Model States

What we must chiefly bear in mind, then, is that physical society in time must never for a moment cease to exist while the moral society as an idea is in the process of being formed; that for the sake of man’s moral dignity his actual existence must never be jeopardized. While the craftsman has a timepiece to repair, he can let its wheels run down; but the living clockwork of the State must be repaired while it is still striking, and it is a question of changing the revolving wheel while it still revolves.

—Schiller, Third Letter on the Aesthetic

Education of Humanity

And when some other minion said

stop! can’t it all stop

for a moment?

*that* was high comedy

idealist tragedy

And now he’s waiting for the same

time

as me

—Rodrigo Toscano, “Future Perfect”

Consciousness

combs with the sterile

shalelike concentric accumulation of remainder.

A light in already clear

waters, as advancement a median of the ever ready

tears in nine light

unanswered change, and brings dissolution.

The cemetery wheel of citizenship,

a theory of chance will not change.

—David Micah Greenberg, “Common Will”

Although no one has succeeded in teleporting so much as a single sub-atomic particle, some have managed to teleport the quantum states those particles are in. These states describe the exact characteristics of a particle, so in theory a body could be reconstructed particle by particle if enough quantum states were teleported.

—*The Economist* (June 19, 2004)

*EVERY generation has apocalyptic visions, can’t imagine its*

*continuance, as in Rivette’s Paris nous appartient (1960),*

*where the exiled American communist journalist, experimenting*

*with Art Brut in his SRO, warns Anne of converging*

*super-militarized oligarchical death waves.*

*My apartment, which you’ll recall from last time, is bathed in*

*the sounds of a Red Bull event by the river, men and women*

*amplified, shouting and generating excitement that somehow*

*gets shunted into product, religious techniques, walking back*

*and forth wireless.*

*A small amount of movement or sound has come to signify a*

*mouse, a rebuke to systems of control by which people might*

*be stamped out, round like a nickel and grey, with tails trailing*

*and eyes bulging brown.*

*Citizens shouted very differently among their own remnants*

*and ruins, Roman and otherwise, on 2/15/03, in the largest*

*mass event and first global manifestation, against war or anything*

*else, on record, detourning totalizing yelling into group*

*demand, stamping the little silver cans into a huge reflective*

*shield and straining to articulate what should follow, fighting*

*enervation with dissolved caffeine and sucrose.*

*The scale of the problem causes fatigue because people create*

*meaning in clan-sized groups, and Steve says there’s a study*

*that says one can only love 200 in a life, which seems to be a*

*kind of parameter for the processing of affiliation, a limit*

*which not coincidentally seems to underlie clans and anarchism,*

*though my beliefs run to the bureaucratic materialism*

*that underlies communism, so that it is at that scale, talking*

*to friends, and with that result, a kind of communism, that I*

*have found myself able to articulate a politics, one that proceeds*

*from the scale of my social relations, rather than a*

*totality.*

*If power, or the means for making and instantiating judgements,*

*is changed in scale by relations that form by agreement,*

*force, or ambient internalization, and if every articulation proposes, produces, or reifies sets of relations, then the distribution of power touches every articulation,*

*since every articulation proposes relations, which form*

*states.*

*The contradictions produced by power are shared, and their*

*articulation, by poets and others, is a real, if unwanted, function*

*within society, as is the modeling, in poems and other*

*media, of other possible modes of power, as on Saturdays on*

*Rain’s tiny dancefloor on N 5 Street in Williamsburg, where I*

*was first brought by poets, and where the men of the neighborhood*

*admit me to a space of mutual movement that subsumes*

*in an explicit manner never approached on the street,*

*where I adjust my walk.*

*Power, an inevitable product of relations, necessarily alters*

*bodies, often damaging, even if invisio-neuronally, or actually*

*destroying them, as when conceptions of what is required for*

*affiliation differ or get distorted when brought into proximity*

*and enforced.*

*The mechanics by which power travels and changes scale,*

*through agreement, force, or ambient internalization, is*

*called politics, yet politics does not address bodies as such,*

*except as instantiations of constructs in which power collects*

*or doesn’t, categories that can have a directly physical extension,*

*like ‘food’, or a purely narrative function, like ‘justice’.*

*Narrative is a set of proposed links among artificially segmented*

*perceptions; narration is the act of proposing such*

*links.*

*For power, shifts correlate to alterations in relations, which*

*are physical, and can be augmented or protected by gloves,*

*cars, guns, neighborhoods, tractors, planes, lending rates,*

*coats, and computers, all of which change the scale of power,*

*and in politics, shifts occur among sets of categories and*

*catchments, also physical, casting shadows on never-fully-discrete*

*bodies, and standing for them in the sense that it is to*

*categories and catchments, or what get called subjects, rather*

*than to bodies, that judgements are ascribed.*

*In film and fiction, such subjects, multi-faceted categories*

*through which social relations, and thus power, run, are*

*called characters, and turning people into characters is what*

*makes non-novel readers so squeamish about fiction, since*

*doing so, reducing people to sets of attributes, is a kind commodification,*

*or at a least reification, one that mimics the*

*market system that spawned fiction in the 18th century and*

*with which, necessary changes having been made, we are*

*familiar today.*

*Imagining commodification to be a result of market logic*

*gets it backward, since turning people into products is a*

*major part of sexual selection, a process regulated by mores*

*and other constraints through which people are treated as*

*acquirable wholes that can be broken down into particular*

*attributes, desireable or undesireable, that are centered on*

*images of fitness and out of which market logic falls, with*

*shopping being a relation in which the ‘partner’ doesn’t*

*talk back or experience transference.*

*Turning people into characters is an amazingly effective*

*political tool, since characters, like some commodities, do not*

*suffer, die or react in real time, and are constructed for performances*

*within narrow bandwidths that are very restricted*

*when compared with the actual conditions most people face,*

*but that are alike enough that the reduction is possible, since*

*to resist such reductions requires more energy than to*

*acquiesce.*

*Although characters, unlike horses and people, cannot*

*respond to an idea that takes the form of force, such as a lash*

*against a coach-and-six that carries the message ‘go’, it is as*

*characters that politics prepares people for power, even when*

*attacking one’s material extension in space and attempting to*

*reduce one to it. Death as message or story. Let’s roll.*

*Rabbits, who have brains and bodies, are of course extraordinary,*

*and their fierce rabbity love, while occasionally seeming*

*aloof or unintelligible, is in fact one of the main model states,*

*but rather than separating species, splitting characters from*

*people draws materialism from humanism, so that discrete fixed code units definable by parts can be replaced with floating, dynamic points of contact for myriad forces never*

*fully visible or possible to specify but which can, with mutual*

*labor, sustain themselves, remain buoyant, partially selfrepresentational*

*constructs with material bases, reducible by*

*violence to bodies, yet capable of producing excesses like*

*imagination.*

*+++*

*MY belief in the absolute material bases for staging such*

*positions, fictional or otherwise, is what forces me to think*

*about politics, along with a desire for affiliation without*

*reduction.*

*Art, or situations of partially suspended disbelief, of foregrounding,*

*of heightening or intentional flattening, of protected*

*description and inflated proposition, is a locus, in any*

*society at any scale, for staging relations as a kind of model.*

*By mutual agreements that do not differ from those of regular*

*interactions, art proposes, rather than fully instantiates,*

*sets of relations, raising, and attempting temporarily to*

*appear to frame, the relations it produces, held like eye*

*contact.*

*Interactions around art, when they work, produce sensations*

*that require high levels of processing, so they tend to happen*

*in relatively protected spaces, never absolute or guaranteed,*

*analogous to airport cottages at Dayton or spartan dachas*

*outside of Reykjavík.*

*Deliberation requires a provisional affiliation, in the sense*

*of involuntarily imagining the consequences of sets of terms*

*and the relations they propose, which makes deliberation*

*disturbing, because affiliation can never be fully provisional,*

*which is what lies behind objections to images of violence,*

*which is why Spielberg claims to employ them only within highly motivated meaning structures, preferring models of*

*exchange based on art, as at the climax of Close Encounters of*

*the Third Kind (1977), when a French disco scientist and an*

*enormous extraplanetary craft undertake a musical rondo*

*under the auspices of a finally indulgent U.S. military, which*

*holds fire while a highly amplified, visually interpreted five*

*tone sequence is put forth, and is tentatively and then forcefully*

*taken up by the hovering vessel, which goes on to offer*

*fantastical variations upon it at speeds that only computers*

*and geniuses at the site can process, finally allowing a large*

*number of MIAs to be disgorged from the hull without incident,*

*along with a young blond boy who is the focus of the*

*movie’s driving mother love, counterpoint to Dreyfus’s signature*

*lone-male sublimations, followed by the letdown of the*

*anthropomorphic, infantilized aliens.*

*Ascribing decisions to character is an act of judgement, and*

*such acts are what make writing political, since judgement*

*creates relations, and ascription is a kind of writing.*

*Aesthetic experience, or pleasure in sharing in proposing*

*relations, art, can take place independently of explicit judgement,*

*but is itself a form of affiliation, which has in the past*

*led to critiques of the very ‘absorption’ that is necessary for*

*many of its forms. Truffault plays the scientist.*

*Because relations are always material and judgement is always*

*affiliation, in proposing sets of relations, any work that fails to*

*examine the material bases on which it is itself predicated, at*

*whatever level, risks contributing to its own misrecognition,*

*and being appropriated to perpetuate myths of baseless relations*

*and consequenceless judgement unbounded by materiality*

*or affiliation, resulting in contradictions, a problem alternately*

*dramatized and parodied in Chabrol’s Les Biches (1968),*

*where Jacqueline Sassard, intentionally young, striking and*

*self-possessed in a manner that seems somehow greater,*

*because incorporating reactionary classicism, than the*

*impending soixante-huitards, produces, when asked her name*

*by mid-30s shiny socialite Stephane Audran, a contemptuous,*

*clearly enunciated «je m’appelle ‘Why’» , the English word doubly empty, which delights Audran’s character, who negotiates*

*with and appropriates Sassard’s Why, providing access to*

*wealth and companionship that, when discontinued, eventually*

*lead to her own character’s death.*

*+++*

*FOR the formalist, affiliation is a kind of death, the death of*

*doubt, agency, and possibility, with the exception of affiliation*

*with method, taken as a means for a kind of critique of*

*fantasies of transcendent maximalist infinitude.*

*By imposing rules and proposing relations along strictly material*

*lines, formalisms can analogize the limits imposed by*

*resources and belief systems, tacit and explicit, and surround,*

*alter or reorder their material instantiations, revealing their*

*provisionality, releasing joy from obligation and projected perpetuity*

*through a ‘count your shit’ recursion, which ironically*

*reveals the infinite in combination.*

*Formalism can thus work against a default or dominant that*

*presents itself as eternal and inviolable, and can function as an*

*indirect critique of entrenched sets of relations, by demonstrating*

*parallel and even random position-takings and sets of relations*

*as potentially equally meaningful and derived from similar*

*limits.*

*Method produces an oppositional position of its own, structured*

*play, that when taken as a model form of exchange can*

*change relations, but that when received as a product, confines*

*its effects to that of politico-aesthetic ‘pressure valve’, or means*

*of discharging the energy produced by contradictions so that*

*they might remain in place, a role provided for in most dominant*

*sets of relations, as when Zola writes, in Germinal (1885),*

*and elsewhere, of the effects of coffee and alcohol on workers.*

*Such contradictions, which most journalists ignore, are inherent*

*in conventional affiliations, and, when examined closely,*

*often produce apathy and fatigue, at least partially due to the*

*scales, far beyond the scope of character, at which they operate.*

*Since it’s predicated on finitude, capitalism couldn’t work if*

*people didn’t die.*

*Like science, which proceeds, theoretically, out of passionate*

*materialist disinterest, but which, in actual practice, is almost*

*wholly market-driven, maintaining contradictions is a business*

*that produces its own class, one with which I identify,*

*partly out a desire to master shifting social codes as a means*

*of nonfamilial power, being beyond the house with the attorneys*

*who formalize the language of exchange, the academics*

*who undergird it, the journalists who naturalize it, the novelists*

*who fetishize it, and the satirists who ironize it.*

*What is often meant by ‘freedom’ is the possibility of the*

*acquisition of such codes, which, like other material acquisitions,*

*become more expensive the more associated they are*

*with power. ‘Cool’ is the attempt to recapture freedom by*

*explicitly rejecting this dynamic, but its cooptation, and the*

*anticipation of its cooptation, drive the provisionality and*

*disposability of the codes and materials cool itself takes up,*

*which also happens to artistic communities.*

*Artists invited me to join Friendster repeatedly, and I tried to*

*turn the invitations to affiliation toward small actions of 5 or*

*15, but everyone with whom I spoke projected a need for definitions*

*and justifications to release them from fatigue,*

*which I saw as a defense against the perceived need for disaffiliation*

*from power, and which I could not produce on the*

*phone or in a bar.*

*Such projections are imbricated within the discourse of*

*‘time’, whereby one is consumed by work or attachment, and*

*cannot imagine undertaking further action and self-representation,*

*particularly in ‘public’, which implies submitting*

*one’s actions to large-scale collective judgement.*

*Most attempts to operate ‘outside’of that judgement are represented*

*as criminal, as in Gun Crazy (1949), where the*

*lovers, on recognizing one another’s interlocking needs, skillsets,*

*self-presentations and physicalities, and, in attempting to manifest them fully and in concert, discover them to be*

*unsustainable at the highest levels without constant infusions*

*of money, triggering, beyond need for shelter and sustenance,*

*feelings of rage and neglect that spill over into escalations*

*of the types of ‘jobs’ they do, including killing those*

*who seem to judge their acts, eventually leading to an escalation*

*in the scale of pursuit that leads to their being cornered,*

*or isolated without adaquate resources or means of further*

*travel, and locked into an inarticulate choice between imprisonment*

*or death.*

*+++*

*ALL characters need names so that decisions and values can*

*be ascribed to them, and so do projections with which multiples*

*might affiliate, like teams, an extension of subjectivity*

*to partial intersubjectivity that allows one to possibly absorb*

*violence in the belief that it will not arrive at a scale large*

*enough to destroy the group. Stonewall was a riot.*

*The mass proposition of changes in specific sets of relations,*

*protest, has been underminded by state agencies and corporations,*

*aggregate characters granted rights of property and*

*speech, that have developed practical tactics for preventing*

*the scale of actions from reaching a tipping point or for*

*making it look that way.*

*The fatigue gets overcome by ‘extraordinary’ events, like a*

*war or a fraudulent election, but it does not seem to get overcome*

*in the quotidian by people who feel secure but only*

*provisionally so. Skinnerian partial reinforcement of the lack*

*of guaranteed employment blocks the impulse toward resistance*

*and advocacy by putting beliefs about what constitutes*

*‘good’ work, artistic or otherwise, as well as ‘well spent’ time,*

*into conflict with resistance, which makes the idea of trying*

*to put one’s body someplace in a resisting or canvassing posture*

*carry a high degree of fear, and makes it seem as if a*

*legimating structure for doing so, let alone one that directly*

*and coherently reflects one’s beliefs, is impossible to*

*construct.*

*The articulation of contradiction can cause catharsis and abreaction,*

*the power of which can cause dis- and re-affiliation, a*

*threat to forms of power.*

*Because forms get fetishized, they change, seeking fresh access to*

*the energy that inheres in contradictions, so that at one point,*

*when further shifts seemed impossible, the ‘dematerialization’ of*

*the art object was attempted, meaning there was an agreement*

*among artists and others to treat encounters, procedures, and acts*

*of documentation as art, difficult to conserve.*

*Jauss’s restatement of beauty (1977), “the form in which aesthetic*

*experience presents itself,” forces one to talk about specific*

*instances and encounters, and encodes the impossibility of fully*

*generalizing about form.*

*+++*

*PARTIALLY because disaffiation is a kind of death, Fanon advocated*

*violence as a means to catharsis and abreaction, which are*

*sometimes produced by the destruction of bodies, and are real*

*material resources, even if invisio-neuronal. Yet the trauma produced*

*in survivors of violence, including those that inflict it,*

*negates any momentary cathartic benefit, because the longterm*

*consequences of violence include a tendency to replicate injury,*

*perpetuating a ‘cycle’ that acquires narrative justifications as necessary.*

*Fanon’s own “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” (1961)*

*can be read as registering instances of such replication, grounded*

*in specific acts arising from internalized conditions of domination*

*and oppression, while Semezdin Mehmedinovic’s Sarajevo*

*Blues (1998) records instances of paramilitary beheadings within*

*a non-colonial city that the perpetrators justify through citations*

*of acts of violence from prior centuries.*

*Representations of violence often take the form of entertainment,*

*which can be a tool of control as well as a form of discursive*

*preparation, which most killings require, and which*

*usually reduces to a single character-trait:*

*“Someone who is threatening my life or that of someone I*

*love” as most primal and most often given to actual soldiers,*

*though video simulation and gaming also seem to suffice—*

*Hollywood death*

*“Someone who is in league with a force that is exploiting and*

*destroying us, and that will not recognize our condition”—*

*Maoist death*

*“Someone who is a barrier or threat to my expansion, and that*

*is impeding my extracting the full possible benefit from a situation”—*

*capitalist death*

*“Someone who is staining our representation of the ideal, or*

*the all, and our ways of relating to it”—religious death*

*Agency, or decisions acted upon with resultant chains of*

*consequence, desired or undesired, produces contradictions*

*that manifest as fatigue, in the sense of feeling unequal to circumstance,*

*or as boredom, in the sense of feeling that all outcomes*

*can be anticipated, or as frustration, in the sense of*

*wanting cathartic resolution, which can be turned inward via*

*self-abnegation.*

*Most of the suicides I have imagined have been passive:*

*addressing the back of my head, in 1991, to the parking lot*

*window of a first floor apartment in Providence so that bullets,*

*whose trajectory would be perhaps a 20-degree-angle*

*from the blacktop, fired by no one in particular, might pass*

*between the burglar bars and into the cerebellum and stem,*

*the old breathing brain, making little holes just at the top of*

*the collar of the robe; or falling from an extremely fast-moving*

*car and skidding slowly and painlessly, because blacking*

*out, to a stop; or the gun fantasy of putting a fake plastic Uzi*

*in my yellow vinyl shoulderbag and taking the 4 or 5 train to*

*Wall Street, where I walk up to the barracades around the Exchange, take out the gun and wave it in circles over my*

*head, drawing a rain of extremely accurate, high-powered*

*fire; but just now I became active, and could imagine exerting*

*enough force on the tongue of my belt so that it would*

*puncture the point just where the ribs part, making a kind of*

*lower stoma, and pulling up for a tiny blunt evisceration.*

*Because I have imagined my own death through narcissistic*

*fantasy, trying to imagine the deaths of others, as when reading*

*the New York Times, feels compromised by that same narcissism:*

*being slowly killed by silicosis in a rural Chinese factory*

*that cuts fake gems; disappeared and tortured to death*

*in Colómbia for making a neutral remark outside of Calí that*

*gets me onto the list of one or another paramilitary limpieza*

*faction; recruited as a soldier at age 10 and subsequently*

*being decapitated in the Great Lakes region of Africa; raped*

*and strangled in Gujarat in order to defile my religion as carried*

*by my gendered body; shot in the face by a fearful cop in*

*Harlem who has mistakenly invaded my home; bleeding to*

*death after being suddenly shot with an automatic weapon*

*while lined up at a coffee stand in Hebron; slashed in the*

*throat in Pakistan after being forced to proclaim my religious*

*affiliation and that of my kin; suffocating after being thrown*

*down a well in any number of places because of gender-based*

*resource allocation; or being killed in Kuwait by noncombat*

*weapons discharge while mobilizing for deployment.*

*Yet because the surface conditions of ‘my life’ depend of sets*

*of relations that produce those conditions, the attempt to*

*imagine and render them must inform any work that proceeds*

*from it, to the point that, in imagining extreme forms*

*of my own subjugation, I fantasize that in nuclear death the*

*brain is fast enough to complete, before vaporization, the*

*full-replay that some have reported, since a ‘good death’*

*requires preparation, and while the duration of the flashbacks*

*is reportedly long, the time elapsed, apparently, is not.*

+++

*FANON wrote in French, and French continues, in areas to*

*which it was forcibly brought, to be taken up in exigency and*

*desire as well as disgust and repudiation, to produce economic*

*effects for anyone whom it subsumes or engages, and to*

*retain, like any language, natural or artificial, accumulative*

*traces, some of which, for French, specifically remain from*

*when it was taken up, some sixty years after France took*

*Algeria, as Bergson’s phenomenological instrument of duration,*

*if not of time.*

*Time and duration depend on scale, in the sense that the sets*

*of relations that produce them, gravitational and otherwise,*

*are perceived as relatively stable and inviolate, though actually*

*localized and in flux.*

*Time now dominates perception to the point that people*

*take drugs to restore duration for short periods.*

*States, or dynamic, non-isolable arrangements of matter, succeed*

*each other; time’s incrementality marks, and thus represents,*

*different states.*

*Time assigns values to successive states, which are forced by*

*brains into three dimensions, with six tightly curled further*

*planes, unimaginable but modelable, exerting their own*

*pulls, which are manifest in the telepathy heightened by regular*

*congress between electively affinitive persons, discrete*

*units of what Foucault and Negri call biopower, which*

*Haraway finds an absurd and flaccid reduction, despite*

*Scarry’s demonstrations of the very ways in which that*

*reduction is effected daily in innumerable ways.*

*The more heightened such relations, the more character, in*

*ecstasy, becomes what Hölderlin in Hyperion (1798) calls soul,*

*and it assumes, in the throes of congress, classical proportions,*

*meaning that the relation affords access to futher*

*dimensions, as in grief.*

*To imagine all states, or to pick a state and then project or*

*calculate its subsequent states from its trajectory, would be to*

*travel in time, if the body be held stable.*

*If any one configuration could be isolated and held in stasis,*

*it might form a ‘stop’ very unlike those for buses, where*

*states alter during idling in the same manner as when in*

*motion and the same internal fluctuations within the chassis*

*continue, as in Midnight Cowboy (1969), where Ratso’s death*

*does not alter the body’s course.*

*Nostalgia is the wish to reinstate collapsed relations. Fate is*

*the coding of a determinate universe, in the sense of a course*

*by which, given a certain configuration, energy will dissipate*

*along with the chains of consequence surrounding agency.*

*Free will is the manner in which senses maximize access to*

*possible relational configurations, with a pitch toward*

*destruction if unmet. There is a possible consciousness that*

*might comprehend all possible states, and thus all time, but*

*it is not necessary to imagine it.*

*Time and duration correlate to truth and fiction, both of*

*which are required for love, a means of navigating the violence*

*and involuntariness of attachment, as in Late Spring*

*(1949), where the widower father of the character played by*

*Setsuko Hara, a beautiful young woman who is on the cusp*

*reaching an age that will make her a less desirable match,*

*leads her to believe that he will remarry, so that she will shift*

*her primary attachment from him to her suitor. Truth is dick*

*shots on craigslist, or the petroleum element of vegetarian*

*duck. Ethics is a system for weighing competing goods, and*

*for assigning a value to relations, like shame.*

*Narrative is a set of proposed links among artificially segmented*

*perceptions marked by time; narration is the act of*

*proposing such links, even if untrue, in order to saturate*

*duration.*

*Dialects of English use of the subjunctive progressive to mark the*

*unreal, constantly revised present as never fully experienced, as in*

*Stalker (1979), where a glass of milk’s movement means either that*

*superhuman powers are acquired through catastrophe, or that one*

*moves a body without witness in belief.*

*I was sitting at home in these various states when the clock suddenly*

*went out and the fridge stopped. “In a few moments, will be clear*

*whether this was an electromagnetic pulse or a power failure.” Long*

*durée oddly calm, and then slowly lifted the phone. It worked.*