Alienation and Resistance

Alienation and Resistance: Representation in Text and Image

Edited by

Gordon Spark, Laura Findlay,
Pauline MacPherson and Andrew Wood

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Alienation and Resistance: Representation in Text and Image,
Edited by Gordon Spark, Laura Findlay, Pauline MacPherson and Andrew Wood

This book first published 2010

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-1964-6, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1964-0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

In the early summer of 2008, a group of postgraduate students, early career researchers and established academics gathered to participate in the sixth annual University of Dundee English postgraduate conference. This book emerges out of that event. Since 2003, this series of conferences has been providing a platform for postgraduates and early career researchers to disseminate and discuss their work under a broad range of topics: "Altered States: Transformation, Crisis and Reformation" (2003); "Cultural Nightmares: Horror, Gothic and the Uncanny" (2004); "Two Way Traffic: Representing Urban and Suburban Spaces" (2005); "Sub/versions: Cultural Status, Genre and Critique" (2006) (the proceedings from which were also published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, under the same title); and "InVisibilities: Absence and Presence in Cultural Texts and Images" (2007). This publication marks an extension of that process: for many of the contributors this is their first foray into print, for others a valuable opportunity to expose their work to a wider audience. For those starting out in academic research, the experience of others is particularly valuable, and in that respect the conferences have been blessed by the presence of distinguished keynote speakers from across a broad spectrum of related disciplines. Marcus Wood, Professor of English at the University of Sussex and Senior Leverhulme Fellow, who also provides the paper with which this collection begins, gave the plenary talk at the 2008 conference, following in the footsteps of Dundee book-prize winner Andrew Murray Scott, Professor Fred Botting of Lancaster University, Dr Nick Hubble of Kingston University, Dr Roger Sabin of Central St. Martin's School of Art and Dr Darryl Jones of Trinity College, Dublin.

The annual conference marks the culmination of the English Postgraduate Forum which runs throughout the academic year at Dundee. As well as organising the summer conference, the forum provides a space for Dundee postgraduates to discuss, develop and present their research. Many of the conference papers given by Dundee postgraduates begin life as forum papers, and some of the contributions to this collection come not from the 2008 conference but from related work produced from such sessions. One thing which has emerged out of both the conference series and the postgraduate forums is the fact that the study and research of English has expanded in recent times beyond traditional literary modes to

encapsulate such diverse forms as film, comics, and other cultural media. The annual conferences, in close conjunction with those of the Scottish Word and Image Group, which is also run out of Dundee, have increasingly come to reflect this diversification and cross-fertilisation, and that diversity of interest finds its way into this present publication. As such, the book represents a cross-section of some of the scholarship currently being undertaken by postgraduate students working at the ever-changing borders of the discipline.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication would not have been possible without the help and input of many people. The editors would like to acknowledge the assistance they received within the English Programme at the University of Dundee. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to Dr Keith Williams, Professor Aidan Day and Dr Jodi-Anne George. In their capacity as successive Postgraduate Advisors, each has been a source of guidance and encouragement. We are also grateful to the other members of the teaching staff, past and present, within the English programme for the continued support they offer to the postgraduate community. In particular, we are grateful to those members of staff who over the years, in their capacity as Leaders of the English Programme, have supported the Postgraduate conference series that this publication emerged from. Of those Programme Leaders, the present incumbent, Dr Christopher Murray, is particularly deserving of mention. His continued involvement with the postgraduate community of which he was, until relatively recently, a key member, is greatly valued and appreciated. There are many others too numerous to mention within the English Programme, and the University of Dundee as a whole, who lent their assistance. However, we would be remiss if we did not mention the Programme secretary, Jennifer Byers.

We are also indebted to Professor Marcus Wood for his contribution to both this publication and the conference out of which it grew. It is the support and participation of such established academics which give projects such as this their credibility and their impetus. Additionally, this publication is the fruition of many years of hard work by those who built-up the English postgraduate community at Dundee; particularly deserving of mention are Jo Bennie, Andy Wood, Kevin Corstorphine and Ross Thompson. We would also like to acknowledge the present postgraduate community, many of whom have contributed articles to this publication, and the delegates who have supported our past conferences and given us the momentum to continue organising such events.

Finally, we would like to thank Cambridge Scholars Publishing for providing us with the opportunity to again publish the proceedings of our conference under their imprint and for their support during the preparation of this edition. In particular, we would like to express our gratitude to Carol Koulikourdi for her guidance, support and sympathetic ear throughout the entire publishing process.

INTRODUCTION

GORDON SPARK, LAURA FINDLAY,
PAULINE MACPHERSON AND ANDREW WOOD

Turning the proceedings of a conference into an edited collection presents numerous challenges, not least of which is finding an effective means of communicating the theme which unites the contributions within these covers. When the topic of a conference is chosen specifically for its "openness", its ambiguity, as was the case with the 2008 conference *Alienation and Resistance: Representation in Text and Image*, then the task of defining what the subsequent book is "about" becomes a difficult one. *Alienation* is a term which has its roots in Marxism but which has held broad currency in literary and cultural studies over the last century, in everything from the Modernist movement to contemporary cinematic techniques, and which surely means different things to different people. *Resistance* is a term much used but rarely defined with any clarity. How, then, does one begin to arrive at definitions?

When answers prove elusive, the natural reaction is often a retreat into more questions. The articles which follow tackle many such questions. What are the roles, forms and conditions of alienation and resistance in today's culture and its diverse media? Our contributors find examples of both everywhere, from sixteenth century drama to contemporary fiction, from American comics to Eastern European cinema, from representations of the body to the site of the body itself. In seeking out these representations of alienation and resistance, these contributions begin also to probe the borders and outposts of such terms.

The book begins with an article by Marcus Wood. Angry and satirical by turn, Wood's article focuses on two museum pieces which draw attention to the dangers of the memory of American slavery becoming fetishised through the emancipation movement. In the first case, Wood argues that an extraordinary exhibit found at the Dime Museum in Baltimore, purporting to be the final faeces passed by Abraham Lincoln before his assassination, can be read as a satirical attack on the dangers of the cult of personality which threaten to subsume the memory of slavery

within the myth of the "Great Emancipator". Wood identifies a similar process at work at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate, where the fetishistic celebration of Jefferson's abolitionist credentials is undermined not merely by the absence of any monument to his slave mistress Sally Hemings but by the conversion of her quarters into a public rest room.

In Section One, we turn our attention to the body itself, with three articles which explore the ways in which the body becomes a site of both alienation and resistance. Katherine Angell discusses the work of the English Victorian illustrator Aubrey Beardsley, reading his frequent depictions of the aborted foetus within his work as a product of Beardsley's concept of monstrosity. Angell examines the ways in which this monstrosity arises in large part out of the alienation of the foetus, and suggests that Beardsley's employment of this particular image points towards his own social and cultural alienation. Ally Crockford focuses on the infamous case of Joseph Merrick, better known as the Elephant Man. Crockford examines contemporary Victorian writings on Merrick, including his own, to examine the ways in which such writings enact a division between Merrick's monstrous physical appearance and his altogether more humane character. This alienation of the body from the man constitutes, for Crockford, the means by which these writings are able to define humanity, as well as its monstrous "other". Matthew Jarron completes this section with an examination of the films of American silent film actor Lon Chaney. Jarron suggests that although Chaney's frequent portrayal of physically handicapped characters is perhaps uncomfortable to modern day sensibilities, his body of work in fact explores issues of social and psychological alienation as a result of physical disability or deformity at a time when such representation was largely absent from mainstream cinema.

Jarron's article draws attention to the importance of film as a medium for exploring questions of alienation and resistance, and Section Two further explores the possibilities of cinema with three articles each of which focus upon the work of Eastern European filmmakers. Gillian Hunter examines the work of Polish film director Krystof Kieslowski and his Hungarian counterpart, Béla Tarr. Whilst both filmmakers demonstrate the alienation caused by oppressive totalitarian regimes, Hunter suggests that they also depict the resistance to change exhibited when these regimes fall. Brian Hoyle's article is also concerned with the work of Béla Tarr, specifically his *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000). Hoyle analyses this film, made a decade after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe, against its source text, Laszlo Krasznahorkai's *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989). Hoyle argues that whilst both examine the state of communism in Hungary

in an indirect manner, the novel (which was produced under communist rule) was forced to do so, whilst the film does so as an aesthetic and political choice. In particular, Hoyle focuses upon the films allegorical treatment of piano-tuning as a form of political metaphor. Finally in this section, Christopher Murray examines the work of the Soviet filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky. Murray focuses upon two of Tarkovsky's later movies, *Solaris* (1972) and *Stalker* (1979). Although both have as their sources science-fiction texts, Murray argues that they resist such fixed genre specifications and instead stand as explorations of Tarkovsky's own sense of displacement and alienation.

Hunter, Hoyle and Murray, then, examine the work of three Eastern European filmmakers working during, and in some ways influenced by, the Cold War. In Section Three, we turn to the events which arguably heralded the start of that Cold War – the dropping of two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Kazuhiro Kitaoka reads John Hersey's "true" study, *Hiroshima*, as an orientalist discourse notable as much for what it omits as for its exploration of the effects of the bombing of Hiroshima. In particular, Kitaoka argues that Hersey's account fails to consider the importance of the American occupation of Japan between 1945 and 1952. Furthermore, Kitaoka questions the "Christian" framework in which Hershey's study is presented, arguing that the book is so-indexed for western consumption, rather than reading the bomb and its effects in the context of Japanese culture. Gordon Spark turns to a fictional account of the bombing of Nagasaki, written by the Japanese born author Kazuo Ishiguro. Spark argues that in *A Pale View of Hills* Ishiguro employs unreliable narration, intertextual references and distancing effects to present a contingent history of the event which points towards the alienation experienced by those who survived.

Section Four explores the themes of alienation and resistance against the backdrop of the American Dream. Martyn Colebrook reads Paul Auster's 1990 novel *The Music of Chance* alongside Peter Carey's short story "American Dreams" in order to interpret the former as an examination of themes of alienation and escape in the late-twentieth century capitalist world. Colebrook also sees intertextual links between Auster's work and that of Don DeLillo, who is the subject of Philip Pass's article. Pass explores the alienation and apophasis of the central character in DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997) through Heidegger and the anonymously written *The Cloud of Unknowing* in order to suggest that that it is only through alienation from the self and others that a truer sense of our own being can be approached.

From American dreams (or nightmares), Section Five goes on to consider alienation and resistance from a Scottish perspective. Christopher Kydd considers the ways in which Ian Rankin's series of "Rebus" novels borrow the American hard-boiled tradition's more subversive characteristics in their representation of Edinburgh and Scotland. Kydd examines the ways in which the city is constructed so as to present its urban ghettos as alienated "others", distanced from the historic and opulent areas more familiar to tourists and argues that Rankin employs the crime genre as a vehicle for exploring wider societal inequities and exclusions. Rachel Marsh examines the biographical elements of Eric Linklater's 1933 novel, *Magnus Merriman*, suggesting that the novel's support of nationalism is conditional and that Linklater rejects anti-English sentiments and notions of national alienation in favour of a federalist future.

Both Kydd and Marsh make clear the role that genre plays in representations of alienation and resistance, a trait they share with each of the contributors to Section Six. Scott Stephen re-evaluates the anonymous sixteenth-century play *Arden of Faversham*. Stephen argues that, the play should be read within the genre of "equitable drama" rather than as domestic tragedy, and that in so doing the play becomes a site of resistance rather than resolution. Samira Nadkarni's interest lies in Frederick Busch's short story "The Talking Cure". Nadkarni reads Busch's story through Shoshana Feldman's notion of the "reading effect" to explore the similarities between a psychoanalytic reading and an ethic reading of "The Talking Cure". Hannah Miodrag examines the ways in which Linda Barry cartoon strips portray that genre as being excluded from serious consideration as "literature". Miodrag explores the importance of language in Barry's work, suggesting that the way in which linguistic convention functions as a means of entry into a particular social discourse serves as a central theme for Barry, in whose cartoons alienation arises out of the inability to use language in a manner that conforms to the social norm.

The question of voice is also at the heart of Lisa McNally's contribution, with which Section Seven begins. McNally explores the question of who might speak for the alienated through an analysis of the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Ali Smith, both of whom she identifies for their sympathetic evocation of adolescent voices. Adolescent alienation is also central to Karen Graham's reading of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. Graham examines Pullman's work alongside its "parent" text, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in order to explore the ways in which Pullman reworks the Fall myth to probe issues of adolescent alienation and sexuality.

Taken together, we hope that the articles collected here offer some sense of the current scholarship taking place on the twin themes of alienation and resistance. Certainly they demonstrate the breadth and depth of work being undertaken by young scholars across a range of disciplines and media. And if these contributions decline to offer any firm definitions of the terms they seek to explore then perhaps that only goes to suggest that we should resist the temptation to seek such absolutes and instead acknowledge the fact that alienation and resistance have different meanings and applications across the different cultural media.

—Gordon Spark, Laura Findlay, Pauline MacPherson and Andrew Wood
University of Dundee, December 2009

STRANGE LIBERTY MONUMENTS: LINCOLN, JEFFERSON, FREEDOM AND EXCRETION

MARCUS WOOD

The following analysis concerns two peculiar and almost wholly neglected public monuments to the memory of slavery both of which are involved in the metaphorics of excretion as a response to the memorial inheritance of slavery. Neither monument has so far been given the place it deserves as a central indicator of the fetishistic power exerted by the memory of the two Presidents most closely associated with concepts of American liberty.

Abraham Lincoln, the "Great Emancipator", is after Thomas Jefferson, who was after all the primary author of the central portions of the Declaration of Independence, more centrally associated with the articulation of American freedom than any other President. Lincoln held, and continues to hold a special place in the hearts of African Americans as a result. Benjamin Quarles, the pioneering historian of African American cultural achievement, wrote at great length on the way in which a cult of personality was developed around Lincoln's manifestation as "the Great Emancipator". Lincoln's continued iconic status for African Americans is amply demonstrated by his hagiographical construction by Barack Obama. The flood of books which have greeted the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth is further testament to the fact that he will primarily be remembered, whether we likes it or not, as the man who fought against and ended slavery.

Lincoln, as any student of American memorial stamps, and of the statuary and art which proliferated around the official public sites of his enshrinement as the "Great Emancipator" very readily knows, functioned, and indeed continues to function, as a core myth onto which to accrete revisionist interpretations of slave freedom. Yet the cult of Lincoln was not, and is not, restricted to official monuments and stamps. Lincoln memorabilia almost immediately had their own potency, the most potent of all being anything connected with the myth of Lincoln both as martyr, and as "the great Emancipator" of the slaves.

The real objects and fluids, or their residues, used physically to manufacture the final emancipation declaration took on the weight of holy relics. One need only, for example, consider the case of the "Emancipation Ink Well" and of the pen Lincoln used to sign the final Emancipation Proclamation on January the first 1863. The official website of *The Lincoln Museum* contains an elaborate article by Gerald J. Prokopowicz, self proclaimed "Lincoln Scholar", which announces that "After 133 years out of the public eye, in February 1996 the 'Emancipation Ink Well' went on display as the newest acquisition in the Lincoln museum". In an attempt to explain why this object has meaning the article gives a charged account of how Lincoln was initially forced to abort the signing due to a legal error in the document. Then when he returned to sign the new document he was forced to postpone the signature due to his quavering hand. He explained that he had been shaking hands all day and his arm was "almost paralyzed". He did not want a wavering signature to imply doubt about a document of which he declared "my whole soul is in it". Prokopowicz amasses dramatic context in order to convince us that by the time Lincoln finally used this ink well it was imbued, if not shrouded, in the weight of its historical moment. So this is one side of its meaning, the weight of history is somehow contained in the object.

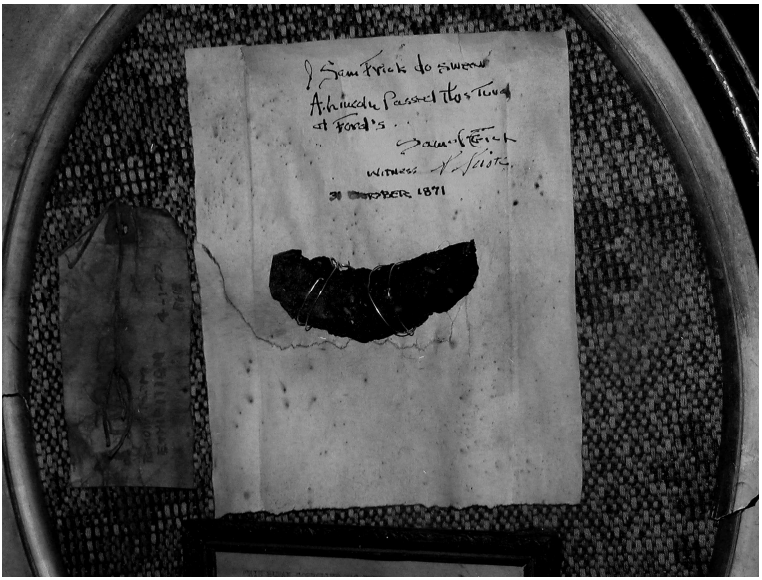
The article then moves into another more materialistic explanatory register and gives a detailed account of provenance. Provenance is important to historians and to art-dealers and concerns the assigning of a pedigree to an object, in order that the public can be certain that "what you see is what you get" and in order that its dollar value can be established. Proving that the ink well is just as authentic as, for example, the Turin shroud, or the purple shirt Elvis wore at his famous Memphis reunion concert, reassures the writer, the museum and the American public at large, that they are not dealing with a forgery. As the article progresses the ink well emerges as part of a sort of holy trinity of relics related to Lincoln and abolition: "The Proclamation itself is one of the treasures of the National Archives. The pen Lincoln used to sign it was presented to Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, and now belongs to the Massachusetts Historical Society". So the Ink Well makes up the final part of a reliquary triangle of paper, pen and ink, erected around the signing of the Proclamation. And yet for all the words, and the accompanying virtual imagery, mouth-watering simulacra for things that you can visit, see and touch, there is still the question of how these objects relate to the historical reality of slavery, and to the slave body. Surely the facts that Lincoln was famously ambivalent over the continuance of slavery, and to begin with over Emancipation, and that he was reluctant initially to consider that

slaves should be allowed to fight for their own freedom, must give the ink well a muted symbolic significance. And yet what Lincoln really said and did over the slavery question seems strangely powerless to alter the message of the ink well. Finally, this object is another example of how the myth of the Emancipation moment can sweep all before it, and generate a blinding light which annihilates dingy ethical corners. This little hollow hemisphere of glass, with its encrusted lid of dried ink, like some ancient truffle awaiting a cook, somehow makes everything clear and right. Lincoln dipped his pen in it, took ink out of it, and signed his name to the gift of freedom. Bang, and the dirt was gone! Suddenly America didn't have any slaves any more, it had "contraband of war", and in a flash America had gained that moral high ground previously occupied by the British with such strutting aplomb.

What the inkwell and its current status tell us is that American slavery was reduced to a most precise memory, or rather slavery had become, in the national mythology, the memory of a white man signing a legal document. The ink well is really a sort of crystal ball that can take American collective memory away into that fantasy land of the white gift of freedom. Gaze upon it and you too can see yourself signing the "peculiar institution" into a certain form of sanitised history and memory. This raises questions concerning the relation of physical objects to traumatic memory; indeed it forces the difficult philosophical question so central to Proust's thought: how do objects function in relation to memory? In a whimsical insight Wittgenstein suggested that maybe objects that had caused pain thereafter had various "pain spots" upon them. (Quoted and discussed in relation to trauma theory in Scarry 1985, pp.40-42) Similarly maybe this ink well contains certain freedom spots, or anxiety spots, relating to when and where Lincoln's pen and hand touched it, and took from it. Yet this object is finally a semiotic distraction. If such an object brings us closer to understanding a certain valorizing Emancipation fiction then it surely does so at a terrible cost, namely the colossal memory of slave suffering in the collective American memory?

There are many fetishistic Lincoln memorials, and some of them test the symbolic limits of the horrible gift of freedom. Probably the most extreme was an object contained in a glass case in one of America's most fascinating and ludic museums, the Dime Museum in Baltimore. The museum was unfortunately closed to the public in 2006 owing to the contravention of health and safety regulations. This fetish object does not have the same notoriety as the pen, the ink-well and the Proclamation, but acknowledging the dangers of appearing facetious, I think it raises some important questions about the limits of the cult of personality within the

Figures 1 (above) and 2 (below): Dime Museum exhibit *Great Emancipator's Final Turd*



context of emancipation, and it may yet gain a wider audience. Within the modest Dime Museum, and framed by the head of a Gnu, a Narwhal tusk and a case of 'Strange Nuts' is an elegant deep-set oval frame.

Within the frame, and accompanied by a variety of documents officially setting out its provenance, is a desiccated lump of matter attached with brass wires to a piece of khaki linen backing cloth. When I first saw it this thing perplexed me, it looked very like a giant owl pellet. I moved closer and saw a stained manuscript above the object which states: "I Sam Frick do swear that Abraham Lincoln passed this Turd at Fords [sic] 31 January 1871".[1] This is certainly getting up close and personal with history. Why would anyone want to keep the final faeces which the President passed before he was shot, and again what does this relic mean in regard to slavery and freedom? Beneath the exhibit is another document, a yellowed typescript which throws the provenance of this object into some doubt:

> This human coprolite was presented to us in 1906 as having been passed by President Lincoln in a private lavatory at Ford's on the eve of his assassination and preserved by an alert attendant. The clever con man had consumed a meal of terrapin soup, veal and Oxford pudding, duplicating Lincoln's dinner of the day before his fateful trip to Ford's as recorded on the White House Menu. The scoundrel then passed this turd and claimed it to be the product of the Great Emancipator. Microscopic inspection by a Skeptical Dr. Poe revealed traces of a compound found in Nacco [?] Wafers (a candy treat) manufactured after 1867 therefore making this stool a more recent deliverance. When confronted with the clever Dr. Poe's evidence the faecal forger fled, leaving his prize behind him, and has not been heard of since.[2]

All good fun maybe, but the object and its relation to these texts do raise some relevant questions about what powers can be invested in objects, about what the limits of a cult of personality might be, and about how difficult it is to whitewash history. From the moment news filtered out that John Wilkes Booth had fatally shot the president on April 14 1865 the American North was swamped with a flood of Lincoln memorabilia. There were badges, ribbons, broadsides, *cartes-de-visite*, extempore altars, and many fantastic photo-collages showing the President as the saviour of

---

[1] 'Great Emancipator's Final Turd', Memorial case, containing human coprolite, brass wire, manuscript and typescript. Photographed by the author 2005, 'Dime Museum Baltimore'. Present location unknown.

[2] Detail, Typewritten label, 'Great Emancipator's Final Turd', Memorial case, containing human coprolite, brass wire, manuscript and typescript. Photographed by the author 2005, 'Dime Museum Baltimore'. Present location unknown.

the slaves.[3] Many newspapers carried advertisements for objects of pieces of clothing associated with Lincoln, although nothing approaches the extremity of the Dime Museum's relic. And yet if one steps back the idea is not that fantastic. This would not, after all, be the first occasion upon which excrement and bodily fluids connected with the sudden death by gunshot of a gargantuan personality were enshrined within a museum. The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich has its own reliquary case devoted to Lord Nelson and Trafalgar. Within it are Nelson's pigtail, cut from his dying body by the lamenting Lieutenant Hardy, the dress coat complete with the bullet hole he was wearing on the fatal quarterdeck, and his pathetically small linen breeches. The latter are covered in thick faded stains of various colours, stains that were clearly not blood alone given that Nelson lost control of his lower body after his spine was shot through. When it came to the execution of Lincoln's assassins the hoods they wore when hanged were passed from the War Department to the Smithsonian. They contain stains of saliva and blood created during the prisoner's death struggles. (Swanson & Weinberg 2001, pp.79-83) So why not keep the final turd of "the great Emancipator" in a case, surely the principle isn't that different? Beyond coprological irreverence I see a sophisticated satiric impulse at the core of this exhibit. What is being attacked is not Lincoln, what he really did, or how he died, but the dangerous extremity to which the cult of personality can go. How are relics created around the memory of the great and the good, and when do they slide into the realm of the fetish? The Lincoln exhibit suggests that the posthumous sanctification of Lincoln can transform even his defecation into a holy relic, and that at the heart of the Lincoln myth is the idea that he was above all else "the Great Emancipator". While the typescript pretends to tell us, with faux outrage, of the perpetration of a dirty hoax upon the public, what this little installation really does is to suggest at a deep level that we have all been part of an international hoax at the expense of freedom. The exhibit also implies some quite keen questions about the limits of the "total immersion" theory of museology. If history is supposed to "take us back there" and to make us think about what it was like to be such and such a famous person, in such and such a famous location, then what is the status of that mimetic meal eaten by the scoundrel Sam Frick, in order to reproduce the digestive processes of "the Great Emancipator"? What if performance and installation

[3] By far the most full account of the Lincoln assassination and its aftermath in terms of the visual archive it generated is the obsessive study by James L. Swanson and Daniel R. Weinberg, *Lincoln's Assassins Their Trial and Execution* (New Mexico, Arena Editions, 2001). Examples of Lincoln memorabilia are shown pp. 37-50.

artist Joseph Beuys had done a similar piece in 1963 where he duplicated the last meal of President Kennedy, and relived his last hours mimicking his final excretory experience? If he had then preserved the evidence in a Perspex case, the whole exercise could be theoretically constructed by curators as a knowingly brilliant piece of conceptual art which laid bare the hypocrisies and exaggerations built into the Kennedy assassination cult.[4] Beuys knew very well that the line separating a performance artist from a politician, let alone a con-man, can be a very thin one. We would do well to focus on the point at which this line is crossed when it comes to remembering slavery through the political heroes who are supposed too have ended it.

Maybe the best way to come at Emancipation and the reification of the relics of individual abolitionists is through fetish theory. If one takes William Pietz's definition of objects to which a transcendental, personal and historical significance has been transferred as inevitably fetishistic, then surely the Lincoln emancipation memorabilia, and the processes of their institutionalisation, qualify:

> [fetish is the] meaningful fixation of a singular event; it is above all a "historical" object, the enduring material form and force of an unrepeatable event. This object is "territorialised" in material space (an earthly matrix), whether in the form of a geographical locality, a marked site on the surface of the human body, or a medium of inscription or configuration defined by some portable or wearable thing. The historical object is territorialized in the form of a "reification"…This reified, territorialized historical object is also "personalised" in the sense that beyond its status as a collective social object it evokes an intensely personal response from individuals. (Pietz 1985, p.12)

The prose may be ugly but it encases an important truth. Using Pietz's definition the history and memory of slavery can be seen as fetishised through the emancipation moment. At one level this is quite healthy, cultures with powerful Nationalist agendas seem to want to, indeed in order to survive often need to, put a positive spin on their wars, their crimes and their traumas. The danger comes with the sort of closure that is inbuilt into the process of fetishisation. If individuals become iconic sites

[4] For Beuys, the relic and national and historical memory see his 'Auswitz demonstration 1956-1964' in Alan Borer, *The Essential Joseph Beuys* (Munich, Schirmer Mosel, 1997); Gene Ray, 'Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime', and Georg Jappe, 'Interview with Beuys about key life experiences' in Gene Ray ed. *Joseph Beuys Mapping the Legacy* (New York, D.A.P., 2001) pp. 55-75, 185-99.

of idealisation, and if the processes of idealisation are essentialised within certain cult objects that they owned, touched or produced, then "history" can suddenly disappear. The emancipation inkwell shuts down the memory of North American slavery to a single instant of explosive transformation brought about by one man's signatory act. Constructed in this manner "Freedom" is kidnapped and culturally entombed, in fact "Freedom" becomes memorially imprisoned. What happens to the memory and history of the slaves themselves is that they are effectively locked out.

Tangible and intangible heritage at Monticello: Sally Hemings's Rest-Room and the vagaries of monumental memory

> Mr. Jefferson's Sally and their children are real persons, that the woman herself has a room to herself at Monticello in the character of sempstress to the family, if not as house-keeper…is well known (Richmond Recorder 1802)

How should, and how has Jefferson's slave mistress Sally Hemings been monumentalised within Monticello? Every visitor who pays their sixteen dollars to be very thoroughly guided round Monticello receives a copy of the brochure *A Guide for Visitors, Jefferson Monticello*. On the penultimate page, there is a small inserted paragraph, which gives the account of Sally Hemings sanctioned for mass public consumption by the "Thomas Jefferson Foundation Inc. a private non profit 501 (c) 3 corporation":

> Sally Hemings
>
> That Thomas Jefferson fathered children with Sally Hemings, an enslaved ladies' maid at Monticello, entered the public arena during his first term as president, and it has remained a subject of discussion and disagreement for more than two centuries. DNA test results released in 1998 indicated a genetic link between the Jefferson and Hemings families. Thomas Jefferson Foundation historians believe that the weight of existing evidence indicates a high probability that Thomas Jefferson was the father of Sally Hemings' son Easton (born 1808) and that he was likely the father of all her known children. The evidence is not definitive however, and the complete story may never be known. (*Guide for Visitors* 2008, p.7)

What this paragraph tells us, beyond all reasonable doubt, is that Jefferson and Hemings had a long-lasting relationship which included the creation and raising of a family, and this happened within Monticello and its grounds.[5] Jefferson married his free white wife, Martha, in 1772 and had two daughters with her, and Martha then died in 1782. In 1773 Sally was born, later that same year Jefferson inherited Betty Hemings and her children including Sally, in 1774 the estate she was part of was divided, in 1775 the slaves were moved to Monticello. In 1787, aged 14, Sally travelled to Europe with Jefferson and his daughters, spending two weeks in London, and then over two years in Paris, sailing back to Virginia at the end of 1789, and she then remained at Monticello until 1827. It is generally assumed that the relationship with the young slave woman started in Paris at some point, or soon after her return. This relationship was a much longer-lasting attachment than that to his wife, and produced many more surviving children. So going around Monticello now it is natural to want to know where Sally lived, and how she is physically recorded, and memorially resurrected, within "the only house in America on the UNESCO World Heritage List." (*Guide for Visitors* 2008, p.3)

From the information provided there is, however, some difficulty over ascertaining exactly where the slaves bedrooms were, and what they should be called. The *Guide for Visitors* has a large centre-fold, this gives a bird's eye view of Monticello and its immediate surroundings seen due South from about a quarter of a mile in the air. It takes the form of a water-colour drawing, showing the property in late spring or early summer, and drenched in greenery. Square signs are inserted on this map informing visitors where the tours start, where parking is, and where the restrooms are, one in the visitor's shop, one in the so called "dependencies". The *Guide for Visitors* deals with these dependent spaces, and at the bottom of

[5] The report had been even more categorical and originally stated: "the DNA study when combined with the multiple strands of documentary and statistical evidence, ***substantiates*** Thomas Jefferson's paternity of all the children listed under Sally Hemings' name in Jefferson's Farm Book [my emphasis]." The report was altered under pressure from Dr. Ken Wallenborn see: *Thomas Jefferson Foundation DNA Study Committee Minority Report April 12*. The report states: "Twice in the spring of 1999, during and after the conclusion of the work of the committee, Ken expressed some reservations to me, and I encouraged him to write up his concerns…For the record, Ken's concerns were reviewed and considered systematically and seriously... while respecting fully Ken's opinions, I stand by the research report as circulated." Yet in the report, and all subsequent publicity such as the brochure quoted above, "substantiates" was changed to "high probability", the expression of certainty over paternity had been one of Wallenborn's major concerns.

the page is what is described as a "Historic Plan of the Dependencies". Near the end of the wing which makes up the southern dependencies is a room that is labelled "slave quarter". (*Guide for Visitors* 2008, p.7) On a similar projection of this set of rooms on a large public placard outside the basement labelled "Monticello 'Dependencies'" these rooms are termed "House Servant Rooms". Yet if one turns back to the bird's-eye map this same space has been labelled "Rest Rooms", with a little disabled sign attached. We are told matter-of-factly that: "These dependencies or areas for domestic work, served as points of intersection between Jefferson's family and enslaved people, and were instrumental to the functioning of the house. They were concealed in the hillside to avoid obstructing the landscape around the house." The grammatical ambiguity of the "They" opening the final sentence is significant. What is its subject, does it refer back to the dependencies or the enslaved people, or to both? Jefferson produced detailed architectural drawings for Monticello one of which is entitled "Basement with dependencies final drawing". This time the space termed elsewhere "slave-quarter", "house servant's room", "Rest-Room" and on its door "Ladies", is clearly labelled "smoke room". It appears to be a large space covering two separate rooms with a dividing wall that are now both labelled "house servant's room". The current smoke room is now located off the main walkway under the main building. So it appears what was intended to be the smoke room, was at some point changed into two servant's rooms. And one of these two rooms, as we shall see, lies right at the heart of Sally Hemings's presence in Monticello, it is a room which has not only been multiply named and renamed, but which has come to serve very different functions at different times.[6]

[6] The evidence that one section of Jefferson's intended "smoke room" came to be Sally's bedroom at some point from 1803-07 onwards, although she may well have been there well before, is set out in the following text: 01/26/00 , *Statement on the TJMF Research Committee Report on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings*, Daniel P. Jordan, Ph.D., President Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, Inc.: 'Housing at Monticello': "On her return to Monticello in 1789 [from Paris], she may have lived in the stone house on Mulberry Row (present Weaver's Cottage), where her sister Critta Hemings was known to have lived. Thus, in 1793, she would have moved, as did Critta, into one of the three new, 12 by 14 foot, log cabins on Mulberry Row. (Jefferson to Thomas M. Randolph, 19 May, 1793, B.26.65) Some time between 1803 and 1807, she evidently moved into one of the 'servant's rooms' in the South Dependencies, between the South Pavilion and the dairy. In 1851, while walking around Monticello, Jefferson's grandson Thomas J. Randolph pointed out to biographer Henry S. Randall "a smoke blackened and sooty room in one of the colonnades, and informed me it was Sally Henings' [sic] room." (Randall 1868). Given that the cook's room, and the room to the smoke

Truth stranger than fiction: the seen and unseen within the Heritage Tour of Monticello

By the time in the Autumn of 2008 I had finished the official tour of Thomas Jefferson's restored mansion, Monticello, I felt small and cowed. Jefferson's vision of things held before us by the docent seemed impregnable, unassailable, unimaginable. Jefferson's intimate relations with slavery, and in particular with his slave mistress, Sally Hemings, seemed unapproachable and inappropriate. I had at various points of the house tour attempted to ask leading questions relating to Sally and her possible presence in the house. When we were taken into the master bed chamber, filled with a large conspicuously double bed, we listened to a long disquisition on Jefferson's theories of ablution and the efficacy of cold water showers. He was presented, after his white wife Martha's early demise, as living a sort of stern, pure, holy-hermit like existence. I couldn't help at this point but ask if he always slept alone, given the size of the bed, and the fact that Sally, his long-term lover, was just a few yards down wind. This got short shrift from the docent, a slow moving glacial stare buried my presumption. After this I was reduced to whispering my doubts and satiric asides into a friend's ear. But at the end of the tour it was my friend, not me, who plucked up the courage to mention the unmentionable, to break the taboo. She asked distinctly: "And do we know where Sally Hemings lived, where her bedroom was?" The elfin faced docent assumed a pained, slightly disgusted expression, the one it had assumed several times already when the issue of Jefferson and Sally Hemings had been forced to the surface. To mention Sally Hemings out there on that beautiful terrace, in the autumn sunshine, with the white dome of the University of Virginia which Jefferson had designed, gleaming in the distance, was, it seemed, rather like spitting on Jefferson's grave. After an awful silence came the answer: "Well, Sally Hemings had a house somewhere down on Mulberry Row, we are not exactly sure where". The woman then continued confidently: "When she lived in the main house, we are pretty sure her bedroom was just about where the ladies' Rest Room (i.e. public lavatory) is now". She added, finally: "Of course when you come again we hope all that will have been changed." And then, with no audible response from the almost exclusively white tour members, and without breaking her conversational stride, the tour guide

---

house were known to be occupied by other slaves, Sally would have been in the servant's room of the South dependencies.

moved on to tell us about the tours coming up, and while we waited we might want to go into the Museum shop.

But I was lost in time and shock at this point. Had I heard this right, had I just been told as a matter of fact that the bedroom of the slave Sally Hemings had been turned into a public toilet? This was the same Sally Hemmings who had been Jefferson's concubine from the age of fifteen, and the mother of his children. This was the same Sally Hemings who had been at the centre of the explosive 2000 research committee set up by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation itself, a committee whose findings had linked Hemings and Jefferson's DNA to the descendent families of both parties. This was the woman who has a good claim to have become the first if at present unofficial African-American first Lady, almost exactly two centuries before Michelle Obama. I think it bears repeating as a formal testimony by a witness. On Sunday October 19th at 1.50 p.m. I stood on the South terrace of Monticello, and was officially informed that the bedroom of Jefferson's long term partner had undergone an eccentric process of restoration and had been filled with toilet bowls, pipes and water tanks, cubicles, condom and sanitary towel dispensers, and that it had been given a maroon door labelled "Ladies". After I recovered from my incredulity what really irked me about this revelation was the fact that this room was cut off from me, or I was cut off from it. Owing to my gender there was no way, legally, I could get in there and see what they had done to her, how they had insulted Sally's memory and buried it alive. Without putting myself in danger of being arrested there was no way I could go in and feel if there was still any connection with Sally in her own private space. At this point I had taken the docent's advice and wandered to the Museum shop.

What an extraordinary temple to the marketing energies of the heritage industries this creation is. "Gift Shop" is an inadequate title for the mighty fetish shrine selling Jefferson memorabilia at Monticello. This is a vast memorial cornucopia, a heritage haemorrhage in the form of a mini-supermarket. I haven't seen another gift shop so devoted to the cult of personality anywhere in the world, not even the Pope's gift shop at the Vatican, could rival it. The Jefferson *terreiro* was overflowing with different sized facsimiles of the Houdon bust of the Founding Father, in a choice of imitation bronze or marble. The whole family hung on walls in all shapes and sizes, in different facsimile oil paintings, and there were full-scale copies of every portrait of Jefferson, the Rembrandt Peel portrait, the Scully portrait, and the display culminated in a full sized reproduction of the "Jefferson West Point Portrait". The extensive cupboards and shelves groaned with historic maps, a zillion versions of the

framed Declaration of Indpendence, and “Jefferson’s Ten Rules”. There were mountains of Jefferson jugs, Jefferson mugs, including the “Monticello Library Mug”, and Jefferson goblets, Jefferson cups, including the “Wine Quote Jefferson Cup”. The interior of Monticello had been transplanted and could be taken out at a price, on offer were the “Monticello Entrance Hall Clock”, the “Monticello Table Clock”, the “Monticello Revolving Bookstand”, the “Monticello Letter Opener”, the famous “Jefferson Campeachy Chair”, and for those who wanted to get into character the “Jefferson work shirt” and the “Jefferson walking stick” and even a “Jefferson colonial tricorn hat”. There were dolls, the “Thomas Jefferson Doll”, the “Martha Jefferson Doll”, the “Ellen Wayles Randolph Doll”, the “Cornelia Randolph Doll” (but no Sally Hemings doll), the “Monticello Children’s Garden Kit”, and the “Buttercup goes to Monticello Coloring Book and Stuffed Dog”. Jefferson! Monticello! Jefferson! Monticello! Jefferson! Monticello!…my head spun.

As I reeled out I saw a sign pointing down to the main “Rest Rooms”, male and female. They were just round the corner from the gift-shop and approximately forty yards from that other now infamous Rest Room with its red door, Sally Hemings’s sad ruined little bed-room. A question now loomed, why was there a large male and female “Rest Room” here annexed to the gift shop, but only that one small female rest room in the main building itself? It made no sense, practically there was no need for this extra rest room in that place, and if there were a need why had the neighbouring empty slave bedroom not been converted into a matching male facility? The only explanation was that there was a deliberate agenda here, a sinister, indeed an appalling, motive.

At this point I felt that I had to know what they had done in there. I persuaded my friend, who luckily was the right gender, to undertake some guerrilla research and infiltrate the Hemings Rest Room with a camera. Given that it was a busy day and this public convenience was overrun with girls and their mothers this was not necessarily a hazard free task, even for a woman.