Postcript

Melissa Johnston

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/totem

Part of the Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/totem/vol1/iss1/18

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarship@Western. It has been accepted for inclusion in Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology by an authorized administrator of Scholarship@Western. For more information, please contact kmasha1@uwo.ca.
Postcript

Keywords
ethnography of consciousness, freeform, poem

Creative Commons License
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Here I go. The task before me is an anthropology essay: an ethnography of my consciousness: a poem of sorts. I must forget everything and have utter confidence. The trick is not to think. yet. But I've got to start with something...Cartesian Anxiety. Who cares if i spell it wrong - whose game is this anyway? A game. ha! Ain't it the truth? So lets start playing. But first, a joint: A mission to gOd in a rolling paper canoe. Mission quite possible.

How to begin? With a topic? Why not? But wait. Is it relevant? Has it been done already? Can i write 10 pages on it? Who cares? i suppose at some point I have to care because, sadly, these are the criteria for ideas to achieve an A—a letter representing the merit and volume of my words. What a fucked concept. Truly. Here is something that didn't come from the societal body part called the brain but from the heart. And not the red, lacey and symmetrical heart, but the fist-shaped, throbbing, life-giving upit of cells. i present this to you as a tattoo across my chest and you propose to carve it out of my flesh with a pen. and what you put in the shiny, gaping wound is a symbol of lines and shapes and numbers (or rather. amounts). like a brand on the hide of some humble cow (and most cows are humble most of the time—or so i've heard).

Anyway, i guess this image is finished. i sure hope something else comes to mind. but of course an infinite number of things come to mind, but are any of them going to be useful? What? Who said that? USEFUL.

CRITERION 1: Has it been done before? Well of course! How can i be so sure? Because in my experience, which is all i have to go on, (or so i've heard), many of the ideas i've had and verbalized or acted out or whatever, are merely abbreviated forms of the ideas recounted by the big names (and really, isn't that all they've become?). So it becomes clear that all that these JACKOFFIAN and UPYOURZIAN concepts are, are thoughts that have been conceived (or perceived) by any Mac Jones while taking a shit on a Sunday morning before leaving for the place where he goes on a Sunday morning. The difference is, Jackoff and Uypourz, the two most important thinkers of all time, proved themselves worthy of attention by possessing some slightly warped and wondrous past or some other requirement for obtaining credibility and authority. Mac doesn't have these requirements. What happens? The idea disappears like shit down a toilet, and Mac goes on believing that he'll never be as smart as, say, Isaiah Fitzpatrick, who has read Jackoff's essays (all of them), and is nearly as fluent in Upyourzian relativism. And Mac sometimes gets into a rut and thinks 'I'll never be as smart as ANYONE AT ALL'. The crazed irony of it is that some days Mac has a thought that doesn't get flushed and that no Jackoff or Uypourz has ever considered (or at least, not to Academia's knowledge), but his lack of confidence and, perhaps, his inability (let us say underdeveloped ability) to concentrate, [largely due (or so i've heard) to years of eyeball spasms in front of a television (why didn't someone tell me he was being scarred for life while Big Bird taught him to say water in Spanish. Agua?) He was a mere child with an undeveloped interest in books and a lot of time on his hands), allows for Mac's completely and utterly groundbreaking idea to be fed to the undertow and kept out of sight and given a nice neat name that fits on the sticker that goes on the front of those colourful duotangs you used to get in school. After all. isn't that what's done to ideas of this type? Not the feeding part. but the labelling part. Cartesian anxiety? So here's Mac, with his idea floating just out of mindsight, but let's say Mac, years later, is an undergrad at a University; and perhaps he passes two professors in the foyer who are mightily discussing the boundaries of FUCKYOUISM; and while Mac gets that familiar frustration and hollowness that comes from feeling stupid. a feeling more painful than a searing sunburn and more stifling than a scuba dive with no '-ba' (or so i've heard), the blaring injustice becomes clear to the one who not only knows fuckyouism, but knows Mac as well. This opener of faucets, this forceful squeezer of paint tubes is none other than Isaiah Fitzpatrick. And the realization that Isaiah suddenly makes. is that Fuckyouism is merely a published and Academised version of Mac's idea, which Mac himself had labelled Jonesian Failurism. Fortunately. (perhaps by an act of gOd or maybe by the protection of Jeez-ass) Isaiah went to Mac and told him the truth about
Academia. That she (doesn't it sound like a girl's name?) is a potentially horrifying creature who will drain you of your vital essence-. But it is mere potential, because all that Mac needs is the audacity to believe you are unquestionably right and to make others believe the same. And just like getting up on waterskis for the first time, Mac found the metaphor he needed to truly create at his full capacity the ideas that had once been thrown to the undertow. THE END. (not really)

CRITERION 2: Is it relevant? Again, I exclaim, OF COURSE. Perhaps I'm being too bold and revolutionary to suggest that everything relates to everything ultimately, so I'll try to tone the idea down a touch (probably for my own benefit). Take two concepts like culture and language. I believe you'd be hard-pressed to find an idea that doesn't relate to either of these. Language: everything we are able to grasp (and even things we are habitually unable to grasp e.g. infinity) are ultimately shaped and fitted into a language or symbols constituting a language (i.e. words, pictures, numbers). This is not to say that I don't believe we have ideas and feelings we are unable to verbalize or conceptualize, but even these are DESCRIBED with such WORDS as "indescribable" and "obscure." Similarly, culture can conceivably be related to any number of concepts, a) because no one really knows the boundaries of the definition of the word (just read any first year anthropology textbook definition), and b) because in one of the present more agreed-upon definitions, culture is described as the collection of things that make up a person. But that can be anything, in fact an infinite number of things, and in a sense, EVERYTHING—and so I conclude. OF COURSE it's relevant.

CRITERION 3: (I probably should have dealt with this earlier) can I write 10 pages on it? The answer is clearly, 'of course,' such a session of verbal defecation would not exhaust me. Yet, absolutely not because Mac has the ability to outline Jackoffism in a flippant 7-words-or-less assortment of gibberish. Why would Mac want to stretch this to 2500 words? Well let's say it's for the benefit of some professor wielding a red-hot brand in one hand, and a carving knife in the other. Well this creates a unique problem for Mac. "Be clear and concise," he's told. "If you can say it in 5 pages, don't give me 8," they say. Yet he's being told to squeeze out 10 pages of this idea. Well getting back to the "of course", squeeze is truly the operative word, why just look at what has come squirting out over the passage of several hours (non-stop I might add). And now, the final criterion: who cares? Well...who indeed?

Note to the carving-knife and brand wielding professor:

This paper may appear to be a guilt-imposing dare (go a ahead. just try putting a number on the page), but these are not my intentions in the least. I suppose over the years I've come to understand that grading papers is a dilemma that is far from fading, and I've even come to empathize with the poor soul (yourself) who is forced into possessing the weapons. So mark away, dear prof, and be comforted knowing that your familiar red pen markings will not succeed in bringing me to the clutches of Academia.

*This line borrowed from the movie The Dark Crystal