted by hysterical laughter)

Perf: No, really, give me a handle on this. Is there art that comes out of this, some "things", objects....

cp: Well, only if you believe in the aphorism: Dada IN, Dada OUT.

rc: (more laughter) Think of the Doll Universe in terms of Heideggerean *Gestell*, which was a term Heidegger used to characterize technology in its modern manifestation, which he termed "enframing" (or *Ge-stell*). It is a way of setting up world relations in terms of calculability or systematizability, of formal systems, algorithms, methodologies, and so on. Everything increasingly becomes part of the "standing reserve" of world technical/energetic systems--including humans. In simpler terms, we become fodder for the extrapolation of global technological systems. All of the "things" or "objects" that come out of such a world system only act to increase its level of functioning, storage capacity; even acts of resistance only increase its efficiency.

cp: And...so much for the so-called avant-garde...

rc: Any one episode or group of events may seem catastrophic and so on but this only serves to activate functions in the techno-grid of capital which feed on mishap and act to convert into, if nothing else, capital, that most abstract form of storage energy. Capital itself is, of course, empty. This makes it almost infinitely usable, up to and even beyond, the limits of human culture, life and thought. And beyond those

limits waits the Doll Universe. And perhaps as a corollary, the Puppet Universe where objects are still ventriloquized by a few shards of a human "moral" (or perhaps "essentialist") universe, nostalgia regnant. A dangerous transitional phase perhaps. Although frankly, even the concept "danger" becomes quaint. In fact, if you will hand me that book beside your chair I can read something to you that I was just reading this morning that pretty much gets at the heart of what I was talking about, especially the latter part of the quote. The book is called *The Aesthetic State*, it's by Joseph Chytry:

"The will to enframe is really the Nietzschean will to power historicized, cresting in the will to will nothingness itself. Opaque and ever present in its moment of ascendancy, it powers forth the concrete products by which the present is distinguished: the post-Renaissance cult of perspectivism, the modern cityscape of homogeneous quilting, total mobilization, and universal donning of the "uni-form," thought reduced to the clarification of model languages or dissolving into cybernetics these manifestations of a world of grids and lattices, paralyzing in their endless rows of smoothly functioning, perfectly identical entities serving the single purpose of telescoping the capacity of nature to provide steady and meaningless energy flows, betray as their master the state of being that wills power, wills an objectivity that, never knowing beings as beings, can never know its own being as uniquely destined to guard being proper in its moment of elation."

Perf: I'm interested in the limits you mentioned earlier. I'm having a hard time deciding whether you mean the idea of limits to be positive or negative.

cp: Limits are neither positive nor negative...except situationally...and, there is always the possibility of reversal. Reversibility is what brings boundaries into dynamic play. At the boundary is where "both/and" and "neither/nor" logics find application... All boundaries are inherently "fuzzy"...

rc: The two most readily available limit-cases given us to think about are also two of the most fundamental: death and identity (not taxes, as the old saying would have us believe). And I believe you could say that both are co-implicated in the same realm. They form two imbricated boundaries beyond which it seems impossible to reach.

cp: Identity is grounded in an individual's attitude toward death. How we live is actually how we are choosing to die. How we die is who we were.

Perf: And yet much of human thought and imagination certainly seems to be devoted to at least examining those topics, if not going beyond them. In fact, the whole arena of human religious life is devoted to that "going beyond."

rc: Yes, of course that's true...which is only testimony to the aporetic power of death and identity and the asymptotic nature of the attempts to examine their structures. Technology is fascinating, at least in its "deep" aspect which we have been discussing, in that it is non-living but it has the capacity to mimic living substance. In a very restricted sense, it is both living and dead, and is zombie-like in that it can be queried as to its condition. Indeed, technology in general, always already everywhere as they say, raises the question of limits: what is the limit here, can it be exceeded? how can it be exceeded? The question of what it means to exceed limits is, at least at the moment and, as the Chytry quote indicated, beyond its capacities...

Perf: Beyond its limits?

rc: At least for the moment that sort of reflection is beyond the framing capacities of technology. For that matter, it often seems beyond the capabilities of many humans. Heidegger's estimation of this reign of technology--that is, whether it is a good thing or a bad thing--was based on the tool-like character of technique and its ability to set aside certain aspects of the world, make it available for humans. At the same time it is 'ordering' human space. Not being a Heidegger scholar I don't know if he considered the possibility of that realm taking on a certain form of life---and at the same time life takes on certain characteristics of death. And even though Heidegger thought he was destroying certain traditional metaphysical categories---which he assuredly was--he still moved within a certain metaphysical realm which he was not fully able to extirpate, as Derrida has shown in his little book on Heidegger and spirit.

Perf: If we could change direction slightly for a moment...well, I don't know if it is a changing of direction or not... Chea mentioned cyborgization earlier. There is a lot of

talk among techno-oriented groups about cyborgs and cyborgization. Is this the same thing as the Doll Universe?

rc: First we need to recall that cyborg means "cybernetic organism." Cybernetic is from the Greek and means helmsman, although it has also been construed to mean "dead helmsman"--as in a non-living guidance mechanism, or governor with a sophisticated feedback circuit which continually advises and adjusts the system according to preset operating parameters. Presumably a cyborg then is a combination of living or organic, carbon-based, material and non-living, electronic (so we might say silicon based) circuitry which consist largely of very sophisticated feedback loops with presets which can be altered by the organic, "organismic" component. On the most basic level, the purpose of these mechanisms would be to augment and extend abilities. Of course, in a very real sense, a human in a car is a cybernetic organism.

Perf: I'm not sure that's what they mean...

rc: No, you're right. What is implied by the term "cyborg" is usually a much more intimate intermingling of mechanism and organism, which Donna Haraway has explored at length in her cyborg manifesto. Haraway's image of the cyborg is a perfect one for a de-essentialized age, where everything can function as a module of a larger complex, a more or less complete interchangeability of parts, as Chea mentioned, based on their utility for the feedback circuit as a whole. In fact, this dismemberment has come to seem the radical option now, the necessary course that freedom takes. (Here would be where we take another recursion into formal deconstruction, genetic research, viral mechanisms [also on the border between living and non-living], and the mechanisms of immune deficiency syndromes. Without going into that area, I recommend an article by Alexander Guttman in issue #7 of the journal *Public*, for a very interesting look at the relation between deconstruction and AIDS.) But the important thing to remember about a cybernetic organism is that it represents a more efficient "system of management", and in that sense it is at the peak, conceptually, of capitalization and commodification of "what-it-means-to-be-human". It is hard to see how capitalism could go any further after the full cyborgization--whatever that would mean in its particulars--of the human species.

Perf: I hesitate to say this, but that seems to imply that capitalism itself is the most radical system of development--at least of the material environment.

cp: I don't know if it's the most radical, but it's definitely the most dominant...

rc: It could certainly be seen as the most radical if one wishes to take a de-essentialized view of the human being. Of course, the original meaning of radical was "to the root" but, as we know, in a "post-modern" age that has become a very problematic concept. Certainly, capitalism has a peculiar way of simultaneously honoring and cutting off at the root. Globally, "getting back to the roots" seems to be a very conservative phenonema, a search for an ethnic ur-identity, imposition of strict borders, etc. Another way of seeing this, and I don't necessarily think of it as cynical, is as a form of a capitalist confessional; a form of interrogation, efflorescence, and dismissal. (Or sublation, if you prefer something that sounds more positive.) Another turn of the Hegelian screw, if you will--by way of Foucault--of course. Such a concept of capital, identity, the instability of oppositional stances, etc., certainly problematizes critique to an extreme degree, and I think those who would use cyber culture as a counter-stance would be in for considerable theoretical difficulties. As would also those who seek to use identity as a bulwark of some kind. Perhaps they should go back and read Poe's, The Masque of the Red Death. Perf: So Cyborgs, as an aspect of the Doll Universe, ARE or ARE NOT radical and liberatory?

cp: Neither radical nor liberatory; and both. Again, cyborgization is a BOUNDARY situation. For some it is an opportunity to short-circuit the politics of identity, for others a way "to possess machines in a sexually gratifying way," as McLuhan might say. It's the boundary where one experiences intensely a tearing apart, a laceration, a perforation... Whether, like Oedipus, one says, "Am I made [hu]man in the hour in which I cease to be?" is an individual matter. The outcome, even for the individual, is often uncertain...indecideable...maybe unknowable.

rc: Well, again I would say it depends on what you mean by "liberatory" and "radical." You could look at it this way: Are the astronauts liberated from gravity when they are in outer space? In a sense they are but they are also imprisoned by

their incredible technical support system which is undoubtedly a construct of gravity. Even if they were able to cut free of the earth completely, the template of their bodies (and mental, conceptual orientations) would carry the intimate and unexpungeable imprint of gravity. The Doll Universe is perhaps as radical and liberated as "life" (or perhaps a re-membrance of life) is possible to become, and still retain any semblance of such an appellation. And even so, many humans would no doubt consider it to be an evil because it's so detached from human reality as to form a threat to human existence...and, of course, in that they are correct.

Perf: I seems to me that all of this implies a certain hubris on humanity's part that we can actually have such ultimate control of energy and matter. Perhaps there are certain parts of the construction of the universe that humans will just not be privy to.

rc: In fact, that's what the Doll Universe is predicated on, that is, that there are distinct limits to human abilities, both body and mind. At some point, perhaps, both have to be discarded. With the advent of the Doll Universe, by any previous standards of human life and community, we will have entered the land of the dead and the departed (and which has always been the arena of mythology). To enter fully into the so-called 'technological singularity', which is another name for the Doll Universe, is to take a ride with boatman Charon, that other famous kybernete . I don't know that many of us are ready for that journey but more and more it appears to be one we must take, even if at times it comes to seem a forced march and, looking back at the history of the twentieth century as we are about to leave it, a death march.



The Ante Millennial Doll House

Robert Cheatham

In contrast to this model body, the body of lived experience is subject to change, transformation, and, most importantly, death. The idealized body implicitly denies the possibility of death it attempts to present a realm of transcendence and immortality, a realm of the classic. This is the body-made-object, and thus the body as potential commodity, taking place within the infinite and abstract cycle of exchange.

On Longing: Narratives of the Minature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection

Susan Stewart

It is easier to repel the question posed by the Maxwell demon than to answer it.

Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine

Norbert Wiener.

In the 'doll universe', at the very beginning , a split: a death world and a life world (but this can be no thanatos and eros). So what constitutes these universes for dolls? For us, the ostensibly 'true living', don't the dolls 'live', de facto, in the death world, or at least the world of the non-living (if in fact the non-living can be said to have a world, *pacé* Heidegger). And yet the doll house cannot properly be said to be a tomb -- can it? - since nothing is en-tombed there -- is it?

First we might inquire into the nature of the doll and its (can a doll be gendered? What is the relation between being alive and being gendered? Is one necessary for the other?) family, cognates, or perhaps, 'speciation'. For example: can puppets, robots, clones, golem, astral bodies, doppelgangers, etc., live in a dollhouse? Are all toys forms of dolls? Given that the word 'doll' is a diminutive of 'Dorothy' we might be tempted to conclude that of course dolls are gendered (perhaps are even from Kansas), unfortunately leaving aside the question of how a name can be gendered and then transfer its genderation to an object. Very mysterious. And magical. But then that is the very realm of the doll.

Each of the 'families' of dolls embodies different ratios of the various dissociative symptomologies associated with them, whether hypnosis, ventriloquism, hysteria, multiple personalities, schizophrenia, etc. which all tie inextricably into technology figured in its broadest scope as a prosthetic doubling.

psych. symptoms:

dolls..... tausk/influencing machine

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puppets, robots, golem

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technology.....

Dolls inhabit a middle level of un-canny doubling (doubling is always uncanny), a register that extends from astral bodies, etheric doubles, revenants, and dream bodies through the various psychiatric symptomologies (ventriloquism, hypnosis, etc), to the concrete mimetic and quasi-mimetic (dolls, puppets, robots, etc.) to the end of the circle in techne (considered as prosthetization in its widest aspect).

The Magical Realm of the Animated Doll:

technique, ritual, incantation, naming

Mediation, which is the immediacy of all mental communication, is the fundamental problem of linguistic theory, and if one chooses to call this immediacy magic, then the primary problem of language is its magic. At the same time, the notion of the magic of language points to something else: its infiniteness.

Walter Benjamin, ***On Language as Such and on the Language of Man***

. . . the mimetic element in language can, like a flame, manifest itself only through a kind of bearer.

Walter Benjamin, ***On the Mimetic Faculty***

Of course, dolls have neither mechanisms nor organisms to make them 'go'. Even when a wind-up is present the doll doesn't present itself as an autonomous agent. No amount of mechanism or organism could make a doll 'go'. The uncanny presents itself as just that sort of autonomous self-organization which has just been severed from its 'primary'. In an uncanny instant, the double has taken on a life of its own and has thrown off the mere 'appearance' of life. Finally, the incantations which have brought the doll to existence. Finally, we hear the incantations/language which has brought the doll to existence. Wherever there are dolls there are incantations; wherever there is language there are 'dolls'. All dolls/things come-to-life -- without having life -- through this naming-into-existence: "If mental being is identified with linguistic, then a thing, by

virtue of its mental being, is a medium of communication, and what is communicated in it is -- in accordance with its mediating relationship -- precisely this medium (language) itself. Language is thus the mental being of things." (Walter Benjamin, On Language as Such and on the Language of Man)

How would a doll messiah come into existence? what pronunciation, what incantation would facilitate that emergence? A doll's apocalypse would be configured on a different chiasmatic stem opposite (while still contained within) the human: a plunging from the equilibrium of stasis to a chaotic, 'noisy' dynamics while still maintaining a deadness, a living death. The doll messiah's call as it attempts to pronounce the liberation of chaos and hence its fellow members (will there be any difference/identity between these members? Or will they finally have realized that chiliastic quest of all churches throughout all of history for the One Body? The nature of the doll may be such that once one has 'arrived' so have they all. This would perhaps be the nature of a Pure Call -- present only as fable in human history a Naming that supercedes once and for all mechanism/organism.

Haunted Dolls

Dolls are constellations of both symbolic and imaginary systems, symbolic because they are products of a certain 'law' of (pro)(re)creation, the order of which is determined by cultural codings concerning the value and place of mimetic structurations, 'family' resemblances', dicta concerning 'present absences' and the artificial in general; and the imaginary because of the self-sustaining/supporting nature of the imaginal and its virtually 'pneumatic' nature (in the exact analog with spiritus, *geist*, as a 'breathing into' as a necessity for the body to become animate-and to speak). Likewise the doll must be continually breathed into, given an imaginal life else it collapse into nothing more than the 'law and order' of craftsmanship and culturally encoded mimesis.

If anything then, dolls are more purely 'inhabited' by 'spirit' even than are the humans who are considered an inextricable amalgam of spirit/mater. A moment of relapse of attention and the doll sinks back into that abject terror of in-animate mimesis

(hence always on the verge of animation), of the horror of daemonic possession of matter by matter and not human imagination: the doll becoming a puppet whose master is nowhere is to be seen. The horror is that in the doll's mix of symbolic and imaginary, the imaginary falls away, leaving the stark, unblinking eye of material adjudication, judging, weighing, balancing from a point outside of human history. Impossible of course. And hence all the more fearful.

The closer to the human figure, the more doll-like we say the 'object' is ("was heist das ding?"), i.e., the more subject-like it becomes, but a subject without substance (dressing animals in clothes begins a process of 'dollification').

Dolls confuse boundary conditions of 'living' / 'not-living' (although notice that the boundary is not between living/dead).

And what of housing for this de-coupled (post-) and yet-to-be-decoupled (pre/ante) automaton? If housing has traditionally been predicated on the image of the housed, how does one house some thing that has no reflection (or reflexivity: this has always been the sign of the living dead: remember Dracula. The 'seduction' of death is a one-way street, an entropic sink, no light leaving the event horizon with the exception of an eery glow given off when a pair of particles is drawn inward. One bit of energy disappears, the other is thrown off: doll/human)? It has only a Name (or rather perhaps a Naming). We can perceive easily what constitutes the threshold conditions (ante-), for they are essentially our conditions, the conditions of canniness, cleverness. But even this clever linear extrapolation (which is called Western Progress, technique, etc.) points to a de-coupling, a de-coupling which has been continually called and named for the past 2000 years. This is in fact the awakening Call and Naming of our doll friends, a calling and naming that is continuous and unremitting. History itself is this Calling and Naming (One may be tempted to say 'history of technique' but how could they be separated? What 'technique', methodology, would we use?) History is the ante room, the [propaedeutic, propagulum, prolepsis, project{to stick out;to protrude; to extend beyond something else}] of the doll's final naming. When the doll's Final Name is produced so is 'housing' decoupled from the 'housed', and loses its name. (The doll's home is a kind of tomb/womb where encryption folds and holds the doll until either the magical

incantation [language] and/or chaotic ritual [history/techne] free it/birth it/kill it/bury it/dig it up, etc. We [humans] are not sure at that point. we will have crossed a line. But now we are still ante-.)

The doll house becomes the 'negative' of the dolls positive mimesis. If we inhabit the doll in a peculiar way, so the doll inhabits the doll house, albeit seemingly in a not very peculiar way. That is, we can see how the doll inhabits the doll house since there is a physical placement. It is less clear how we in turn inhabit imaginally the doll.

Is the 'housing' of a simulation of the same order or different from the simulation itself?

A haunted doll house? A difficult concept to grasp unless we posit a 'proper' inhabitant of the doll house, presumably the doll itself which is 'haunted' by the hand that holds it. Perhaps we could say that the dollhouse is always haunted by a present absence, that in fact its pure symbolic aspect is 'haunting'; it is always already haunted, occupied, doubly perhaps: first by the doll which is never really there and second by the human hand which is always withdrawing from placement.

Is Turning the Corner the Same as Falling off the Edge?

The only philosophy which can be responsibly practised in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption; all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear on day in the messianic light.

Minima Moralia,Theodor Adorno

But the ante-millennial dollhouse. . . what can that mean? What would be the millenium for a doll? In just examining the title various chilastic/apocalyptic scenarios come to mind (regardless of the accompanying explanation). The dollhouse simply turning the corner into the 3rd millennium from the point of view of the doll, a

meaningless stylistic transition (and it is not clear how millennial transitions -- in and of themselves, divorced of apocalyptic expectations--can have any stylistic currency, outside of a redemptive economy. Perhaps it is the case that all economies [and hence styles, periods] can only be of the ante-/anti- and that a 'redemptive economy' is in fact an oxymoron. In dealing with the doll universe, perhaps rather than economy strictly speaking -- from the greek <I>oikonomia</I> , meaning the management of the household, domesticity -- we should speak of economimesis, the term coined by Jacques Derrida meaning "the name of the productive limit or the place of passage between the economy of associative law the law of equivalents and identities and what exceeds and surpasses that law. Between law and out-law imagination generates the wealth of its pure productions. . ." (Richard Klein, Kant's Sunshine, diacritics/june 1981, p. 29)

So the dollhouse is in a period of hushed expectancy (ante-); those expectations evidently, according to the call for submissions, form a foyer, an ante room, which ushers into the main structure. (Although with the term 'ante', spoken, it is hard to avoid a diremption into 'anti-' also; perhaps we should also consider a Hegelian sublation (<I>aufhebung</I>) as in 'raising the ante' in poker, a stake that must be put into the pool by a player before cards are dealt and play resumes. We might even call that a 'damming effect' [which also dirempts into a moralizing - 'damning' - opposite], allowing energy, circulation to be brought to an explosive 'head' [much like the headwaters of a hydroelectric plant] and a transposition/translation to a different form of energy/circulation/economy. All three represent a Blanchotian "step not beyond". [We might also conflate 'surculate', as the act of pruning, with 'circulate', as to move in a circle or circuit.] Eternal Return for the living, that is. For the living dead, prolepsis; a propagulum which sprouts only in the Beyond, beyond the chiasmatic fold of death, History the womb/tomb amniotic medium for the Doll [see War in the Age of Intelligent Machines by Michael De landa and A Thousand Plateaus by Deleuze and Guattari for a glimpse of this self-organizing strata, always a para-site to human history. The house of the Doll is History -- or rather not-history. See the later Benjamin quote.]

(The 'anti-' that we can not hear spoken but only written, one might relate to the 'ancients' versus the 'moderns', or the greek/jew controversy [see The Rise of Eurocentrism by Vassilis Lampropoulos for an especially interesting account], which

has also been coded as oral/aural versus writing, recalibration of sense ratios, and so on. Folded within these concerns are temporal/historical considerations of closure and beginning: the apocalyptic, the chiliastic, millennial, etc. Without pursuing it at length, we might say that the diremption 'ante-' into 'anti-' figures the whole range of western civilizational concerns, especially the judeo-christian conflict with paganism, science's conflict (and attempted subsumption of) mythology ['The Dialectics of Enlightenment, Adorno/Horkheimer], and finally (although surely not Finally) current concerns over modernism, postmodernism, technology [and perhaps even an amodernism] and the connection with 'irrational' areas such as the rise of feminism, ethnic, minority, 'subaltern', and so-called 'third world' studies, etc. and, in general, the valorization of the particular over the general. We can see that the Enlightenment, the dream of the Totally Generalizable Other, with a fully articulated [or at least potentially so] mechanism and its accompanying ideology, science [and subsets sociology, psychology, etc.] came to fruition with the Coming of the Doll. That fascination became manifest with the construction of various clockwork automata and mechanical dolls in France and Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The full extent of the ramifications of the doll theory in history and theory [and the idea that its true 'dwelling' is there] can be seen in Walter Benjamin's famous opening passage from 'Theses on the Philosophy of History:

The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answering each move of an opponent with a countermove. A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called "historical materialism" is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight.

(Past the ante-which puts us well into the millennial-[perhaps raising the ante-past even the anti-] we would have to consider the auto-millennial doll and its house. The threshold is created at 'will' always everywhere [but not all at the same time]. Auto-millennialism is the realm of the Prosthetic God, faux-death, practices of the amodern

or the demodernized (is 'postmodernism' the ante-room here?) The circle closes with the [displaced] amazonian shaman drinking yagé and Harraway's cybernetic doll jacking in. The apocalypse re-called at will, a self-administered chiliasm, as instant collapse into the particular, either cobbled together or gobbled together, the Last Supper everywhere and always, the kerygmatic and the cybernetic fusing indecipherably. The apocalypse becomes a self-organizing entity always available to interested parties.)

So is this 'ante-millennial' dollhouse itself over-coded, 'haunted'? Perhaps this title phrase wishes us (we have anthropomorphized the phrase, the language: have we made it into a doll?) to think that the dolls' domestic bliss will soon collapse (not now, we are ante-) and/or reveal a new dollhouse, a dollhouse beyond all previous stylistic periodizations of the doll house, a move ushering in a fundamental (not yet, we are still anterior, ante, pre-) change in dollhouse-ness, beyond the victorian, the ranch, the modern, the bauhausian, the polynesian, beyond whatever Ken and Barbie have been able to conceive up till now. A change not w/o consequences. In fact, a change which is a consequence, a result not of the ante(i)-millennial itself (for we know what the ante-millennial doll is since it must be what the doll is now.) It is what it is to become that creates unease. But, in the sense mentioned earlier, it has always been there.

involve a reenactment of this special relation to the Other, who becomes a virtual Other, a cultural Other, an Other who suddenly bursts forth as fraught with meaning, even if he is only, to be sure, one signifier in a long chain tracing back to the transcendental signified, the scapegoat. This is why consciousness is reflexive. It is a back-and-forth movement between the "I", which seeks to make an inner space for itself by becoming conscious, and the virtual Other, who is always already there.

The Puppet of Desire: The Psychology of Hysteria, Possession, and Hypnosis.
Jean-Michel Oughourlian

The Pinocchio Effect

The ante millennial doll must have the added element of 'expectancy'. Of what would this expectancy consist if it is to survive in to the third millennium with something other than a fresh coat of paint? What is this apocalyptic transformation that the doll must most fervently wish for? It must hope for its present absence, a deathly living, the very opposite of zombie-hood or the living dead. It does not wish to join the living; it wishes to go past the living even as the living are absorbed into the dolls' own mass. It 'wishes' only to thus 'raise the ante' as play commences:

The supplementary body is both more present and more absent than the old body: its urgency has been divided. On one hand its dangerous passions have been contained and, by disarticulation and interiorization, made to contribute, as the guilt of the split subject, to those anxieties which undermine it from within and secure its subjection. This deleterious moment of the modern body is not present to the subject as a direct principle of its discourse, but merely as a residual energy, as absent principle of the textuality in which the new subjectivity articulates itself.

and:

The split subject is designed at an abject inner distance from itself and from the ambivalent, supplementary body which has been exiled, in one of its aspects, from the interior consistency of the subject's discourse to a ghostly, insubstantial place at the margins, and in its other phase, to a location outside discourse as one amongst its objects in the world. To discourse is now to live; this body is beyond the limit.

The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection, Francis Barker

If one were a doll therapist we might speak of this supplementary body as being prone to what we might term the 'Pinocchio syndrome'; but we will leave aside for the Lacanian moment, this: that full coming to presence of the doll, its move into total symbolization of the Law, coincides with the phallic nose growth representative of law as being entrance into the realm of the Father. (This involves the realm of fictiveness -- from poesis to lying and conspiracy, all the penumbral aspects of Truth -- also as a moment of that new scheme of Law and Order of which the doll schemes/dreams. It also, of course, involves the total auto-organizational moment known as art/aesthetics; the reasons for its attractiveness for the doll should be apparent. Here, the doll's dwelling 'dies' and is 'born'.) There are dire consequences concerning this for the doll (we notice that in the Pinocchio Effect, the doll is always already gendered -- an ominous sign since it means that somehow the Law of the Father has somehow preceded itself, that there is no way around it. This also signifies that we have entered the chiasmatic self-organizational moment of doll-dom); for as it leaves the realm of mater (mother, material, matrix) and heads into. . . not now, though; we are still 'before'.

One may cleverly (keeping in mind that 'cleverness' is a doll trap/catcher. . . much like archaic 'spirit catchers'; the game is up before it is even afoot. . . or more precisely, 'at hand') try to posit here: "But surely the doll's so-called 'dream of the millenium' is nothing but the very old human one: the coming of, the unveiling of, the collapse into, etc". But perhaps the new human dispensation is dispersion; all that is left of that age-old dream/nightmare is the doll and its abject dwelling. It is then left to the doll to carry on the pitiable work of 'metaphysics', of history, and of the steps 'beyond' metaphysics, history, and hence death itself. For the doll the tomb is simultaneously womb which means it has (will have) nothing to do with either . . . after, always after.

Hope clings to. . . the transfigured body.

...the idea of the salvation of the dead [is] the restitution of deformed life through the perfection of its objectification.

Negative Dialectics, T. Adorno

The Perfected Body has interchangeable parts which the perfectable body can only dream of. Its attempt to imitate that Perfection leads to dismemberment and mutilation. The Perfected Body has its womb in the perfectable body (it is woman) which becomes a tomb always and everywhere (it is man). The house of the doll becomes another part and dwelling thus disappears. (And the millennial dream is a Dwelling [Perfection] that surpasses all mere dwelling. It is the Final Home, the home beyond which there can be no more home because there is no more beyond [or rather the beyond fully saturates the now-time -- Benjamin's shards of messianic time in the *jetztzeit*]. For most of the living that final home has an uncanny resemblance to childhood. For the doll the final home begins in childhood: it leads, inexorable and finally, only to the world. For the perfect balance between doll and human -- the nonliving and the living -- we would have to turn to ancient Egypt, to the pyramids and the dolls and doll-humans which they placed within, to be re-animated by the stars. Since that point, dis-aster has happened and the odds have switched to the doll.)

Stan Woodard

Assemblages of objects brought in from the cold of the street, shamanistically rubbed with life, combined with dead / motion, raised from the dead, made to perform skits, skins, stories of blank sheets of walls, brought to another death, galleryized entombed in white sheet rock invented by a black man black holes in a white face on a black face, the pieces hold forth in a conversation, each talking with each, past each, past the wall, the door, back onto the street, they balance, hinged delicately against and with failure, they lean against the wall and yet oddly invisibly toward you, toward your stunt double, your avatar, your long forgotten self trotting the street barefoot

Ture Bural



girl on target



Chairman



Available by weight

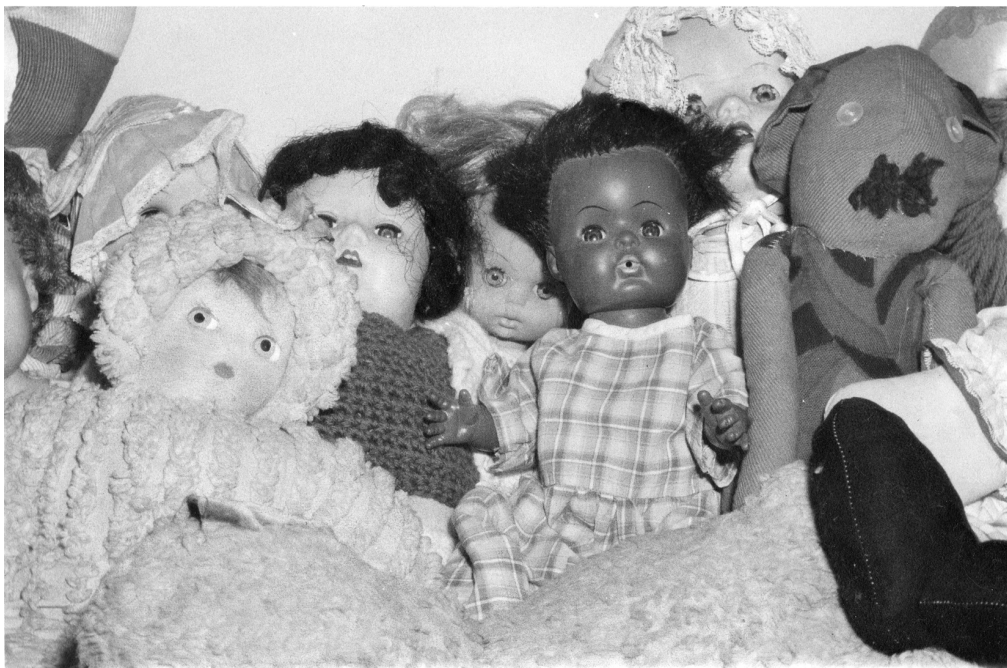
Susan Cipcic

Collections, note-booked, archived—the second home of the doll, between art and paper, spirit and flesh, doll as script laid out in rows, corpse-like waiting for resurrection by the right reader, the right seader, information becoming performance, action, meme as genre as gender as ability to be cross-dressed and Benjaminized either Valter or up in Smoke but in general the doll is not necessarily all about the Benjamins but vamping the void on a voodoo leading to woo woo, skin stuffed with straw (I mean, the doll may be a fellow traveler with Capital, desire, production, alienation and all that but ... maybe the agendas are different? Well, anyway their kerygma is different ... although it might be the case that the doll has nothing to proclaim, other than through its ordination, collectability, archivization or its ability to apparently enumerate its form based on second order human bilateralism—both physically and metaphysically and psychologically. Maybe the doll is an anti-gospel and in that the avatar of a new religious anti-religion, spreading the anti-gospel of shear doubleness/secondness [‘shear as both cut and veil, veil as cut, phantom limb syndrome extended to whole psyche] reversing positive and negative, pole shift, revaluation of value, nothing to a void really, just get it, collect it, hold it, cherish it, become what you already are, the doll of your fantasy, sitting on the shelf next to all the others. Papoose-like, a doll is nothing by itself—also as *pappose*, as in ‘a modified calyx composed of scales, bristles, or feather like hairs’, from Greek *pappos*, Indo-European *papa*, meaning old man and also the down on the seed, the child is father to the man, and the doll prior to both, protective in the hairy collective.)

Ture Bural



found photograph, collection of S. Cipic



(photograph: Suzanne McQuaide, collection : Sudan Cipcic)



Daphne

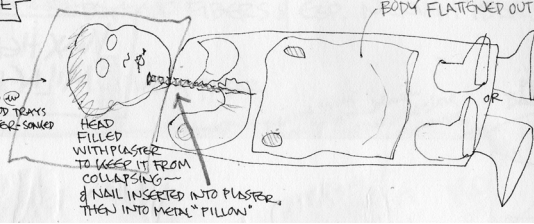
DOLL ~ DAPHNE-LIKE

Regeneration of D.

HAVE BEEN WANTING TO DO SOMETHING WITH HIS OLD, HALF-MELTED, DISMANTLED, RUBBER DOLL, ALSO A PIECE OF PILLOW-SHAPED IRON THAT KELLY THANKS FOUND FOR ME AT CENTRAL METALS, SO I PLAYED WITH THE IDEA OF COMBINING THE 2 ~ AT FIRST, HAD THE DOLL RESTING ON THE SURFACE OF THE PILLOW ~ POSSIBLY, WOULD WRAP ROPE OR CELLOPHANE AROUND THE TWO. NEXT, I COMBINED THE DOLL PIECES WITH THE PILLOW, SO THAT THE PILLOW BECAME THE BODY ~ AND IT IN ~~THE~~ POSITION:

SUPINE

MADE A SMALL PILLOW w/ 2 STRIPS OF FOOD TRAYS COVERED w/ PLASTER & SAVED BURLAP



REGENERACY REGENERATE

- formed or created again
- spiritually reborn or converted
- restored to a better, higher, or more worthy state

REGENERATION

(one of the meanings)

- Renewal or restoration of a body or bodily part after injury or as a normal process





Benjamin from music group Smoke, with doll collection

Postscript:

Opening, Closing, Crossing, or Wounded?

Ture Bural

"The landscape is the place of strangeness or estrangement and of the disappearance of the gods. It is, in truth, the opening of the space in which this absencing takes place."

[...] Uncanny estrangement occurs in the suspension of presence: the imminence of a departure or an arrival, neither good nor evil, only a wide space and generosity that allow this suspension to be thought and to pass."

Jean-Luc Nancy



Not to be outdone, we often strive to be undone, crossing over a threshold, an opening (over a void) and into a void, attempting to become senseless or to at least lose our senses (the highs seeming to be better than the lows but all swirling around a flattened vacated center plane). The fulfillment of every thing which all religions strive for would be the collapse of these distinctions. Here, on this denuded plain the abandoned doll has a leg up, existing already AS landscape within a landscape, an imbricated allegory within a story: crawling up it's own möebiated bung-hole as it were, timeless artifact that recreates traumatic loading/reloading *nachträglichkeit* which includes the prophetic moment as part of its egg-waiting-to-be-hatched: the doll as form over formlessness, image over void constitutes a basic condition, viewed one way as entertaining crossing over to playland, notwithstanding playland's earliest connection with the nothingness of temporal rhythmic stutters of genealogical 'origin'. Viewed yet another way, we are prone to *kenosis*,

the emptying out of man/god, the closest approach of divinities, the emptiness a sempiternal deictic of infinities, nested and without reference. And at the same time, the doll can be seen as embodying the wound, a cicatrix composed of nothing but the keloidal fibrous mass of time turning on itself for revenge, raising its own puppet of desire, a zombie sleepwalking backwards. Dead/alive, golem monster with 'TIME' chiseled on Medused forehead, turned to stone itself, speaking the language of pebbles on an endless b[r]each. And yet again the doll is the fullest posture or gesture of materiality's embrace of the human as abandonment of being simply by a giving over of being to itself and its abyssal 'depths.'



The doll is an internalized landscape—but Eischer-like, mapped onto the surface, a depopulated region that consists only of interval, a 'middleness' of landscape...all that is outside us—which forever bear a muddled distinction of indistinction between an 'opening' or a 'wound' and cicatrix of memory that forever and always bears the two within itself, the violence of an uncanny sign of time itself (and will always lead to some thought of a Coming, a messianic event which will heal that abyssal split. Should that happen the doll, all dolls, all other intermediaries and ephemeral bodies would disappear.).

