

THE GATES OF HELL

Scene 15

Barbarians

The barbarians are outside this universe [of Greek *logos* and order] on account of their outlandish speech and dress, their political and social peculiarities (51).

... the foreigner is the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality (96).

(Julia Kristeva,
Strangers to Ourselves,
1991)

[Setting:] The madman is bent over his desk, pen in hand, intent on a blank piece of paper. His face folds and contorts as he concentrates on the task. In all, he looks like a child puzzling over his first alphabet, except the tongue, which now and then emerges from the side of his mouth, where it licks and spits before returning to its lair. Sporadic movements of the pen suggest pangs of inspiration, before the hand settles and he writes:

Fuckshitfuckcuntshit fuckcunt shit

Before his hand goes still and his face undertakes a calm and solemn aspect. This time, almost smiling, he writes:

Life is worth living because of love.

(Ponders a moment before adding)

Life is worth living because we *willfully* love.

His face is suddenly gripped with anxiety. Now, almost in the hand of a child, he adds: *(Laughing queerly)*

Life is worth living because we *don't* love.

He grins wildly and, in an even more chaotic hand, further adds:

Life is hardly worth living at all.

'The most preposterous and futile charade,' he mutters. He then turns

Vagabonds

On this earth sliced into estates of sovereign states, the homeless are rightless, and they suffer not because they are not equal before the law – but because *there is no law that applies to them* and to which they could refer in their complaints against the rough deal they have been accorded, or to whose protection they could lay claim.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love*, 2003/2006, p. 127)

his attention to the human species itself: ‘The most pernicious race of odious little vermin that God ever suffered to walk on the face of the earth,’ he says, more or less quoting the *Brobdingnagian* King in *Gulliver’s Travels* (Jonathan Swift, 1726).

He chuckles and, suddenly, miraculously, his face smooths over as if touched by the hand of God; and calmly, delicately, he transcribes his newly found epiphany:

The concept of life necessitates the existence of life. Therefore, the concept of love necessitates the existence of love.

His epiphany, however, is short-lived. For no sooner does he recall the love he felt for the woman in the street—the tangle of limbs as she sucked the blood from his bitten finger, the dog groping messily about his genitals and bum—and his face is again stricken with terror. His hand, previously so dexterous and assured, suddenly trembles and starts, and he cuts a pen-line through his most recent speculations. To make a point of it, he folds the sheet of paper in half and tears it in two; having done this, he places the pieces beside the bucket where he shits.

[Voice over:] *Such were Jack’s heartening reflections on love and life on the second day.*

Circe.

Scene 19

[Setting:] A blood-red sunset. Set against this stands a man, discernible only as a silhouette—arms outstretched, like *The Redeemer*, overlooking paradise. And yet this is not paradise. Not for the **vagabonds**. Not for the **flawed consumers**. Not in a **neo-liberal** world. No, this is a postmodern holocaust, an economic extinction, a dream-crushing farce. Hell on earth.

Flawed consumers:

Those that cannot participate in contemporary consumer capitalist life: the poor, disenfranchised, homeless, dispossessed, exiled, and derelict. Vagabonds.

*‘Woe to those who, because of a dearth of assets, are doomed to go on using goods [should they have any] that no longer hold a promise of new and untried sensations; woe to those who for the same reason are stuck with one good instead of browsing through the full, and apparently inexhaustible, assortment. Such people are the outcasts in the society of consumers, the flawed consumers, the inadequates and the incompetents, the flops; the emaciated starvelings amidst the opulence of the consumer feast’ (Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love*, 2006, p. 50).*

Neo-liberalism:

‘Neoliberalism is ... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within

Consumer:

The life of a consumer, the consuming life, is not about acquiring and possessing. It is not even about getting rid of what was acquired the day before yesterday and proudly paraded a day later. It is instead, first and foremost, about *being on the move*.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life*, 2007, p. 98).

The man seems to be willing himself off the ledge before him, to leap into the world beyond, to fly face first into the asphalt several stories below. And then into infinity. Like a lemming. Into heaven. And beyond.

Like a fallen angel.

Like us on earth who wait forlorn.

The minutes pass, one after the other, slowly and miraculously, until the man is lost to the night. Shapeless, he turns away from the unknown and steps into another day.

‘Sort of thing ... Sort of thing,’ he mutters again and again.

Perhaps tomorrow will bring him courage. Courage to wink at the stars above, say a belated ‘Excuse me while I pass,’ and throw himself onto the currents of the wind and have his brains dashed out on some public pavement for all to see. For they are not his brains, but the brains of **consumer** insanity. The brains of other people’s privilege. Media-brains. (Stigmata.)

[Voice over:] *Such were Jack’s heartening reflections on life and death on the second evening.*

Scene 21

[Setting:] A still red night. A haze hovers over the slums, red with fire. Legs are bared to the shadows in the alleys. The occasional knife pierces the occasional ribcage. Laughter breaks out. Bottles smash. Fires burn.

Sunset Oblivion.

Near at hand and the muttering of a silhouette goes unnoticed as it slinks through the red haze of the alleys, glancing left and right as it goes.

The muttering continues as the shape ducks behind a fence, stops, glances about, and crouches by an unlit window. Muffled giggling follows, then more muttering, as if the crouched figure is both mad and glad.

*an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. ... In so far as neoliberalism values market exchange as “an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs,” it emphasises the significance of contractual relations in the marketplace. It holds that the social good will be maximised by maximising the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market’ (David Harvey, *Neoliberalism*, 2007, pp. 2-3).*

*Liberalism: ‘... always placed fundamental concepts such as liberty, individuality, rationality, and progress at its core’ (Freedon, *Ideology*, 2003, p. 51).*

Neo-liberalism: ‘The revival of free-market, or neo-, liberalism has, after

Mahatama Gandhi:

Pioneer of *Satyagraha*—resistance to tyranny through mass civil disobedience and *ahimsa* or non-violence—which led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.

‘When I despair, I remember that all through history the way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end, they always fall.’

‘What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans, and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?’

‘An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.’

‘There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no causes that I am prepared to kill for.’

Wikipedia
(accessed 23 July 2008)

Glass shatters and the figure slips inside.

‘*Pervert indeed,*’ he mutters. ‘I’ll show you perversion.’

And with this he pisses over the racks of pornography that line the walls, even taking the trouble to spell GOD LOVES YOU as he goes, still giggling and muttering as if in constant flux as to his mood and actions. Once finished, he helps himself to a bottle of port, one box of condoms, and a cigar. Satisfied, and scarcely containing himself, he writes an IOU outlining the particulars he has taken, an expected date to pay the debt, a forwarding address simply saying ‘The Lord’s Kingdom,’ and then leaves the scrap of paper in full view on the counter by the till. As a postscript, he commends the owner for stocking pornography and mail-order brides, particularly the bondage paraphernalia, makes mention of a pot calling the kettle black, and vows to never in a million years reimburse the owner for the sleazy merchandise he has pissed over and destroyed. As a final insult, he determines to take his business elsewhere in future, as if this should somehow concern and alarm the imagined reader, before signing **MAHATMA GANDHI**. Then, like a phantom, the mysterious figure vanishes from whence it came, back into the streets and a blood-red night.

Slurping, alas, on a bottle of port as it goes, whistling to itself for having righted the world that so heinously wronged it, and vowing to have a jolly good root using the condoms tucked in its sleeve.

‘Pervert indeed!’ it mutters, puffing on a cigar.

[Voice over:] *Indeed, the blackouts were like mini reprieves from life, short breaks, tiny deaths, vacations. Nothing quite like a short coma to still the wild and aching heart. To be free from history and horror for a moment. As long as he didn’t later recall these perversions. But that was the risk. The risk of salvaging scraps of memory from the depths of amnesia and re-living the extravagancies performed whilst free from shame. The risk of everything.*

It was the ultimate cruelty and a high price to pay for freedom.

all, recently appeared under a conservative protective mantle. It has also characterized libertarianism, which has broken away from liberalism. Libertarianism ... is associated with unlimited consumer choice while crowding out or demoting other liberal core concepts. The fact that libertarianism is also carved out of conservatism releases a strange hybrid. It includes the sanctioning of existing economic inequalities and a built-in reluctance to contemplate state regulation as a possible cure to social evils’ (95).

‘... the liberal-capitalism currently making a bid for ‘globalism’ is not really an individuated ideology. It allows for consumer choice, but controls it carefully through marketing and through entrepreneurial forms of leadership. The result is new types of uniformity, not diversity. It safeguards an ideological position that, in common with so many other non-liberal ideologies, undervalues the maturity of individual citizens, in this case downgraded to the

Smokestacks:

The proletariat of the global risk society settles beneath the smokestacks, next to the refineries and chemical factories in the industrial centers of the Third World.

(Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society*, 1986/2007, p. 41)

Liquid Love:

Don't let yourself be caught. Avoid embraces that are too tight. Remember, the deeper and denser your attachments, commitments, engagement, the greater your risk.

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love*, 2006, p. 58).

[I]n the model of a 'pure relationship', just as on the commodity markets, partners are entitled to treat each other as they treat the objects of consumption. Once permission ... to reject and replace an object of consumption which no longer brings full satisfaction is extended to partnership relations, the partners are cast in the status of consumer

Such was life in hell and hell in life.

When governing the self was a full-time occupation.

Requiring armies of monsters to menace the mind.

Circe.

Scene 25

[Setting:] An alley leading to a waste dump. **Chimney stacks** probe the surrounding sky. The madman is ambling along, eyes roving as if in search of something, a desperate glare to his otherwise sunken eye.

He sees a young woman, arms folded around her legs, rocking back and forth on her haunches, eyes raised sadly but intently. Behind her stands a chained and padlocked gate. 'What's the password?' she says.

He stops. (*Guessing*) 'My days are filled with dread?' he says.

'Yours too?'

'And as lonely as the broken cloud,' he adds.

She considers him, stopping her gentle sway to do so. 'Do you believe in *love*?'

'Not yet, not totally,' he says, feeling suddenly amicable.

'Me neither.'

And so the madman and the woman sit like Theotormon and Oothoon on the threshold of the world from which they have so miraculously sprung (Blake, 'Visions of the Daughters of Albion,' 1793). They exchange hand-shakes and Jack smiles.

'Have you been here long?' he says.

'Yes, since my family was deported,' she says.

'I only just arrived.'

'From where?'

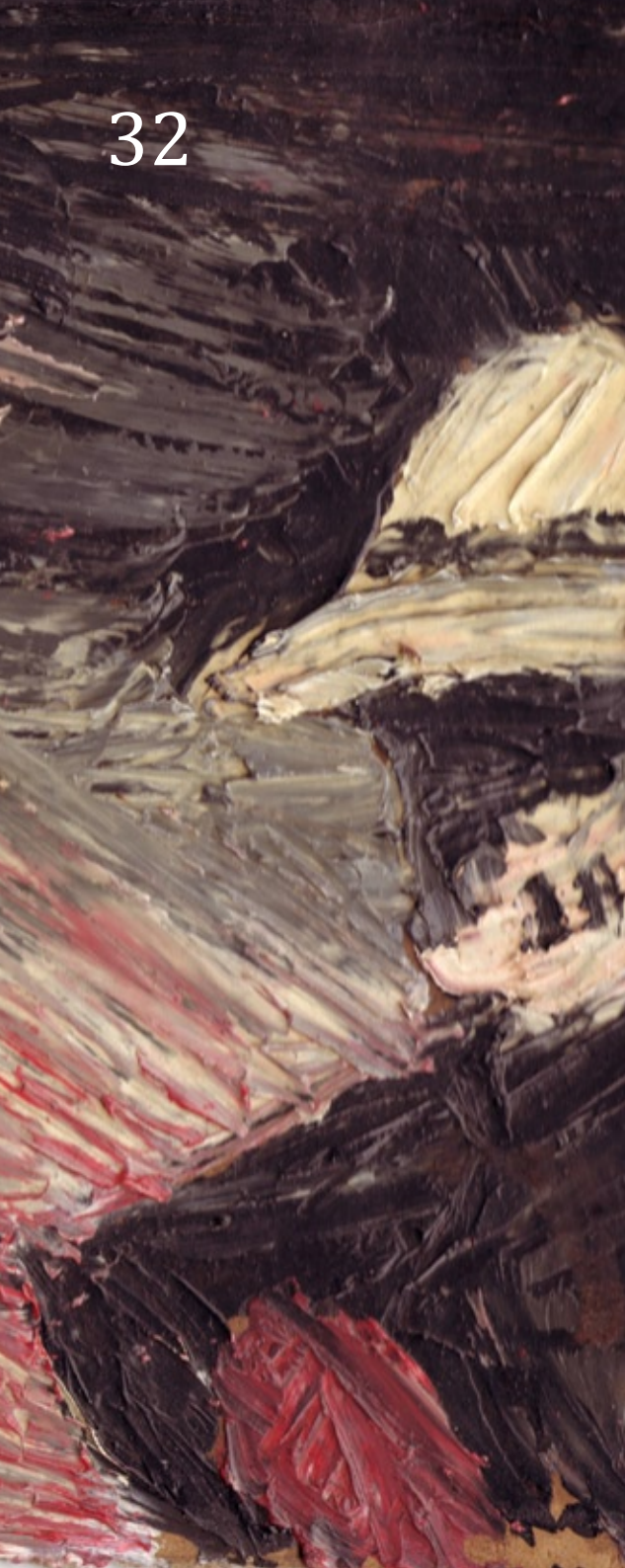
'A place even less fathomable than this one,' he says. 'I was deported from the Mall I used to beg in, then exiled by my maker for changing the world.'

'How do you mean?' she asks, rocking again.

'It's beyond my ability to explain,' he says. 'I'm an avatar. *Un-*

treasured capacity to shop till they drop. Nor does it augment the genuine liberal against the tendency of rulers (political and economic) to direct and manipulate' (125).

(*Michael Freeden, Ideology, 2003*)



objects. *timely ripped.* An orphan (of sorts).’ Suddenly he is bemused and sullen, and his newly found friend raises her brow.
 (Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life*, 2007, p. 21)

‘Come on,’ she says. ‘Put on a happy face. Try sitting up. You look like a corpse.’
 The madman takes her lead and begins rocking back and forth. ‘For starters,’ he says, ‘I was always confused and confounded and perplexed at my old place. And baffled and puzzled, too. Nothing ever made any sense. The simplest of things could throw me into disarray for days and weeks. Like a blemish in an iris—or a spot, the tiniest dot, on an eyeball. I wanted to enter such places and find out what lay beneath. To reach beyond the aesthetic and discover something. *Anything.*’

‘Why you here? You shouldn’t be here,’ she says, still rocking. ‘These are the Gates of Hell. Who comes willingly to the Gates of Hell?’

‘I’m looking for something—’

‘What?’

‘Substance.’

‘Like rock and earth?’

‘Like meaning,’ he says.

‘*Meaning?*’

‘Surely there has to be more than confusion and fear,’ he says, ‘and money and terror.’ He hesitates as his stricken face grapples with memories of fear. ‘I’m scared of the dark, you know? And the light. The voices. Almost everything. I’ve only been here two days.’

(*Shrugging*) ‘Who isn’t?’ she says. ‘Substance exists for most though, in some form. I think.’

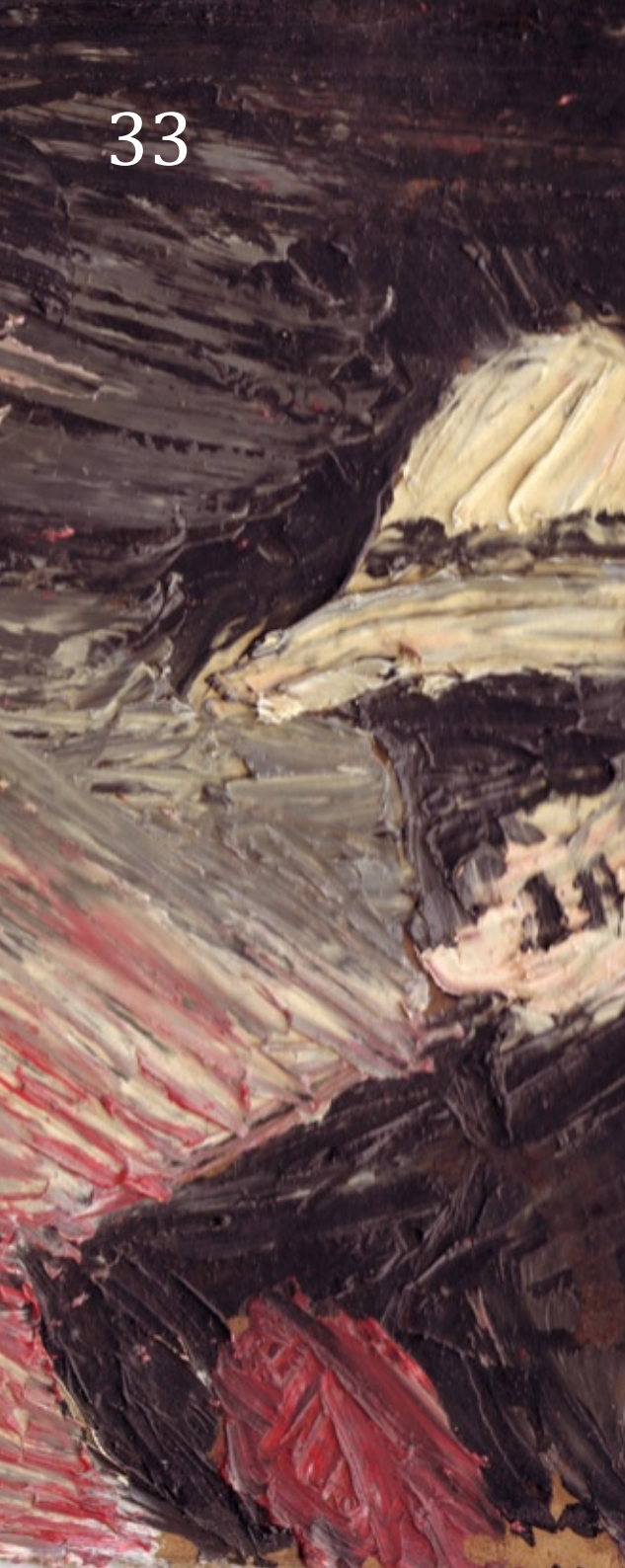
‘Depends how you look at it.’

‘*If* you look for it.’

‘If you care,’ he says.

‘If it’s a primary objective,’ she says.

‘It is for me. I need certainty. I need content. I need touch and meaning and love and hope. But I’m sure it’s all here somewhere.’



She frowns. ‘Perhaps these things only exist in your mind. Your dreams...’

‘I hope not. If I can imagine them then surely they exist. I think. I hope. No, I’m sure they’re here somewhere. Beneath the madness of things.’

She rocks and sighs and finally hums a sad and melodic tune.

‘Ah,’ he says. ‘Those cries for help still ringing in our ears’ (unaware that these very words were uttered by Vladimir some years earlier in *Waiting for Godot* [Beckett, 1956/1965]). ‘That’s beautiful,’ he says. ‘You’re the first person I’ve met who—’

Suddenly she stops and jumps to her feet.

‘—Understands,’ he says.

‘Sorry,’ she says.

‘—me,’ he adds.

‘Perhaps,’ she adds hurriedly, ‘the potential for meaningful connections can only ever exist in the most transient of senses. Those you meet and truly bond with will perhaps always be those to just as quickly shun and spurn you. Perhaps,’ and now she speaks at such a great pace that the madman is aghast with confusion, ‘perhaps the everlasting bonds you seek are also laden with their very own solvent. Like love generates hate to deconstruct itself. Like sensual midnight kisses are mocked by the stale breath of morning. Like,’ and suddenly she runs off. ‘Must go,’ she yells.

Our man jumps to his feet. ‘But wait. Where...? What...? Can’t we...?’ He throws out his hands in a desperate and futile display of dejection. ‘But I dream of the stale breath of morning.’ – yelling – ‘I yearn for the stains of greasy love. It’s not sterility I seek,’ – even louder – ‘*It’s love, stability, and cohesion!*’

[Voice over:] *That did it.*

The girl throws a rock. (*Misses*) ‘Stay back, you brute.’

‘I just need to belong,’ he yells. He sighs: ‘Blasted woman!’

John Keats:
Stanza 36
'The Eve of St. Agnes'

Beyond a mortal man
 impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents,
 he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a
 throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire
 heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as
 the rose
Blendeth its odour with the
 violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime
 the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering
 the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes;
St. Agnes' moon hath set.

1820

and stomps his foot. 'How's a man supposed to survive this kind of discourse? This kind of meaningless—'

The second rock hits him plumb on the head.

The madman turns in a lonely circle and surveys the world around him. Finding nothing but corrugated iron and razor wire and chimney stacks, he sinks to his knees and elbows, and mutters to the ants passing backwards and forwards beneath his bloody face.

'Can you hear me?' he says. 'You with the crumb?'

But his blood drips and drowns the chosen ant and the crumb is carried off by another.

And here our man lies for several hours until dark, his face stuck to the pavement and encrusted with ants, until a steel-capped boot sends shock waves through his spleen and stomach, and he gasps, convulses, and looks fearfully up. Up into a dark looming apparition. Some kind of gargoyle. A vision from hell.

Perhaps a monster.

'Found you, you bludger,' yells the Lout.

'Lout,' he wheezes.

A single blow to the temple is all it takes. Paralysed, the madman watches through watery eyes as his dear friend descends over him, darkening the streetlight. A hand muffles his cries and hampers his breathing.

Ants writhe in his buzzing eardrums. Blood bubbles in his nose.

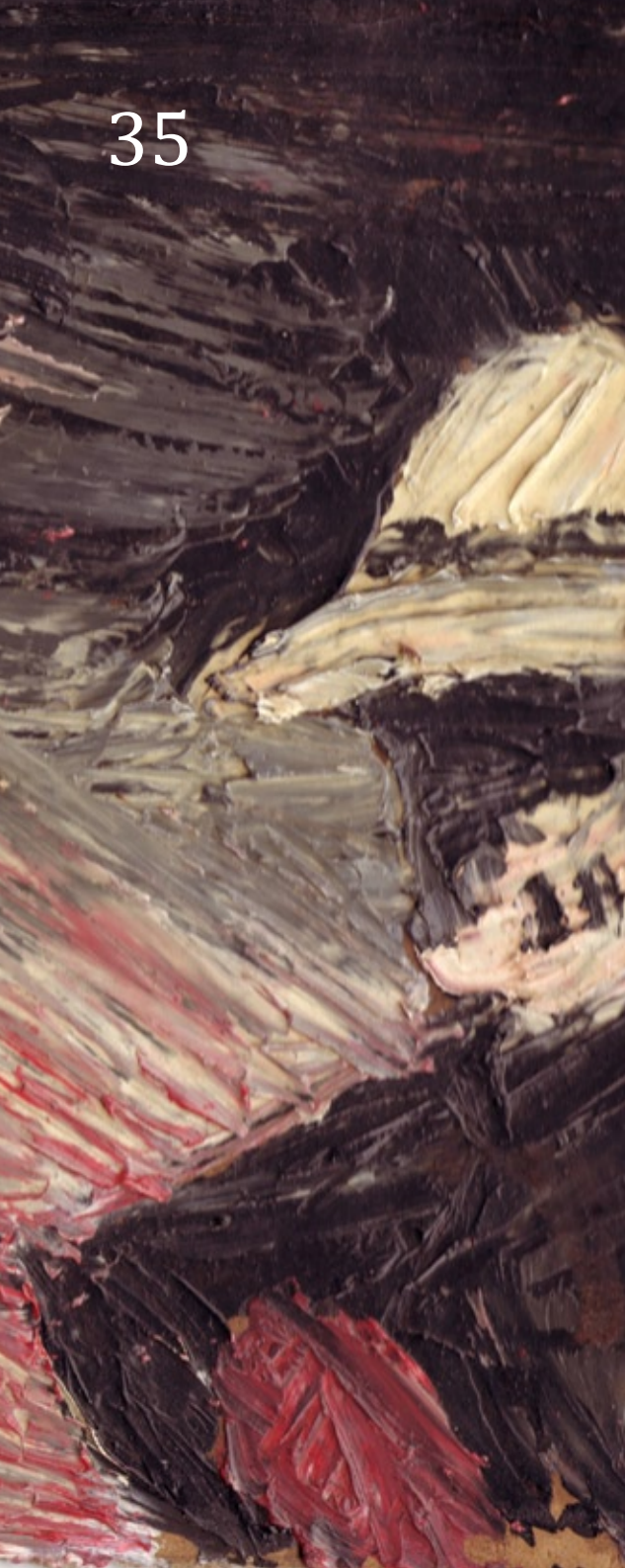
But the madman soon succumbs to the pain and instead ponders the nature of his newly found friend. The girl, **Circe**. The angel of annunciation and trepidation, of truths unknown and lifelong obsessions. An enchantress. Gatekeeper of Hell.

(Lout grunting overhead)

The madman, groaning, whispers **Keats**: 'Into her dream he melts, like the rose blendeth its odour with the violet. Solution—'

(Lout orgasms, knocking the madman out)

Circe: In Homer's Odyssey, her home Aeaia is described as a water mansion standing in the middle of a clearing in a dense wood. Around the house prowled lions and wolves, the drugged victims of her magic; they were not dangerous, and fawned on all newcomers. Circe worked at a huge loom. She invited Odysseus' crew to a feast, the food laced with one of her magical potions, and she turned them all into pigs with a wand after they gorged themselves on it. Only Eurylochus, suspecting treachery from the outset, escaped to warn Odysseus and the others who had stayed behind at the ships. Odysseus set out to rescue his men, but was intercepted by Hermes, who told him to use the holy herb moly to protect himself from Circe's potion and, having resisted it, to draw his sword and act as if he were to attack Circe. From there, Circe would ask him to bed, but Hermes advised caution, for even there the goddess would be treacherous. She would take his manhood unless he had her swear by the names of the gods that she would not.



 [Voice over:] *And so the third day ended like the first. 'Bitter chill it was—'*

Scene 28

[Setting:] The madman's den. He sits within the cocoon of the lamp-light, pen in hand, intent on a blank piece of paper. His tongue makes its usual pilgrimage around his lips and gums, sneaking furtive peeks at the world, and his foot taps unseen in the darkness beneath the desk. Eventually, the madman clears his throat and writes:

Dear Jesus Christ,

(Pauses, adds)

It has come to my attention that the world you fought and died for is not such a splendid or holy place.

(Screws this sheet up. Begins again:)

Dear Jesus Christ. I have so far observed in my brief journey many wonderful things. However, the vast bulk of my experiences have been life-threatening and antisocial. Will you please amend this trend?

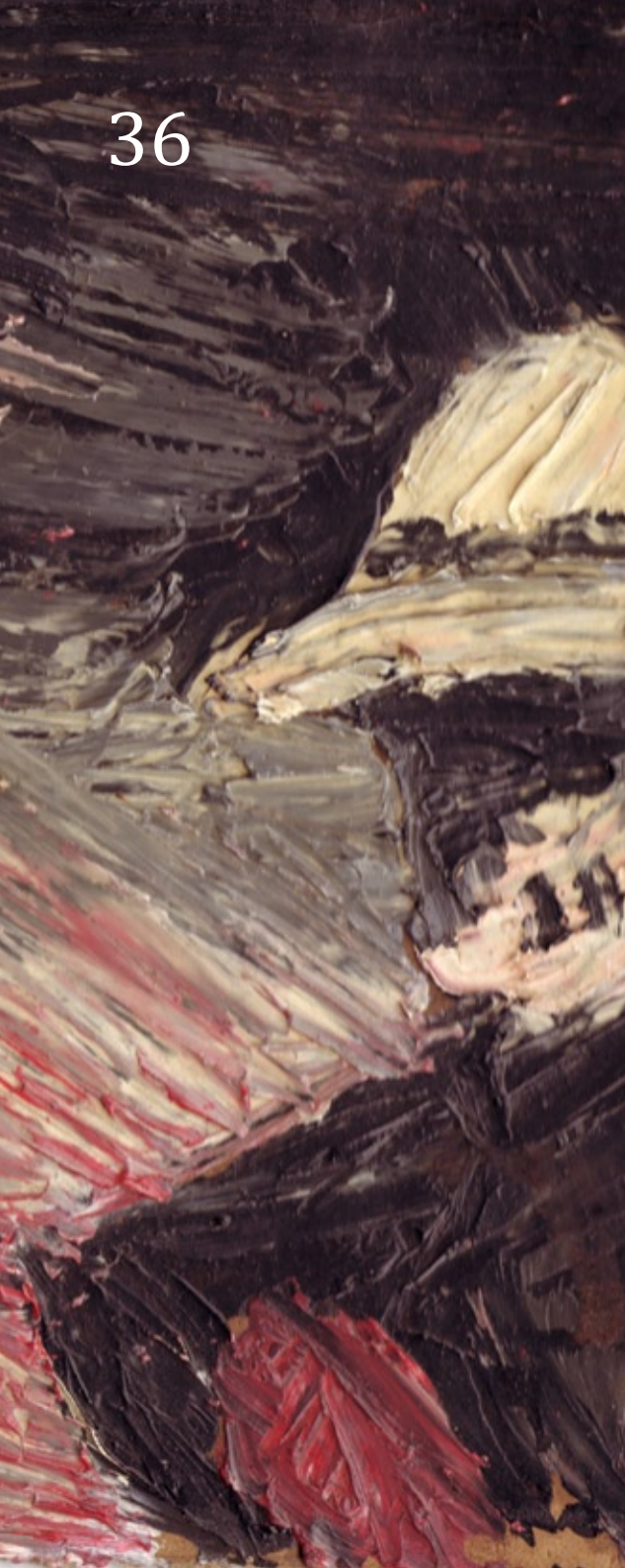
The madman stops. His tongue, again peering from the corner of his mouth, pauses and drools. His large bulbous eyes blink and consider. His foot stops its hysterical beat. Calmer now, the madman begins again:

Dear God,

Having found your son somewhat aloof and remote - in

Odysseus heeded Hermes's advice, thus securing the transfigured freedom of his fellows. For one year, he and Circe were lovers. She later assisted him in his quest to reach his home.

*Wikipedia
 (accessed 31 July 2008)*



Ants:

Ants form highly organised colonies, which may occupy large territories and consist of millions of individuals that are mostly sterile females forming castes of 'workers', 'soldiers', or other specialised groups. Ant colonies also have some fertile males called 'drones' and one or more fertile females called 'queens'. The colonies are sometimes described as superorganisms because ants appear to operate as a unified entity, collectively working together to support the colony.

Wikipedia
(accessed 23 July 2008)

fact, somewhat shy and reserved; in fact, downright rude and dismissive - I have decided to take my reflections on humanity straight to the horse's mouth, to you.

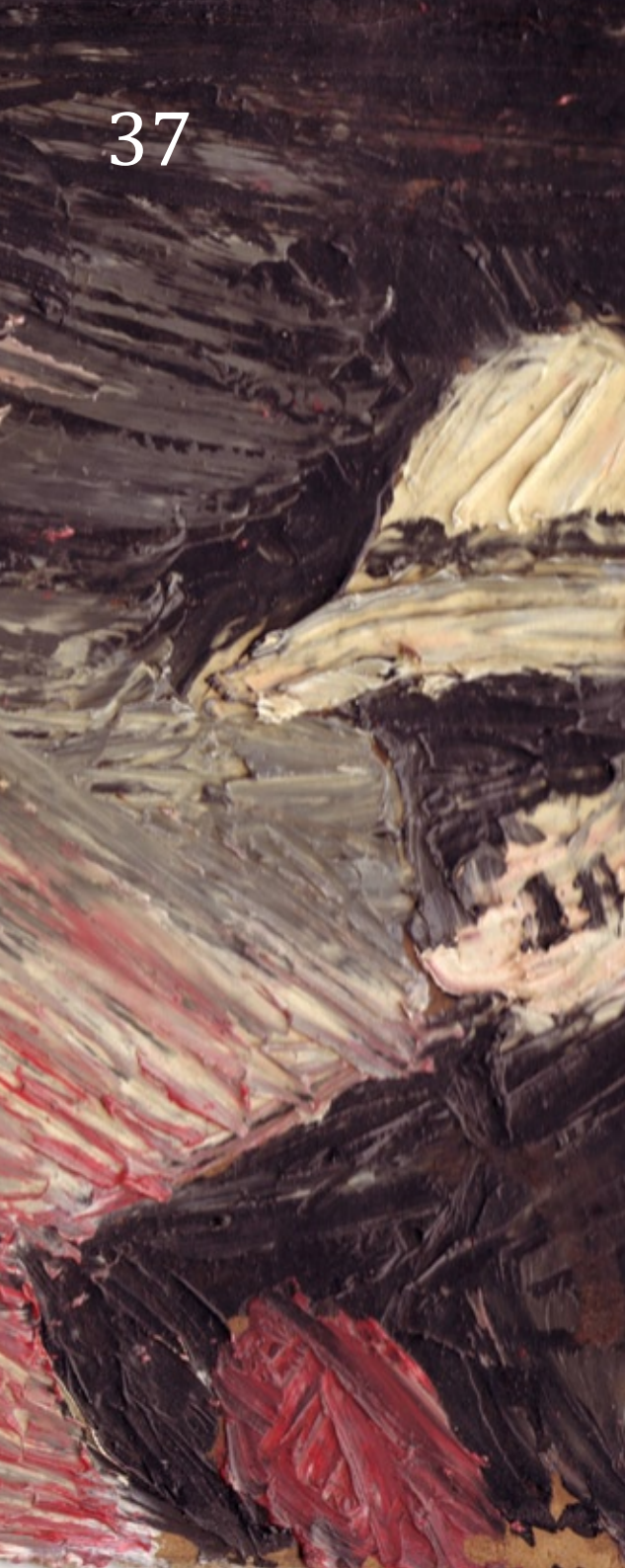
I think you have been grossly negligent in your creation and should redress your plans for utopia. This world (I concede, your first) is sadly imperfect and barely inhabitable. In fact, there is scarcely any element of your handiwork worthy of applause or distinction. I do like *ants*, however. They are perhaps one of your minor successes. Some other things are worthy of fleeting acknowledgment, but they are so few and far between that I dare not draw attention to them here. That would be excessive and complimentary, and may mislead you into believing that your work is adequate.

After all, who in their right mind unleashes a concept like consumerism on an unsuspecting horde? A concept that pits one poor fool against the other in an all-out consumer war? Who in their right mind unleashes such a free-for-all? A God with more pride than heart is who. A God that doesn't care. An invidious God. But I digress.

Overall, however, I have to fail your first project. It lacks all the hallmarks of insight and forward planning. For example (and there are many millions of these, perhaps trillions), you have built into the minds of your subjects an insatiable appetite for unattainable goals, such as *love* and *friendship* and other equally implausible associations. You have done this by proving that miracles can and do happen, however infrequently and arbitrarily, from time to time, and that your subjects can look up to them as examples to be hoped for and depended upon. In turn, your children are forever looking towards a day that won't come, their eyes straining towards a horizon that can't be seen. Strangely, they think that miracles,

Merk: '... For these creatures [humans] are for the most part malevolent and murderous by nature, able to tolerate others only in so far as they resemble themselves, capable of slaughtering each other because of a slight difference in skin-colour or appearance. Also they cannot tolerate those who do not think as they do. Although they know perfectly well, theoretically, that the surface of the inhabited globe is divided into thousands of areas, each with its system of religious or scientific belief, and although they know that it is entirely by chance that any individual among them was born into this or that area, this or that area of belief, this theoretical knowledge does not prevent them from hating foreigners in their own particular small area, and if not harming them, isolating them in every way possible.'

Doris Lessing,
Briefing for a Descent
into Hell,
1971/1973, p. 122



rather than won't happen, will happen! How indeed are your subjects supposed to live with such fanciful hopes? They can't! It sends them mad (and this happens to nearly all of them) and makes them turn to more tenable and achievable goals, such as murder and rape and hate and suicide and other such malign endeavours. Cruelty is the norm here, not the exception. It is, after all, easier to reach the pinnacles of excellence in the more malign crafts than those of the opposite persuasion. In your next project – and yes, I am setting you another – please address this hateful and spiteful inequity. I fear your character is slightly lugubrious and morose.

Your friend and guide,

Jack Diggins.

Teacher & Vagabond.

PS By the way, when you find yourself rolling my dice and chancing my arm, please intervene and bring that Circe girl back into my life. She was truly beautiful. She is about 5' 7 with long golden hair and inscrutable green eyes. There is a blemish, the tiniest spot, in the iris of her eye. Also, she throws rocks. Please arrest her arm when she does this. Also, and this is a minor point, she seems to hate me. I would prefer love and affection.

PPS Also, the rise of neo-liberalism has divided the world into the *haves* and *have-nots*. The two faces of hell. One burdened by agonising choice and endless war, the other by mind-numbing oppression and permanent exile. Lurching from calamity to calamity. Rejection to rejection. [Adiaphorization](#).

PPPPS I shall collect further data highlighting the imperfections of your work and make them available for

Adiaphorization: The postmodern phenomenon of floating moral responsibility in the name of economic rationality.

Adiaphorization is about stripping human relationships of their moral significance by disregarding the whole person for the fragment. People become objects of consumption. Consequently, bureaucratic and urban relationships are based on floating moral responsibility rather than engaging it (pp.133-134).

Adiaphorization is about 'making certain actions, or certain objects of action, morally neutral or irrelevant – exempt from the category of phenomena suitable for moral evaluation. The effect of adiaphorization is achieved by excluding some categories of people from the realm of moral subjects' (p. 149).

Modern organisation is the rule of nobody. It is, we may say, a contraption to float responsibility – most conspicuously, moral responsibility.

Report Card on God:

Effort: God always begins with a bang. He exerts great energy at the beginning of a project but almost none by the end. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome may be a factor. **7/10**

Consistency: Although an unseen logic may guide God's work, he seems genuinely incapable of explaining it when pressed. **4/10**

Research: God undertakes little or no research for his projects. He simply launches into his creations and hopes for the best. **4/10**

Communication: God struggles to communicate with others. He remains aloof and defiant and prefers his own company. **3/10**

Attention to detail: Driven to produce great quantities of work, God ignores all feedback and refuses to revise. He pays little attention to detail (or ethics) and appears hellbent on quantity over quality. **2/10**

In all, God has failed to live up to expectations. Worse, he has failed to

your inspection. I now recognise my calling: Ambassador of Humanity and Special Adviser to you, the Almighty.

PPPPPS As you are omniscient, I shall leave my notes for your inspection on my desk. Feel free to annotate where appropriate and make suggestions.

Diggins.

Here the madman finishes, his face stricken again with excessive thought and effort. Beads of sweat twinkle at his temples. A nose hair sits precariously on his upper lip, where it sucks back and forth with his heavy breathing. After some minutes his complexion softens, and he sits back and admires his work. He changes a stop here and there, applies a comma where appropriate, and smiles at his success. It is at this point that the hair slips through the ridge of his upper lip and falls onto his epistle, a minuscule offering.

[Voice over:] *Yes, by day four Jack had found his chief reason for being. He would document all the world's shortcomings and deliver them to God.*

Flying headlong into mayhem and destruction. Like a moth to a fire or a lemming to a cliff. With each new insult he cast into the world a fresh wave of horror returned with interest. The monsters were coming thick and fast, in all manner of guises and all manner of forms, and they were coming for him. To reign him in and destroy him. Market ravaged and desire riven. A mind at war with itself. Hating itself for failing. Hating itself for trying.

And so a face full of pavement looked welcoming.

The ultimate cessation of mind.

Eternal stillness.

Quietism.

Circe.

'Please, God, *more,*' pray the tourists in their aeroplane pews.

(Zygmunt Bauman, Life in Fragments, 1995, p. 197)

Quietism: '... quietism sought, and claimed to have found, a state of love for God with no concern for rewards or punishments, a state of indifference without quest for either personal satisfaction or desire for salvation, an act of contemplation that takes into account neither the attributes of God nor Christ's humanity ...' (Julia Kristeva, Tales of Love, 1987, p. 301).

live up to his potential. He must concentrate harder in future. Seven days is not enough time to build a world. The same effort he makes to task-avoidance and taciturnity must be made to quality control. Given the gravity of the situation, the Committee has no choice but to place Deity 1151 on notice. Should his work and attitude not improve, the Committee will have no choice but to demand his immediate expulsion from the League of Deities. Of all the gods, both past and present, he has the potential to be the greatest: *if he applies himself.*
20/50

Assessor: Jackery J. Diggins,
Esquire.
Dean of Deities.

‘Money,’ they add as they contemplate the exchange rates that will deify them and crush the vagabonds at their feet. Which reminds him of the most famous failed consumer of all: **Oliver Twist**.

‘Please, God, I want some more,’ cries the madman, palms open, head back, imploring the heavens for some kind of confirmation. Some kind of hope.

The shadows hear his cries and echo back his sighs. But the heavens remain silent.

Solution sweet.

Oliver Twist:
Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own temerity:

‘Please, sir, I want some more.’

The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralysed with wonder; the boys with fear.

‘What!’ said the master at length, in a faint voice.

‘Please, sir,’ replied Oliver, ‘I want some more.’

The master aimed a blow at Oliver’s head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arms; and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

*(Charles Dickens,
Oliver Twist,
1838)*



Rather than a culture of pristine creativity, postmodern culture is a culture of quotations.

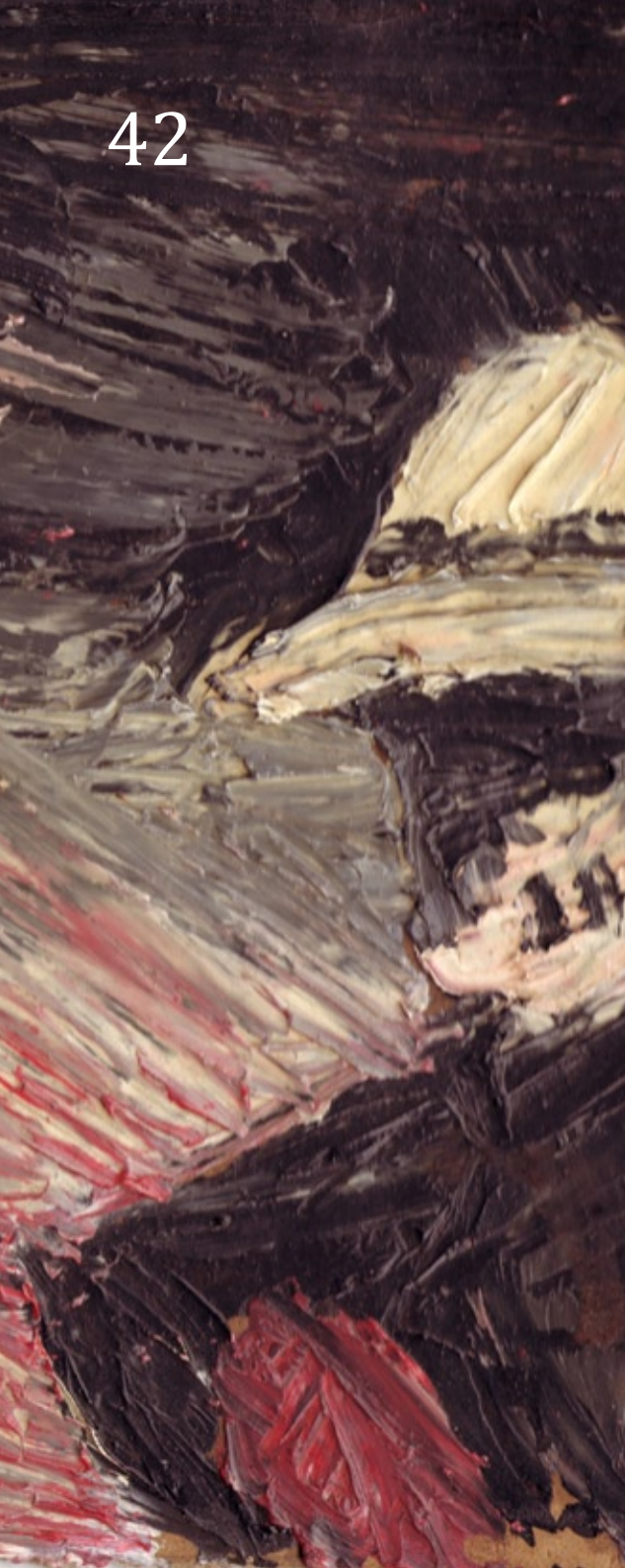
John Storey, 'Postmodernism and Popular Culture,' in Stuart Sim (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 2006, p.

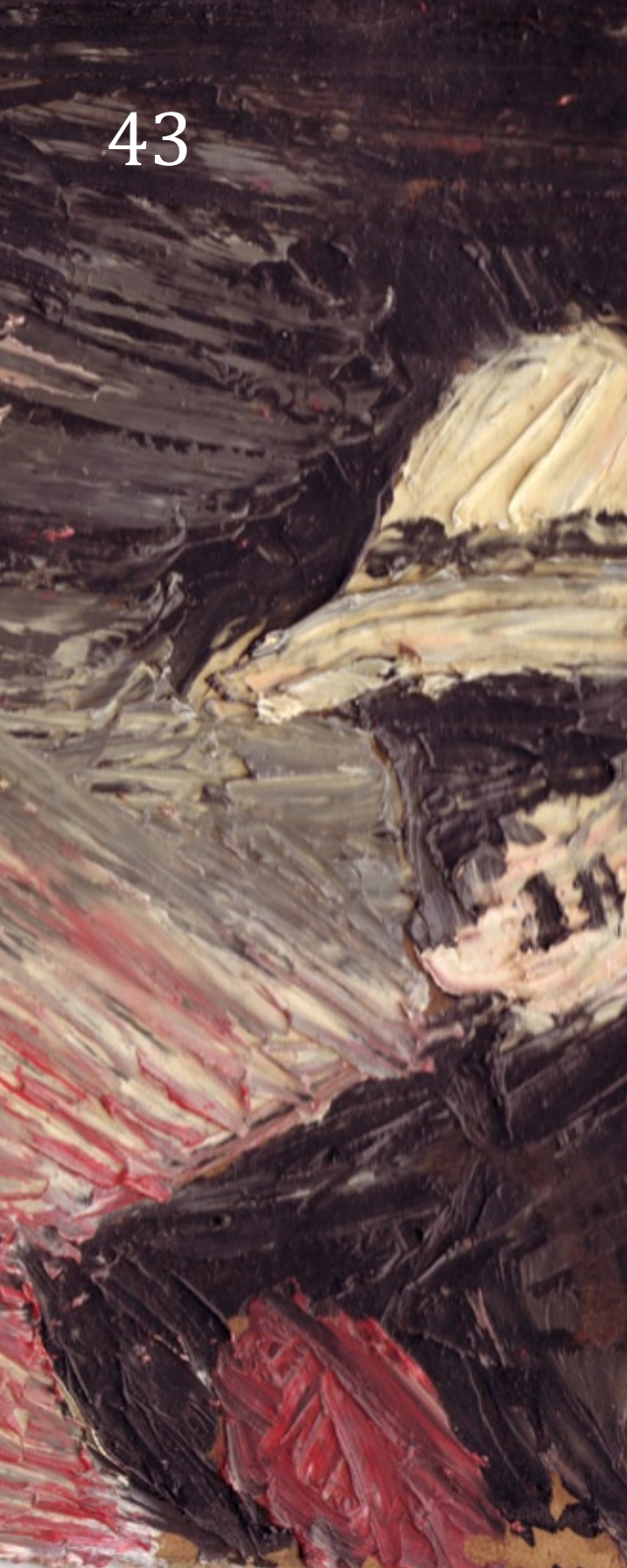


River: 'Please, God, make me a stone.'

Mendel, B. (Producer), & Whedon, J. (Writer/Director).
(2005). *Serenity* [Motion picture]. United States: Universal
Pictures.

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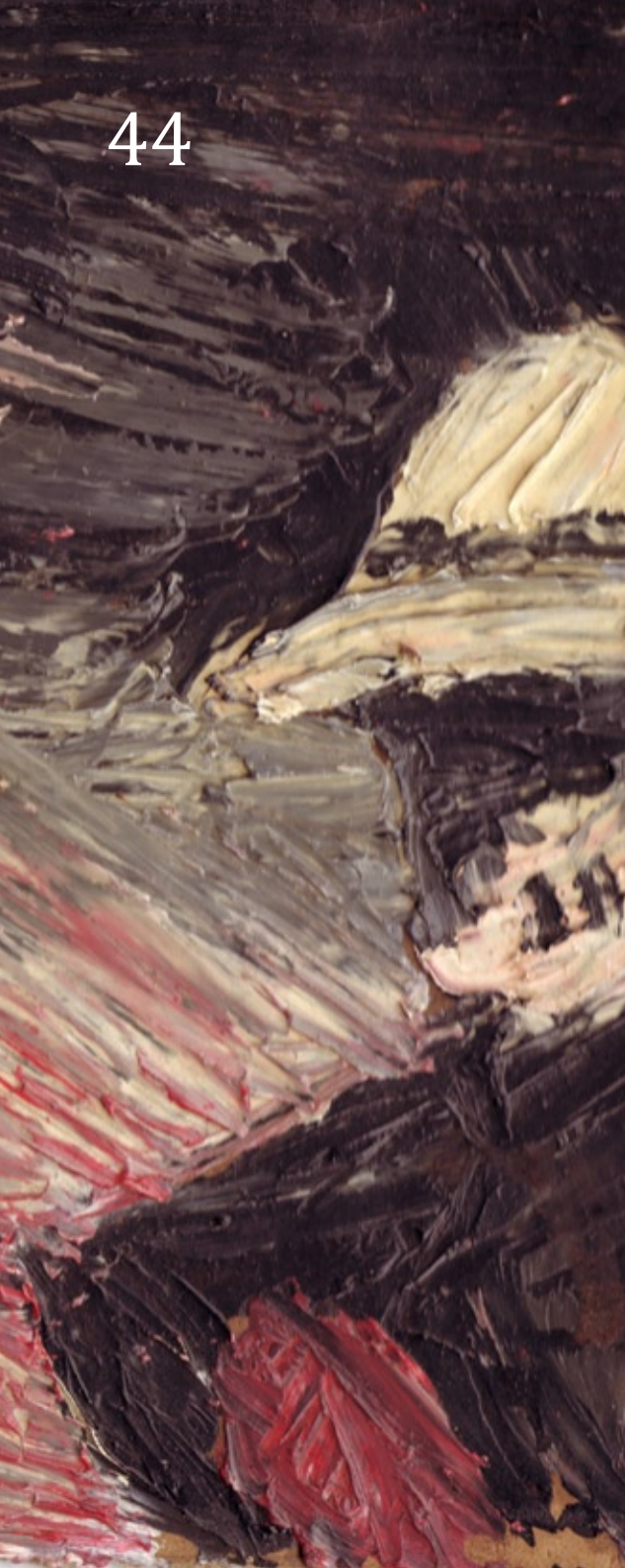




This is the question of the foreigner. The foreigner is the other, the guest, the immigrant, the exile, the deported, the expelled, the rootless, the stateless, the lawless nomad, the displaced, those who come or go abroad, those who ‘turn up’ at our front doors and ‘traumatise.’ They traumatise, first, because we don’t know what to do with them. Do we give them asylum, ‘home,’ and thus welcome them? If so, how? Or do we expel and return them to the place from which they were expelled? Second, they traumatise us through their stories. These tend to discomfort our comfortable selves and homes.

Awad Ibrahim, *The Question of the Question is the Foreigner*, *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, Winter 2005, p. 150

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The Failed Consumer