

ShitText: Toward a New Coprophilic Style

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An argumentative account of text, body, and (the) discipline as fields of shit.

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Dear Michael and Daniel,

Attached is my manuscript, “ShitText: Toward a New Coprophilic Style,” which I am submitting for review and possible publication in your special issue of *Text & Performance Quarterly*. The manuscript addresses the body art performances in the 1960s and 70s (e.g., Actionism) and underscores the relationship between governmentality and performativity. It also takes some aim at autoethnography and autobiographical performance, as well as the jargon of rhetorico-pomo theory,

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and the entire enterprise of writing journal articles. Everyone, I think, gets shit on. The essay is unquestionably “sinful” as a document; it will ruin my career.

Do any of the other submissions actually *sin*? If not, I can quickly crap out some others based on a NCA panel that I submitted on the topic of decorum as a graduate student in 1999. Of course, these were all conceived well before I defected from rhetoric to announce I am now a performance scholar/practitioner.

You know what really fucking chaps my hide about the review process? Blindfolding. It’s just another excuse to get fucked over. I’m just joshing: actually I kind of like it. I bet you do too. I bet you like to watch.

Oh, back to the fine art of arguing for the paper in the cover letter: The title “ShitText” is, of course, an homage to the infamous Corey and Nakayama manuscript of 1997, which many scholars castigate as *pure* shit. Did you ever notice all the butt play in that fucker is righteously “clean?” What else does all that discussion about tan-lines denote, but the edge of a razor—cutting edges—indeed, cutting. People that cut themselves to relieve depression are really little fascists. And they say Hitler scrubbed, furiously, his behind and took lots of anti-gas pills that turned out to be poisonous (one scholar argues that his later delusional state of mind was a consequence of poisoning by anti-flatulence pills, which he had to take because he was a rabid vegetarian). Anyway, I don’t know about you, but the last time I stuck my finger up my ass it (a) hurt a little; and (b) was smelly. And on that note, that little stinker Freud reminds us that, owing to cloacal ambiguity, where there is sex, there is shit. So where’s the shitty smell in “Sextext?” It’s been perfumed and white-washed!

I have some concern that the product of my labors may not make it past the sentries for the purposes of blind review. I’ve deliberately *lost control* of my prose as a strategy of excremental resistance, and I suspect that the tendency of straight reviewers will be to wipe this one clean—if not flush it altogether. To help increase my chances of acceptance, I should let you know that the manuscript really addresses two sins: directly, of course, the focus is on gluttony’s reversal (a commentary on consumption and D. Soyini Madison’s “embodied text” as gluttony on stage). But the whole thing, in light of “Sextext,” is also a commentary on scholarly *pride*. Indeed, I can only imagine the puffery of the submissions you’re going to get . . . and the righteousness of the authors when you want them to alter this or that sentence. Indeed, I can see people taking sin so seriously . . . like Trent Reznor. God his Nine Inch Nails albums are so *serious*, so *angsty*. Just listen to his song “Sin,” where he sings of someone’s backside taking “in the extent of my sin.” Blah blah blah. “Take the *extent* of his sin?” He hints that his “extent” ain’t a penis. Oh please! *As if* fist fucking is the most seriously sinful act one can commit. Even Žižek uses fisting as his main “shock” joke now. How can anyone take fisting seriously? Have you ever seen one of those videos? It’s so silly to watch (ooh, ooh, squeeze my prostate!).

You know, scholarly constipation produces pristine scholarship but sometimes lacks a sense of humanity. True, some people *will publish just about anything* if it is mystifying enough, if it deploys the right theorist, politics, or disciplinary agenda. But as dangerous as taking scholarly risks may sometimes be, communication studies scholars need to be taking them more often, and the disciplined sphincters of our scholarly conversations (editors and reviewers) need to stop pinching-off

creative or unusual work as “shit.” So you should publish this precious payload, even if reviewers recommend flushing it. The new coprophilic style embraces the creative, the raw, the inspired, and the undisciplined just as a child delights in her faecal gifts. The new coprophilic style urges experimentation, uncouth language, and coupling sex-texts with shit-texts in a refreshing celebration of life itself. Although the new style will occasionally produce failure—the inelegant turd, the miscarried child, the counterfeit bill, the impotent claim—as is the case with all risk-taking, the payoff is the refreshing creativity of the undisciplined payload! At the very least, as the academy continues to corporatize, scholars will need to get increasingly comfortable with publishing their shit. But not just any shit. We need more smelly shit! stinky shit! shit that delights and revolts! The new coprophilic style combats the sterile, constipatory flows that animate and produce the corporatized, “cookie-cutter” monograph that spews out of the academic anus year after nauseating year. We must resist corporatization and alimentary sadistification with stylistic *coprotization*! Onward poo, onward the “stinking turds of the new planetary [dis]order!”

I do not envy your task as editors, and wish you luck in the review and editing process. Writing this manuscript was *very enjoyable*. Oh, and fuck you for being such power mongers.

Yours in the Stinkiest Cologne Stolen from a Comb-over, Suited Old Fart at the Last NCA,

DJ Joshie Juice

On the Anal Imaginary: United We Stink

We represent the International of excreta, the stinking turds of the new planetary order! We are fragmented, dispersed, they can sweep us away with their water hoses and then sterilize the ground with disinfectants and pesticides! If we are united, they won't be able to flush us down the drain!

—The Metro Defecator (Goytisolo 36)

Thus spoke the anal character in Juan Goytisolo's novel *State of Siege*, a street-shitting prophet who calls for the “foul-smelling tide” of the rabble to choke the streets and temples with an inescapably human *hyle*, an irreducible excess no perfume or elaborate hygienics can completely eradicate. To be sure, the Metro Defecator understood the anal imaginary: in the beginning there was a turd, and this turd was gold. Yet if the State was to emerge, the “rustic swill” of one's privates must be packed privately away, domesticated, perfumed, and transmuted into money; one had to mind one's own business for the business of a public to emerge (Laporte).

As is the case with all economies, the anal imaginary is both social and individual (see Brown 202–06). In his elaboration of the development of subjectivity in childhood, for example, Freud is careful to remind us that the first gift one has to offer is, in fact, shit. But shitting is also that erotogenic pleasure that one is to first repress for membership in a given public. In the original occasion of self-conscious

shitting—upon first encountering the symbolic as law, the command to “shit in this little potty”—the child “has a glimpse of an environment hostile to [her] instinctual impulses [. . .]. From that time on, what is ‘anal’ remains the symbol of everything that is to be repudiated and excluded from life” (“Infantile” 187, n. 1). Potty training is the moment when we become self-conscious, social subjects, enfoldments of norms, customs, and habits that comprise our social realities and that introduce us to an anal economy that we must subsequently repress (see Frankel). Potty training is thus the originary site of civic performativity, that primary, empirical moment of public subjectification, literally the first command performance of citizenship.¹

The Metro Defecator represents a figure who has regressed to embrace his anality as a way to resist transnational capitalists: “Our foul-smelling tide,” reports the prophet, “will immobilize your beautifully tailored executives on the sidewalks [. . .] will fill your mansions with a stench that will chase the inhabitants out and then infiltrate the offices and banks till it reaches the safe deposit boxes and transmutes the gold and the banknotes into shit!” (Goytisoló 36). The Defecator is a good role model for materialist scholars and practitioners because he resists imperial globalization by taking back his anus, celebrating the excesses of his own productive capacity and calling for others to do the same. Indeed, it is precisely the celebration and production of the anal object—that from which we are most alienated—that the consumerist logics of capitalism can be thw(f)arted: consumerism is countered with bodily excess, prideful overproduction, gluttony in reverse.

Among other things, Goytisoló’s novel is symptomatic of a global repression of anality and the consequent emergence of a sadistic subjectivity whose lifeworld is now governed by the sado-masochistic norms of giving and withholding. To resist the sadistification of Self that results in fascism, as well as the evaporation of material labor and the arrival of immaterial labor (which, of course, threatens a more insidious form of exploitation), there must not be a multitudinous “refusal to work,” but a popular proliferation of excessive bodily production (see Hardt and Negri 203–04). To wit, in order to resist the pernicious effects of transnational capitalism, we should return to the old Actionist, Yippist, and Scumfuc strategies of shitting in public. Like Günter Brus, Abbie Hoffman, and G. G. Allin, the Defecator is a refreshing figure precisely because he reminds us of the Real in the midst of a blob-like Empire that “is planted with a virtuality that seeks to be real,” as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri put it (359). The typical gesture of crusty socialists when confronting the reality of postmodernity—if only in theory, which is surely an index of its arrival—is to point to either the international division of labor and the persistence of agrarian economies on the one hand, or the “concrete constitutive effects” of exploitation and the survival of violent, oppressive sovereignties on the other (see Lazarus 94–138). This tired wind-bagging needs some good shit, and to this end in this essay I argue for a new coprophilic style of public address (*viz.*, of shitting/speaking within a public) as a means for contending with an increasingly totalizing, consumerist hygienics that has infiltrated every domain of social life, most especially the field of academic publishing.

The Anal Economy: Scato-Power and the Hygienic Apparatus

To grasp the necessity of a coprophilic style we must digest the challenging thought of Michel Foucault, whose theory of bio-politics and governmentality helps to explain the gradual emergence and eclipse of the state by a hygienic apparatus (also see Gunn and Vavrus). According to Foucault, one can understand contemporary forms of governance in terms of an increasingly abstract triangulation of modes that can be conceptualized on a continuum (see Foucault, “Governmentality” 87–104; Graham 539–66). At one end is the sovereign who claims the right to preserve some lives and to end others, and who displays his power via the spectacle of slavery and torture (Foucault, *History* 138). As we move along the continuum into increasingly abstract and indirect modes of governance, we discover panopticism, the *threat* of punishment that inspires subjects to conform on the basis of the almighty gaze of the Other. As we reach the most abstract modes of governance, we find the strategies of surveillance internalized and self-discipline as the norm, such that the state “governs at a distance” (Gordon 1–51). The primary difference between one end of the continuum and the other concerns death: Whereas the older strategies of discipline focused on the individual body as such (e.g., a display of the king’s power with torture, beheadings, and so on), contemporary modes of governmental rationality aim toward the regulation of populations (types and groupings of bodies) in order to secure and perpetuate their welfare; further, this promotion of life is enabled by any number of *dispositifs* or social apparatuses no longer articulated to the State (Deleuze, “What is” 159–68; also see Hardt and Negri 329–30).

Although it is certainly the case that one can identify a number of disciplinary techniques and strategies in the contemporary world, Foucault’s later, multisyllabic grunts on governmentality seem prescient, as self-surveillance and self-discipline in accord with this or that norm (e.g., “ideal body type”) have emerged as the primary techniques of the present “society of control” (Deleuze, “Control”; Deleuze, “Postscript”). The hegemony of the nation-state as the principle governing apparatus has been eliminated (Hardt and Negri 4–21). In its place are any number of governing apparatuses that are at once abstract and concrete structures that identify “a population in need of calibration” while simultaneously mobilizing that same population to “perform its own transformation” (Greene 5). These apparatuses are not fixed but performative, enacting a dynamic process of continuous redefinition and remobilization that encourages group self-management. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argued that such self-management is articulated to the administration and proposition of life itself, principally through the life-affirming practices and logics of “bio-power” (140).

Bio-power marks a transformation of political power from that of meting death and punishment to that of promoting human life. Foucault suggests that bio-power emerged gradually as conspicuous modes of domination (e.g., torture) receded and new, productive forms of governmental rationality emerged (see Foucault, *Discipline*). Demography and surveillance were articulated to the living, such that “propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity”

became the ends of governance (*History* 139). Buried among these many ends is the often-invisible governance of hygienics, the eradication of the disease caused and/or enabled by the detritus and filth of stubborn, human persistence. Indeed, the emergence of modern society depends precisely on the arrival of waste management, a critical technology that began, predictably, with decrees from the State, but which, gradually over time, became an abstract, disembodied means of social control. In his monumental history of hygienics, *History of Shit*, Dominique Laporte argues that the social order is necessarily tied to that sphincteral source of all gifts, the anus. Described as the inability to come to terms with our own waste and waste-making, Laporte argues that modernity should be understood as harboring a hidden anal economy that is continually repressed and regulated by a hygienic apparatus. No longer the principle means of governance, the nation-state is simply the apparatus of purity and cleanliness, a functional “sewer” aiding the public and, more importantly, transnational corporations, in the perfuming, masking, and channeling-away of the odor of origins and, by implication, our sense of humanity (also see Gomi). Laporte argues that when things appear most civil and sanitary—such as in a business transaction in a boardroom or in the prose a neatly composed essay—they are actually the most filthy (42–56). Money, the ca-ca of civil society, depends on the existence and erasure of the private surplus made in the (water) closet.²

Laporte’s cartography of the hygienic apparatus neatly models the Foucauldian continuum of sovereignty ↔ *dispositif*: Beginning with the sixteenth and seventeenth century battles over the proper use of the French language, the apparatus emerged in Kingly decrees (15). Laporte provides a comparative exegesis of two edicts, one the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterets, which ordered all future laws to be written in the French language, and the other an edict by King Francois I, which ordered all human waste to be stored in the privacy of one’s home until collected by the State on particular days. Laporte argues that this homologous cleansing of language and public space—of speech and streets—is intimately related to an emergent form of bio-power that privatizes what comes into, and what goes out of, the openings of a body. Ultimately, the hygienic apparatus of modernity molds the modern subject into a *private* individual who represses the bodily in the service of a purified, public body. When industrial capitalism arrives in the nineteenth century, the modern subject is a private individual who publicly contracts with others to exchange money and goods in a public imaginary laundered of obscenities and profanities, which would only serve to remind the subject of his or her repressed anality. For Laporte, contemporary modes of governance intone, “*to each his shit!*,” an “ethic of the ego decreed by a State that entitles each subject to sit on his ass on his own heap of gold.” Laporte continues that “as a ‘private’ thing—each subject’s business, each proprietor’s responsibility—shit becomes a political object through its constitution as the dialectical other of ‘public’” (26).

To dispatch these observations alternatively, one could argue that the bio-power particular to governing apparatuses in general takes on a peculiar meaning within the movements of the hygienic apparatus: scato-power. It is the ability of the hygienic apparatus to cause or produce constipation and diarrhea, broadly conceived, which

we designate as “scato-power.” Ultimately, scato-power aims to administer and regulate the dialectic of shit and speech, or human bodily production as a mode of public address/performance, by various (anti-diarrheal and laxitative) strategies of control. Below, I break-free from the Foucauldian focus on the governance of populations in order to detail how such strategies work on the subject in psychosomatic terms. A rumination on how scato-power works at the level of the individual subject’s psyche will enable us to sniff out various tactics of resistance.

Number Two: Sense and Scato-Power

The emergence of the modern subject as a shitting self who willingly forgets and/or represses her shitting to enter the public imaginary does not simply speak to a materialist critique of capitalism (although certainly one cannot escape from that which is, in the last instance, the fundamental cause of wiping with quilted toilet paper: “*mine!*”). As Laporte has argued, the gradual purification of communal centers and cities by hygienics parallels the history of the human hierarchy of sense perception in written and spoken public address. “Bowling to the demands of the gaze,” signaled by the arrival of the logics of surveillance, innovations like perspectivism in art, and, later, the ocular biases of modern philosophical aesthetics, the sanitization of the city heralded the eventual “disqualification of smell” (38). For example, in Immanuel Kant’s writings on the beautiful and sublime, “smell is toppled to the lowest rung of the sensory hierarchy,” for there are “no beautiful smells” (84–85; also see Mininger and Peck). Similarly, among those scholars seemingly most invested in exploring the relation between text and body, smell has been literally written out of “live” performance. For example, consider this description of Günter Brus’ spectacular *Action Number 33*, which was performed during the meeting of the Association of Socialist Students in Vienna on 7 June 1968:

The artist, standing naked on a chair, slashed his chest and legs with a razor blade until the blood trickled down his body. Then, urinating into a glass and defecating onto the floor, he smeared his body with his own excrement, drank the urine, and stuck his fingers down his throat until he vomited. Finally, he proceeded to masturbate in front of the audience while singing the Austrian national anthem and the student’s anthem, *Gaudeamus Igitur*. (Ursprung 139)

Although this orgy of bodily excretions unquestionably produced abject wafts of pungent odors, most of the analysis of the excremental event avoids any account of the stench, succumbing to the representational hygienics of the (visually) marked. Analogously, feminist body art that employed all kinds of stinky, vicious substances, such as Suzanne Lacy’s *She Who Would Fly* or Carolee Schneemann’s *Interior Scroll*, are predictably described as if nostrils do not exist (see Jones, 1–4, 209–10; and Schneider 131–33). Even the account of desire and anal/textual penetration in the infamous “Sextext” shuns an olfactory perspective:

I placed one foot in the sink and Raul slipped the razor in between my legs. I felt the blade on my balls, riding through the shaving cream, tingling each new opening. He guided his path with the tip of his finger, a finger that began to find its

own path, close between my balls and the inside of my leg, up the crevice running between my balls, further down and back until the tip of his finger started to disappear and discover a new course. I felt a sudden warmth move inside, on the edge, and around the rim. (Corey and Nakayama 60)

The vivid imagery of the anal fantasy is perfumed by the prose of the visible. Although “Sextext” is certainly rooted in a patriarchal conceit tethered to the masculinist primitivism of “shock art” (see Schneider 126–52), just like the scholarship on the stinky body art of the 1960s and 1970s, “Sextext” is curiously clean. The bodies of “Sextext,” like the abstractions of poststructural theory, do not smell. They have been perfumed, cleaned-up, rendered readable.³

Hence the innovation of perfume (i.e., social “maskings”), the performance of which I call perfumativity. Whether in one’s bathroom or one’s scholarly journal (I suspect the shit of both is frequently commingled for some readers), perfumativity is of a different sensory order. Like Febreze (an odor-eliminating spray) or the smelly pucks that turn one’s toilet water blue, perfume represents the myth that “infection can be exorcized through the eradication of smell, or by finding ways to camouflage bad smells with good ones” (Laporte 81). Like Prozac, perfume is an anti-diarrheal strategy and one of the principle means by which the hygienic apparatus promotes and administers “psychological well-being” via sensorial constipation. Perhaps one of the surest means the reader can make him or herself aware of our repressed anal economy is to let a fart slip in public. Although the whoopee cushion and similar devices represent the most conspicuous ways in which the hygienic apparatus deploys various technologies of humor to mask the trauma of a real fart, there remains something in the gas we pass that is symptomatic of the return of the repressed, which I suggest can be utilized and acknowledged to combat false consciousness and alienation (also see Cho; Dawson; and for an account of the chemical elements that make farts noxious, see Spinrad).

The pernicious effects of perfumativity, as well as the conditions of resistance it simultaneously creates, are as mundane as they are smelltacular. For example, when one feels the need to fart but finds herself in a crowded elevator, she is faced with a number of choices, principally among them: (1) letting the fart out slowly and quietly and hoping no one suspects the gift; (2) letting the fart out with full force, but attempting to implicate another through the gaze or an audible gasp of surprise; (3) farting freely and potentially enduring the consternation of others (unless there are children present, who delight in such announcements); or (4) “holding it in.” Although much work has been conducted on the motives and frequency of oral disclosure (see Chen), very little work has been conducted on the frequency or motives of anal disclosure (flatulence research tends to focus on the degree of noxiousness as an indicator of physical illness; see Weed). Nevertheless, insofar as perfume is the analog to surveillance, I suspect that most readers would recognize that “holding it in” is the overdetermined choice in this thought-experiment.

What is instructive about perfumativity, defined here as the simultaneous sensory demotion of the olfactory and the willful constipation of human invention, is that it is a process intimately related to the drives: the demotion of the olfactory is

associated with the nasal drive, and the constipation of human invention is associated with the drive to eliminate or evacuate, the anal drive.⁴ For this reason the hygienic apparatus can be said to manifest scato-power at the level of membranes and muscles, reaching all the way down to processes that have become *involuntary and autonomic*. In other words, hygienic discourse has not only *inscribed* the body, but has penetrated it without discernable discomfort in a manner similar to James Arnt Aune's description of frictionless capitalism: "getting screwed without noticing it" (9). In this light, given our repression of the anal in the public imaginary, it is understandable that individuals whose bowels are swelled with expanding gasses "hold it in" without consciously attending to the matter. Consequently, the repression of bodily excesses typical of the hygienic apparatus represents the success of bio-power in general in the control and regulation of life, *right down to the biphasic functioning of the anal sphincter*. Insofar as one has become relatively unaware of her farting and shitting practices—or precisely insofar as one responds to such necessary, biological processes as "funny"—she has succumbed to a transnational, governing apparatus that thrives on the continuous alienation of subjects from their bodies. Whereas the child, upon learning she can produce the gift of shit, delights in her productive capacities, the adult finds them either abhorrent or silly.

Yet, as is the case with all forms of bio-power, perfumativity and the hygienic apparatus creates possibilities and forms of resistance at the same time as it closes down or transforms others. As Mary Douglas has shown, the repression and eradication of shit, flatulence, urine, and related mucosal substances have consequently transformed them into fetishized objects in the West, both central and foreign to the social order. Their banishment from the public imaginary simultaneously produces any number of ritual moments of transgression (e.g., fudge sports; golden showers; nose-picking at the red light; farting in a crowded elevator; this essay; see Douglas, esp. 1–29).

"It's Mine to Mind!": More Sadistic Shit

Although the governance of hygienics has prolonged the life of the human subject, it has also promoted modes of self-discipline and surveillance that are demonstrably dangerous to the well being of human kind, rooted as they are in the pleasures of fascism. Fascism, defined loosely as the imposition of, and desire for, authoritarian control, is a logic of transaction, of give and take, of deposit and withdrawal, of sending and receiving (e)mail—of *equity*. Writing about desiring machines, Foucault once famously observed there lives a fascist in all of us, but, of course, failed to explain how and why this is the case because he jettisoned the psychoanalytic tools that would enable such an explanation (Foucault, "Preface" xi–xiv). For the remainder of this essay, I argue that although a Foucauldian understanding of the social apparatus has allowed us to identify the hygienic apparatus, only recourse to the anal economy that is introduced in childhood can explain the fascism within, including its relationship to capitalism and its threat to human intentionality. Understanding the anal economy requires a break from Foucauldian logics at this

point, not because of its psychical manifestation, but because the system itself assumes a radical dualism or alienation of self from body that is forged by discourse (that is, the medium of negativity or the order of the “No”). A psychoanalytic understanding of anality, however, is compatible with Foucauldian understandings of governmentality. All that is required is to posit the modern subject as an enfoldment of the exterior (of discourse, of social logics, of the chain of signifiers). The subject is not a container that ingests the social (i.e., identification), but rather, is an expression of the exterior (e.g., the unconscious is “out there,” as it were; Žižek, *Plague* 3). The anal economy, a dynamic system of meanings animated by scato-power, masked by perfumativity, and governed by the hygienic apparatus, articulates the modern subject in terms of biological (shit) and rhetorical invention (speech) at any given moment in time; however, the mythic (that is, fictional but necessary) origin of the emergence of the anal subject occurs during what Freud termed the “anal-sadistic” stage of psychological development (Freud, “Infantile” 173–206).

In Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality, a child moves through a number of successive stages of development, each of which corresponds to an erogenous zone on the body. Each of these zones are associated with an orifice, and this is because it is at the locus of our orifices—their opening and closing—that we first encounter the external and, ultimately, the symbolic. That which the orifice comes into contact with is experienced as a love object or “part-object” (see Laplanche and Pontalis 301–02). The first stage is the “oral stage,” which, of course, fixates on the oral drive and the mouth; its part object is the breast. The second stage is the “anal-sadistic” stage (replete with cloacal ambiguity), its orifice being the anus and its part object being feces. The third stage is genital and its orifices and part-objects are yawningly predictable in that sublative, Hegelian sense. Different forms of erotism in adult life, Freud believed, correspond to repressed fixations on earlier stages of development. The “anally retentive” person or “anal character” displays the symptoms of anal erotism.

During his practice and research, Freud observed a number of common traits among patients with pronounced anal erotism: orderliness, parsimony, and obstinacy (Freud, “Character” 169–75; Freud “On Transformations” 127–33). These individuals, he theorized, “took a comparatively long time to overcome their *incontinentia alvi* [faecal incontinence], and [...] even later in childhood they suffered from isolated failures of this function” (Freud, “Character” 170). The anal character is haunted, as it were, by the repressed childhood *jouissance* of defecation:

Children who are making use of the susceptibility to erotogenic stimulation of the anal zone betray themselves by holding back their stool till its accumulation brings about violent muscular contractions and, as it passes through the anus, is able to produce powerful stimulation of the mucous membrane. (Freud, “Infantile” 186)

The pleasures of giving and withholding dejecta lead to the preconscious and unconscious association of feces with a host of symbolic meanings. The contents of the bowels, argues Freud, “represent [a child’s] first ‘gift’: by producing them he can express his active compliance with his environment and, by withholding them, his disobedience” (“Infantile” 186). Because of their being the initial object of barter,

Freud suggests that turds are unconsciously linked with a number of gifts, particularly money, babies, and penises (“On Transformations” 128).

Prior to its status as “gift,” the anal object must be understood as that which is most Real, beyond human symbolicity, because it is precisely the leftover status of shit, its status as surplus, extra, remainder, which both motivates and undermines the greedy capitalist. Prior to its “symbolic status as a gift [. . .] excrement is the *objet a*,” explains Slavoj Žižek, “in the precise sense of the non-symbolizable surplus that remains after the body is symbolized, inscribed into the symbolic network” (*Metastases* 179). Or in other words, the difficulty that gives rise to the status of shit-as-gift, that gives rise to parsimony or generosity, is the problem of

how we are to dispose of this leftover. For that reason, Lacan’s thesis that animal became human the moment it confronted the problem of what to do with its excrement is to be taken literally and seriously: in order for this unpleasant surplus to pose a problem, the body must have already been caught up in the symbolic network. (Žižek, *Metastases* 179)

That is, the fecal gift implicates the social and anal discipline of the law. The shitting subject is, in fact, the juridical subject who learns primarily to operate in the world as an agent by managing her “human capital.” Consequently, the anal character tends to be prideful, narcissistic, and obsessed with her money, genital organs, and/or offspring.

For Freud, the pleasures of intersubjectivity, of giving and withholding shit—an ambivalence of unity and independence, of compliance and autonomy—are inherently erotic on the one hand and sadistic on the other. Freud suggested that the child’s passive compliance was erotic, and that his active failure to shit on command was sadistic. This assignment was problematized by Karl Abraham, who argued that the anal-sadistic stage proceeds through two phases or “pleasurable tendencies” that are both erotic and sadistic in nature (“A Short” 422–27; also see Abraham, “Narcissistic” 318–22; and Abraham, “Contributions” 370–92). First, there are the diarrheal pleasures of destruction, when the act of elimination is fantasized as the annihilation of something or someone external (Abraham, “A Short” 428). Second, there are the pleasures of control, whereby the child retains his or her shit in a defiant act of constipation. Such pleasures comprise the psychical *point de capiton* for laxitative and anti-diarrheal strategies that are deployed by the hygienic apparatus, mediating one’s relationship to others in the psycho-social field at the moment preceding a more harmonious genital stage:

Psycho-analytic experience has shown beyond a doubt that in the middle stage of his libidinal development the individual regards the person who is the object of his desire as something over which he exercises ownership, and that he consequently treats that person in the same way as he does his earliest piece of private property, *i.e.*, the contents of his body, his feces. (Abraham, “A Short” 428)

Presumably, successful progress through the genital stage displaces anality and engenders a more empathetic position via the Other (*viz.*, the possibility of love). Evidence of anal erotism in adulthood, however, is hallmark of an inability to understand the Other as anything but an object of exchange—a commodity, in

today's world. Consequently, in late capitalism treating others like shit is no longer the exception, but the norm.⁵

Indeed, the consequence of globalization and the ever-increasing hegemony of the logic of equity is symptomatic of a return of the repressed, or rather, a *return to the repressed* in the sense that the hygienic apparatus deploys the strategies of constipation in the service of hoarding, not only money, but love, affection, and even creativity (self-help gurus like Stephen Covey, for example, counsel that “highly effective people” understand their interpersonal relationships in terms of the ATM machine; one must learn to say “no” to an Other who has “overdrawn” her shit; see Covey). Increasingly governed by the logic of transaction, ours is a society of surveillance folding back on itself in “conservatism,” the preferred idiom of contemporary anal retentiveness. Our contemporary political retreat—especially in the United States—into a conservative anal economy marks a concomitant amplification of possessive control and measured consumption. These moves have been so successful that our conservative leaders are surprised when their diarrheals, ironically termed “economic stimulus packages,” fail to encourage consumption, producing consumerist parsimony instead. Theirs is a failure to properly recognize consumerist gluttony as inherently retentive: the consumerist glutton wants everything for him or herself and gives nothing in return. In light of the governance of the hygienic apparatus and the ever increasing dominance of perfumativity, it should be no surprise that economic conservatism produces consumerist constipation.

As the most exaggerated manifestation of the anal economy, conservative economics help us to see better the globalization of the hygienic apparatus. Since conservatives have taken control of US governance, relaxed restrictions on pollution have allowed a number of corporate purity peddlers to thrive. Despite persistent economic crises in the United States, Procter and Gamble, the Western leader of the soap and toilet paper industry, has witnessed its shareholder returns increase steadily over the past ten years (“Stock History”). The company reports that the average shitter uses 20,805 sheets of toilet paper a year, about 57 sheets per day, which is substantially more than the number of sheets used ten years ago (“Bath Tissue Trivia”). Procter and Gamble have also expanded their soap operations into a number of foreign markets, particularly lesser developed countries (Bashar). Indeed, the hallmark of globalism is the promotion of soap and butt-wipe in least developed countries (LDCs). As cleanliness spreads across the globe, so, too, do the analogics of the hygienic apparatus. Only a reversal of the now dominant anti-diarrheal strategies, only a new coprophilic style, can save us.

The Loaf, Finally Pinched: On Confession, Sadism, and Enemas of the Real

Ooooh ooh, this my shit, this my shit [x4]

—Gwen Stefani, “Hollaback Girl”

Give it away give it away give it away now! [x3]

—Anthony Kiedis/Red Hot Chili Peppers, “Give It Away”

All of this is *not* to say that sadism is an immoral or a negative force. But, sadism, as much as masochism, is a common human impulse that *can* lead to fascism and barbarism if left unchecked (masochism can lead to similar sins, only the object is not the Other but the Self). The logics of control, which alone lead to fascism, should be tempered by the logics of destruction, which alone lead to nihilism. In her recent hit “Hollaback Girl,” Gwen Stefani demonstrates the dangers of pop star sadism. Stefani’s musical essay opens in a prideful, hip-hop idiom, “oooh, oooh, this [song represents] my shit [e.g., life philosophy], this my shit” (which is repeated many times to a militaristic beat akin to the funky drumming of a high school marching band), and proceeds to tell her enemy, who has been “talking shit” about Stephani, that she is going to kick the shit out of her behind the bleachers after school. Such a negative, shit-giving sentiment is the dialectical counterpoint to the joyfully prideful, yet communal and caring, shitfest recommended by Anthony Kiedis, who wishes to bestow what he has “got” to your mama, your papa, and your daughter. Indeed, for Kiedis giving it away is a loving gesture. “Come on everybody,” he argues, “it’s time to deliver.” I argue that the new coprophilic style of public address should strive to steer sadism away from Stephanic violence toward Kiedistic love.

Unfortunately, many of those who aspire to giving it away (for want of love or publications for tenure and promotion) do so in a cleanly, fascistic manner that reflects the machinations of the hygienic apparatus, thereby paradoxically holding it in; what appears to be the gift of gold or good shit (“give it away”) turns out to be a virtual fist or bad shit (“this my shit!”). For example, overly sadistic individuals and populations tend to exhibit the characteristic orderliness, parsimony, and obstinacy by drawing attention to their skills at arranging, counting, ordering, and wiping—all strategies of perfumativity—such as the debaters at the National Forensic League championship tournament who neatly “flow” the “spewing” speech of their opponents and spew back responses seriatim (also see Okrand). Yet, it is the performance scholar/practitioner who gives her or his shit a sadistic airing most directly, sometimes via the misleading masochism of the confessional. In his “Confessions of Apprehensive Performer,” Ronald J. Pelias details an interior monologue in a neatly ordered series of thoroughly hygienic scenes, a narrative that has been cleaned up so that the shit appears as smooth and taught as the clean-shaven scrotum of “Sextext.” This autobiographical account of performing poetry also, predictably, features the cloacael ambiguity of derailing trains, precious payloads, and shitting/giving birth:

[from Scene 2, as himself] The goal is to sound clever, bright. Engage, entertain, and enlighten is the evaluative base. I try again. This time the new goal: avoid embarrassment. [...] My god! The words on the page blur. [...] I hear myself stumble; I’m making a fool of myself. We are all embarrassed. My friends look down; the rest look away. I can’t get back on track. The passengers are getting off this train. Another mistake. What should I do now? Can I just stop here? Roll on. Soon you can unload this freight.

[from Scene 3, as an audience member]. Look at him. His hands are shaking [...]. Oh, this is painful. Please get control of yourself.

[from Scene 6, as therapist]. Tense, then relax those muscles, one group at a time. Modify your behavior. Visualize evocative stimuli that may trouble. You can control the situation. Visualize yourself successfully completing the performative task.

[from Scene 14, as himself] Once, it went as planned: Hold steady. You're going to make it. This isn't too bad. Nobody knows. Just keep it up. You can get through it. A little bit at a time. You even got a laugh. Keep going. It's almost over. Just one more line to go through. Smile. Give thanks. Amen. *They were mine.* (26–31; my emphasis)

Pelias' confessional essay is framed as a simulated risk-taking, as a scholarly performance on the page that is homologous to the apprehension of a staged reading. The cargo holding, however, is characteristically sadistic. "Apprehensive Performer" is obsessed with control, not only of the Self, but of the Other as well. "Give it away now" is really "Ooooh ooh, this my shit, this my shit." Worse, "Ooooh ooh, this my shit, this my shit" has become "Ooooh ooh, they're (*my*) shit, they're (*my*) shit." In much (not all) autobiographical scholarship, the masochism of disclosure is the performative ruse of excremental omnipotence.

As is well known, the problem with the confessional and related scholarly performances is that narcissistic excess can become violent; that which masquerades as gifting perfumes getting shit on by a scholar or performer. The hygienic apparatus is therefore a reversal machine, as is typical of most biopolitical apparatuses (e.g., the irony of blue toilet water). We see these ironic reversals embedded in many descriptions of autoethnographic performance. Tami Spry explains that the "performative autobiographical location," figuratively and in the Real, is one of "intense personal and cultural risk" and "simultaneously a space of profound comfort," both "libratory and excruciating." The performance of autobiography, explains Spry, forces the performer to concentrate "on the body as a site from which the story is generated," seeking to "read what she and others have written on the published hides of her skins" ("Skins" 361). Consequently, performance—as daily life, as staged, as texted—is that form of human expression most closely associated with the Real hide, and that which is therefore sphincteral and most dangerously close to meting-out and hoarding its fascistic business. By comparing performance to a "promiscuous lover," D. Soyini Madison details the danger most stridently: "Now, I will admit, within my own metaphor, I am guilty of gluttony. I have taken Performance for myself," she claims. "Like a possessive devotee (or lover) I want to hold on to her, not wanting her to be with anyone but me and my kind [...]. I've found myself bristling at that those who are not ready or willing to put in the time with Performance: to honor properly, to learn sufficiently" (108). This is why, when reflecting on her autobiographical performances, *Skins* and "*Tattoo Stories: A Postscript on Skins*," Spry admits her performances on the stage and page are most especially and unabashedly proprietary; they are hers to hoard (and flesh, especially the kind that is marked or shed, is always the cleaner, dialectical surrogate for shit/text, of course; "*Tattoo*" 84). Insofar as consciousness is fragmented and the subject is decentered, displaced, interpellated, split, or splintered, the "I" (its being and its assertion) of autoethnographic anal-gazing is *the* modernist lie from the get-go,

however good it or its assertion might feel. Consequently, we should *expect* demands for an address or specific locality, demands for the real truth or “where one stands,” from readers or audiences who notice the posture of reflexivity is much too unified, too clean or pretty or pleasant smelling. One should expect the demands of counter-fascism especially when a performer or scholar details a painful or sorrowful experience, since such intimate disclosures frequently work to muffle critique by further perfuming bad shit with tacit pleas for empathy. Indeed, it is not difficult to locate scholars who want to fuck over autoethnography by returning its abusive sadism directly (see Shields).

Similar controlling tendencies—to produce shit that doesn’t smell, to wipe-up that shit which does, and to claim one’s shit as exclusively “mine to mind!”—are reflected in the abandonment of the abject and “activist” bodies in performance art in the 1960s and 1970s (one can just hear the practitioner saying, with a slight art world lisp: “zhock, like heroin, is *zo pazzé*; no one zhits on ztage anymore [yawn]”). The same is true of the Body Strikes Back/Long Live the New Flesh movements in the performance art of the last decade. Amelia Jones notes that “the 1990s have witnessed a dramatic return to art practices and written discourses involving the body,” but they can be distinguished from their smelly forebears by the frequent use of “multimedia, installation, and photographic technologies, eschewing live performance altogether” (198–99). Presumably, the mediated body in performance escapes the “structures of narcissism and the rhetoric of the pose,” but the unmarked seems to have succumbed to the logics of perfumativity and cultural constipation (Jones 199). In the end, the screens, skins, and hides (run) cover for the repressed, the abject, the irreducible excess of the anal object. In this respect the “embodied text” is merely harbored shit. Performance is constipated.

Yet, as is typical of bio-power, all this emphasis on (self)control (ooh, this my shit!) creates the possibility for its own dissolution (give it away now!), for in its blindness to the particular disciplining of the individual in favor of the management of a population, the hygienic apparatus helps to generate “a new kind of counter-politics” on the page, on the stage, and in the street. As governmental practices have addressed themselves in an increasingly “immediate way to ‘life’ [...] individuals have begun to formulate the needs and imperatives of that same life as the basis for political counter-demands” (Gordon 5). Just as discipline produces deviancy, so does scato-power produce polluting counter-conducts that are able to thrive precisely because the norm has replaced the rule. The lesson here, then, is that in our Contemporary Age of Constipation, now synonymous with the Age of Surveillance, the Metro Defecator brings good counsel: to avert fascism we must produce our gifts freely and with selfless abandon.⁶ Although we can never escape the excruciating comforts of sadism, we must err on the side of giving our shit away. Perhaps a “new barbarism” is needed, but it should not be one that is only understood in terms of mutated and “posthuman bodies” or the neatly ordered logic of the piercing or tattoo (Hardt and Negri 214–18).⁷ This style of public address must be akin to street shitting! This style must *truly* be risky and creative. (Self)consumption should be

emptied out into a prideful overproduction, gluttony in reverse. The new style must counter the strategies of the anti-diarrheal with the diarrheic. To halt the sadistification of Self that leads to obsessive control, one must allow the desires of destruction, the sadistic push of the death drive, to inspire one's bodily production! Give it away now! Shit now or forever fascistically hold your piece! Like a magnificent, custodial blob, the hygienic apparatus *will* absorb our *movement* and overwhelm our proletarian pungency in scents of green apple and "spring breeze." But we must cast our ballots regardless! We must drop our spikes! We must pinch loaves, roll logs, cover our feet, and have our havanas! To resist Empire we must overproduce our shit!⁸

Endnuggets

- [1] This offering is in direct opposition to the primacy of the mirror stage, which early Lacan suggested marks the originary point of subjectification. To the contrary, potty training must precede the mirror stage as the original site of disciplining the subject first as *homo economicus*, which is then later *masked* with the fantasy of the self-image or *imago* of the mirror stage (see Lacan 3–9). The jubilant announcement of the child beholding him or herself in the looking glass, "that's me!" is the dialectical counterpart to the "that's mine!" the prideful speech-act/swagger of the infant most famously immortalized by Milton's figure of Satan in *Paradise Lost* (the devil is always the filthy and arrogant child). Indeed, the radical narcissism of the infant and the powers of omnipotence betokened by shitting is a major theme of Hollywood fantasy: in films like *The Brood*, *The Children of the Corn*, *The Exorcist*, *The Omen*, and *Village of the Damned*, children are likened to demons, a euphemism for the narcissistic act of shitting on one's parents.
- [2] Within the field of communication studies, there have been few attempts to unmask the way shit goes down (for a notable exception, see Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland).
- [3] Coincidentally, Dan Savage has dubbed the curiously foul and flowery, "frothy" substance created by the intermingling of lubricant and fecal matter during anal play "santorum," in honor of Senator Rick Santorum. My thanks to Mirko Hall for this reference.
- [4] Even psychoanalysis has expunged the excremental smell insofar as nasality and the nasal drive have yet to be theorized.
- [5] The anal character, now synonymous with the capitalist, has succumbed to what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno termed "instrumental reason" (Horkheimer and Adorno). I am reminded of the numerous horror stories that one hears at academic conferences about backstabbing colleagues who have succumbed to this in terms of "pragmatism." See Horkheimer and Adorno.
- [6] Perhaps a more progressive, less patriarchal role model is Ani DiFranco. This ambisexual righteous babe publishes every goddamn lyrical piece of shit she scrawls on a napkin, having released over twenty-five albums in the last three years. You go girl!
- [7] Moreover, I agree with Schneider that we must guard against the patriarchal, sexist norms that underwrite appeals to barbarism, which merely mark a renewed call for the aesthetics of primitivism that inspired stage shitting for a decade (see Schneider 126–52).
- [8] Note Brus' commentary on his Actionist performances in Vienna: "I reject the often sought incorporation of the audience into the action of the play. The results of such an experience are superficial [...]. I don't reject such efforts totally, but feel however that one cannot do without more deep-going means [...]. Useful results are not a conglomerate made up of tomfoolery, post-dadism and public participation in willy-nilly street theatre socialism. Useful results have proven themselves first class. The action moves for the most part outside

of language or such—at least outside the speech and language normally used” (in Ursprung 149). The superficiality is located, of course, in likening *anything* to shit—I mean speech, or do I mean text?—as a singularly possessable object, as something that can be shared, owned, possessed, hoarded, or given.

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