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COGNITIVE PROCESSES OF SURREALIST POETRY IN LIGHT OF HEGEL

&

INSOMNIAC TRIALS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for

the Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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2010

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2010

ABSTRACT

This thesis project pursues the stylistic nature of Surrealist writing and provides deeper understanding into how one may interpret Surrealist poetry. My work consists of two written components: an analytical essay concerning how Hegelian philosophy is applicable to the understanding and interpretation of Surrealist expression and a collection of original Surrealist poems titled "Insomnia Trials." My essay introduces Surrealism then further discusses the processes of Surrealist writing by analyzing the Hegelian dialectic and demonstrating how it corresponds to the interpretation and manifestation of Surrealist poetry. "Insomnia Trials" consists of 16 poems that are divided into two sections, a section of 12 poems adopting the form of horoscopes and a section of four poems adopting the form of Bible verses. Each poem corresponds to a theme of relationships and has been written using one or more devices from Surrealist games and exercises. In combination of both written components, it is my intent that my project grounds my collection of poems as a Surrealist work, and expands the philosophical lens by which Surrealist poetry can be addressed.

Keywords: Surrealism, Surrealist Poetry, Hegel, André Breton, Dean Young, Automatic Writing

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CHAPTER 1

COGNITIVE PROCESSES OF SURREALIST POETRY IN LIGHT OF HEGEL

1. Introduction

Georg W. F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit presents a foundation for the epistemological reasoning of consciousness, which complements the cognitive processes involved in interpreting Surrealist poetry; this proves to be especially true in accordance to André Breton's Manifestoes of Surrealism. In this essay, I present the idea of Surrealism by discussing Breton's work, and then applying it to Hegel's phenomenology, primarily focusing on Breton's portrayal of consciousness as a state of pure psychic automatism. For the purpose of clarity, I briefly reconstruct Hegel's epistemological foundation for the understanding of consciousness, and then demonstrate how this foundation parallels the cognitive state of the Surrealist poet by addressing Hegel's Introductory Lecture on Aesthetics. I then demonstrate the assertion of Hegel's philosophy as pure psychic automatism, by discussing select poems by Surrealist contemporary poet Dean Young, and then discuss its significance to the pursuit of present-day attempts of Surrealist poetry by discussing how this idea has ultimately translated into my own work. In closing, restate how an understanding of Hegel's

philosophy is conducive to explaining the progression and interpretation of Surrealist poetry.

2. Summary of Surrealism

What then is Surrealist poetry? It's quite similar to a Surrealist joke: How many Surrealists does it take to screw in a light bulb? One answer is a fish. In this case, and assumedly most others, the humor is only accessible through the absurdity of the punch line; the initial question of the joke has no hint or suggestion of its answer. In this way, the punch line of a Surrealist joke is like a line of Surrealist poetry. It is always susceptible to change without warning, and will most always portray spontaneity of thought rather than logical reasoning. The act of screwing in a light bulb may lead one to think of a fish just as much as it may lead another to think of the color purple. This phenomenon is necessary for Surrealism because the idea of the surreal focuses on portraying change in consciousness, rather than the relevance of one thought to another. Then again, one must consider how this explanation may be better justified by the idea of a fish or the color purple.

In Manifestoes of Surrealism, André Breton, the acclaimed founder of the movement, defines Surrealism as, "Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express–verbally, by means of written word, or in any other manner–the actual functioning of thought dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern" (Manifestoes of Surrealism 26). In poetry, the method of writing in the absence of weighing and reasoning ideas, writing

as a stream-of-consciousness, stems from Breton's description of Surrealism as, "Psychic automatism in its pure state," and is often referred to as automatic writing. This process consists of writing thoughts as they arrive in the present moment of consciousness without ever allowing one to reflect upon a previous thought, or stop writing for any reason.

To provide deeper understanding into the cognitive processes which manifest Surrealist poetry, it is necessary to clarify what Breton means when he says Surrealism is, "Exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern." This provokes one to question what Surrealism attempts to achieve. Breton writes, "Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought" (Manifestoes 26). Simply stated, Surrealism is most concerned with achieving a liberated state of reality. This ought to be interpreted as a reality that freely reflects the nature of the subconscious, the area of the mind that governs our thoughts without any coherence to individual will. Breton finds the state of pure psychic automatism achieves this state because it demonstrates the pattern in which the subconscious influences one's thinking. If this state were frequently interrupted by one's aesthetic and moral concerns, it would contradict itself as a function of Surrealism, because consciousness in and of itself is abstract from aesthetic and moral value. Breton's poem "Lethal Relief" demonstrates this and is a prime example of automatic writing:

> The statue of Lautréamont
> Its plinth of quinine tabloids
> In the open country
> The author of the Poetical Works lies flat on his face
> And near a hand the hiloderm a shady costumer keeps vigil
> His left ear is glued to the ground it is a glass case it contains

A prong of lightning the artist has not failed to figure aloft
In the form of a Turk's head the blue balloon
The Swan of Montevideo with wings unfurled ready to flap at a moment's notice
Should the problem of luring the other swans from the horizon arise
Opens upon the false universe two eyes of different hues
The one of sulphate of iron on vines of the lashes the other of sparkling mire
He beholds the vast funnelled hexagon where now in no time the machines
By man in dressing rabidly swaddled
Shall a lie a-writhing
With his radium bougie he quickens the dregs of the human crucible
With his sex of feathers and his brain of bull-paper
He presides at the twice nocturnal ceremonies whose object due allowance for fire
having been made is the interversion of the hearts of the bird and the man
Convulsionary in ordinary I have access to his side
The ravishing women who introduce me into the rose-padded compartment
Where a hammock that they have been at pains to contrive with their tresses for
Me is reserved for
Me for eternity
Exhort me before taking their departure not to catch a chill in the perusal of the
daily
It transpires that the statue in whose latitude the squitch of my nerve terminals
Weighs anchor is tuned each night like a piano (Lethal Relief 1-25)

Considering how much of the poem reads as an inner dialogue one might have with oneself, it is just to believe there is a thick stylistic presence of automatic writing throughout the poem. One may prestige this style of writing with the quality of fearlessness, while another criticizes it for appearing clumsy; however, as a Surrealist work, this poem is not attached to any such value. Although the reader is uncertain of whether or not the poem is an exact representation of Breton's stream-of-consciousness as it once occurred, the poem's form may be interpreted as a translation of his consciousness. Since automatic writing is a cognitive process of Surrealist poetry, we are not expected to attribute any degree of faith to the notion Breton's poem has not been modified or edited. Breton clearly states the process of automatic writing ought to be considered a tool of Surrealist writing rather than a limitation: "This imagination which

knows no bounds is henceforth allowed to be exercised only in strict accordance with the laws of arbitrary utility" (Manifestoes 4). This may be viewed as the foundation for which the cognitive processes of Surrealism take form.

3. Summary of the Hegelian dialectic

In order to grasp Hegel's dialectic and how it may be used to interpret Surrealism, one must first abstract all of his preconceptions of consciousness; this includes his ideas, concepts and sense of self identity. This is essential for an understanding of the dialectic because it begins with the concept of objective reality, as it appears in and of itself, without any notion of subjectivity. "The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*" (Phenomenology of Spirit §90). One can assume this kind of reflection is similar to the way one reflects on the first syllable of a poem, or how a newborn child reflects on a newly exposed world. There is no means of making sense or placing value on existence, because in this state the only certainty is "it is." This is what Hegel refers to as sense certainty.

A way this can be understood is to imagine being born into a hypothetical reality of a blue abyss. In this reality there is only one objective property, one particular shade of blue. One can imagine that without any experience of any other shade of blue, color or thing, he would not be aware of the blueness of his existence, for he would have nothing to demonstrate the significance of blueness. Hegel claims this phenomenon presents itself to be the truest, yet most abstract form of knowledge, and is therefore the starting

point of his dialectic. Sense certainty begins with objective reality projecting itself to the senses. This is different than the way we contribute knowledge to our perception, because we attribute our senses to the notion of "I." In order to understand the mapping of Hegel's dialectic, one must consider the concept, objective reality precedes subjective reality. In our hypothetical example of a blue existence, it is the blueness that makes one aware of existence. Blueness is the objective property being projected.

To bring this idea back into the lens of poetry, let us consider the objective properties of a poem. On the page, it is composed of letters. Spoken aloud, it is composed of syllables. Poetry doesn't progress very far with these objective properties alone because letters and syllables are abstract in and of themselves, and have no meaning until their significance has been subjectively interpreted. The sound of a syllable or the lines which constitute a letter have no significance without the differentiation of other syllables and letters. Likewise, the blueness of a blue reality cannot be viewed significant until there is a contrast to blue, which is why the subjective view first enters the dialectic by inwardly making distinctions within objective reality. There must be a subjective awareness of observation in order to know beyond "it is", because the objective cannot be certain of itself. In other words, one must have read a poem in order to write one.

For the purpose of bringing Hegel's philosophy into a more accessible view, let us consider the example of a newborn child who is experiencing her first impression of the world. Perhaps she sees a doctor standing above a hospital bed. From her perspective, it is true to say, "This is right here, right now." Although she does not know exactly what doctors or hospital beds are, she is at least certain they are right here, right now through

her senses. She receives this impression upon the moment of initial sense-certainty; however, after the moment passes, she is certain of a different impression. Perhaps the doctor is now lifting her into the air away from the hospital bed. To say, "This is right here, right now," in the present moment, holds the same value of truth as it did in the moment before, but the present object now negates the past object. That is what changes from the past now to the present now.

In discussion of such negations, Hegel writes, "When we compare the relation in which knowing and the object first came on the scene, with the relation in which they now stand in this result, we find that it is reversed. The object, which was supposed to be the essential element in sense-certainty, is now the unessential element" (Phenomenology §100). What Hegel means by this is the subjective view is always fixed on what is happening in the present. This stipulates the concept of objective reality being constantly in flux. To provide an analogy of this, objective reality is to the subjective view, as a reel of film is to the lens of a film projector. In this analogy, let us imagine each frame of the film reel represents an objective impression that is imprinted upon the subjective view as a this, *here* and *now*. As the lens of the film projector views each *this*, *here* and *now* and projects them onto the movie screen, a linear narrative is played out.

This phenomenon is what the Hegelian dialectic presents as perception. Once the subjective view is acquired, one begins to make distinctions between ideas, color, sound, etc., through perception. Discussing this, Hegel writes, "That principle has arisen for us, and therefore the way we take in perception is no longer something that just happens to us like sense-certainty; on the contrary, it is logically necessitated" (Phenomenology §111). In reflection of the newborn child perceiving the world example, we may consider

that he will become aware of the fact that a doctor is not a hospital bed because they both possess significant qualities that appear to behave differently from each other. The doctor, for instance, may begin to move parts of his body, while the hospital bed may not move at all. "In essence the object is the same as the movement: the movement is the unfolding and differentiation of the two moments, and the object is the apprehended togetherness of the moments" (Phenomenology §111). Through perception, this phenomenon is what fundamentally demonstrates the negation of objective reality.

This negation essentially illustrates the concept of a thing in terms of thing-hood; it reveals a thing to be in and of the properties which are significant to the thing itself. Its thing-hood is not understood only by the properties which constitute the thing itself, but by the contrast of properties which constitute the thing-hood of all other things as well. In explaining how this understanding is revealed to the self-conscious being, Hegel writes, "Since at the same time diversity is explicitly there for him, it is a connection of the diverse moments of his apprehension to one another; but if a dissimilarity makes itself felt in the course of this comparison, then this is not an untruth of the object – for this is the self-identical – but an untruth in perceiving it" (Phenomenology §116). For instance, blue is not understood by its blueness alone, but by its contrast to all other things that do not possess blueness; therefore such determinate properties do not constitute the essence of blueness, but rather the idea of blueness based on what is and is not deemed to be blue.

In effect, this realization demonstrates the concept of consciousness as it is perceived in one's subjective view, allowing him to formulate thoughts upon the phenomenon of reflection into self identity, interpretation of ideas, and ultimately what is referred to as "I". Let us also consider how this relates to what happens when one reads a

line of poetry. As a reader's eyes scroll across the page, the syllables come together in a linear order to form words that arouse thought. "In the dialectic of sense-certainty, Seeing and Hearing have been lost to consciousness; and, as perception, consciousness has arrived at thoughts, which it brings together for the first time in the unconditional universal" (Phenomenology §132). This ultimately demonstrates the concept of self in the reader. It allows him to create his own interpretations. Although the realization of "I" may appear to be complete within the claim, "I am my own truth," there remains the inescapable assent of desire, which contradicts the claim, because desire drives one to be fulfilled through his objective reality. The poet, for instance, cannot be a poet by merely collecting thoughts, but by giving his poetic ideas objective form. Because of this, he pursues the art of poetry by transmuting abstract ideas into a structure of language that may be interpreted in and of itself.

In retrospect of Hegel's philosophy, one can see how the dialogue between the objective and the subjective states of reality is the only means by which artistic forms can exist. Once one moment of objective reality is negated by another, the subjective state of sense-certainty eludes the essentiality of itself through perception. Consciousness follows as a response to the error perceived by the unexamined nature of thing-hood, and is finally able to exert itself through the desire to be further negated. The poet, as well as any other kind of artist who works through expressive mediums, negates his consciousness by exerting his thoughts and ideas into objective reality as an abstract form of expression. Consciousness is thus the essential element for artistic expression, and in light of this, the arts, meaning the modes of expression by which consciousness can take form, may be defined as transmuted subjectivity.

4. Surrealist poetry in light of Hegel

Hegel's Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics may be used to demonstrate how this idea of art as transmuted subjectivity can be applied to the interpretation of Surrealist poetry. This is brought into perspective by discussing painting and music, and how they demonstrate the raw expressive forms of image and sound, the essential properties that constitute poetry. In the final chapter of his lectures, titled "Division of the Subject," Hegel discusses the core mediums that pertain to art and the way they give rise to one another through negation. "It has already been said that the content of art is the Idea, and that its form lies in the plastic use of images accessible to sense. These two sides art has to reconcile into a full and united totality" (Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics §XCIV). To restate what the Hegelian dialectic proposes, objective reality is necessary for artistic forms to exist, and exist only by being transmuted from consciousness as manifestations of subjective Ideas. Although this deems true, he does not lend the possessiveness of subjectivity to the representational function of art until it is properly negated.

He argues the fundamental means of transmuting subjectivity into objective reality occurs through giving an idea or concept the property of shape. This must be true since objective form implies a possessiveness of physical nature: "But in compensation this sensuous concrete, in which a content essentially belonging to mind expresses itself, is in its own nature addressed to the inward being; its external element of shape, whereby the content is made perceptible and imaginable, has the aim of existing purely for heart and mind," (Aesthetics §XCVII). The artistic idea, which is transmuted into an objective

form falls short of portraying itself as a representation of an idea. When interpreted as nothing more than its most basic objective form, as the shape in which it manifests itself, the only understanding one can conceive from the artistic idea is the image that is cast forth from sense-certainty.

One can understand how this skews the original artistic idea: "For in certain stages of art-consciousness and of representation, the distortion and disfigurement of natural structures is not unintentional technical inexpertness and want of skill, but intentional alteration, which emanates from the content that is in consciousness, and is required thereby" (Aesthetics §CIII). Art, as it exists in its objective state, provokes nothing about the content of the artistic idea other than the technique and talent behind one's ability to represent an object. Representational art is imperfect for this reason. It cannot be a perfect representation of the subjective idea until one fully realizes the imperfection of objectively representational art. It is the realization of art's imperfection within its ability to recreate an object that allows art to reflect back into the subjective view of the artistic idea. For example, a still life painting of a fruit bowl does not best represent the idea of a fruit bowl because the idea best represents itself just as the object best represents itself.

This imperfection provokes desire in the conscious mind to make the objective form of art stimulate the subjective origin of expression, self-consciousness. In reflection of this phenomenon, Hegel writes, "And hence, in the phase we have reached, all the most manifold subjectivity in its living movement and operation – as human passion, action, and incident, and, in general, the wide realm of human feeling, will, and its negation – is for its own sake the object of artistic representation" (Aesthetics §CXI).

Hegel claims the negation of such human sentiment must arise in three fundamental modes of expression: painting, music and poetry.

In reflection of Hegel's claim, I find that painting, which most notably utilizes the quality of color, is drastically different from architecture and sculpture, which rely more heavily on the properties and uses of space and form. A painter's use of value and line is able to push the non-spatial elements of art forward by giving them a form which adopts a flat surface. This allows painting to expand the artistic elements of space and form by forcing the viewer to interpret a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. Although it is rightly understood that paint on a canvas is in fact three dimensional, due to the element of texture created by the density of paint, the viewer of a painting must interpret the work as though it were a two-dimensional plane due to its abstraction of spatial properties. In this sense, a painting encourages the viewer to interpret the work to a more similar image in his mind, because thoughts possess no realistic quality of space. To interpret a painting, the viewer must attribute his concept of space to the work, rather than making a judgment of perception upon the work's actual spatial properties. This allows the viewer to abstract the painting from objective reality and distinguish the work more similarly to his own sentiment.

Like painting, music provokes us to distinguish sentiment from objective properties which possess no meaning. Music lends a higher sense of freedom to subjective interpretation than painting because it is restricted only by the properties of frequency and duration. Frequency may be interpreted as being either melodic or dissonant, while the duration of time between frequencies is interpreted as being fast or slow. One must acknowledge these terms as subjective in nature; a slow duration of time

is as much a matter of opinion as a dissonant chord. The combination of these properties essentially arouses sentiments created from musical experience, yet due to the fact they can be objectively measured by their physical nature, music is not a purely subjective form of expression.

Hegel argues that poetry is a higher form of subjective representation than painting and music because it is composed of words which possess no objective property, yet still represent image and sound. Poetry can be written and spoken, which allows a poem to be perceived within objective experience and is purely symbolic, unlike sound and visual stimuli which can be objectively measured:

> For this reason the proper medium of poetical representation is the poetical imagination and intellectual portrayal itself. . . Poetry is the universal art of the mind which has become free in its own nature, and which is not tied to find its realization in external sensuous matter, but expatiates exclusively in the inner space and inner time of the ideas and feelings. (Aesthetics §CXIV)

In light of Hegel's claim, it is correct to imply that if symbolic representation is at the pendulum of what is objectively perceived, yet subjectively interpreted, and words, which constitute poetry, are purely symbolic, then poetry may be explained as absolute transmuted subjectivity in the form of expressive language.

Considering Surrealist poetry is represented as a manifestation of pure psychic automatism, a symbolic representation of raw undisturbed consciousness, it is my intent to guide this concept further through Hegel's dialectic, so that it may properly be addressed in light of what Surrealism aims to achieve, a liberated state of reality. Breton begins his manifesto by discussing the nature of consciousness as it comes to realize its

own cognitive existence. He writes: "Man, that inveterate dreamer, daily more discontent with his destiny, has trouble assessing the objects that his nonchalance has brought his way, or that he has earned through his own efforts, almost always through his own efforts, for he has agreed to work, at least he has not refused to try his luck (or what he calls his luck!)" (Manifestoes 3). This state of discontent is undoubtedly similar and arguably parallel to the desire Hegel discusses, which one envelops upon realizing his own conscious existence.

Self-consciousness arrives at a state of despair when it is confronted by the desire to project itself into objective reality; one realizes he cannot be his own truth, for he has come to realize himself through objective reality. We can imagine that if one were hypothetically living only in his own mind, his pursuit of thought would be in vain. He would be stuck having no direction to progress or expand his concept of self. Discussing this state, Breton writes, "None of his gestures will be expansive, none of his ideas generous or far-reaching. In his mind's eye, events real or imagined will be seen only as they relate to a welter of similar events, events in which he has not participated, abortive events" (Manifestoes). In this way the conscious mind desires to project itself into objects, and superimpose itself against objective reality in order to free itself from isolation. "To reduce the imagination to a state of slavery–even though it would mean the elimination of what is commonly called happiness – is to betray all sense of absolute justice within oneself" (Manifestoes 4-5). In result, the conscious mind discovers objective reality is actually an inverted reality of itself.

Hegel argues this inverted reality is what leads one to understand the concept of what he calls an infinite reality. The inversion of the self, its absolute opposite, exposes

the nature of everything unbridled to the self and reveals the extent of all possibilities. "Thus the supersensible world, which is the inverted world, has at the same time overarched the other world, i.e. the inversion of itself; it is itself and its opposite in one unity. Only thus is it difference as *inner* difference, or difference *in its own self*, or difference as an *infinity*" (Phenomenology §160). Hegel's conceptualization of infinity is parallel to what Surrealism aims to achieve, a liberated state of reality. The dialectic is just as applicable here; Surrealism intends to achieve a liberated state of reality by exerting raw unbridled consciousness into the inverted world as poetry. It is within the lens of this idea that Surrealism may expand and be further explored.

5. Cognitive processes of Surrealist poetry

To support my claim, it seems necessary I discuss the application of the cognitive processes of Surrealist poetry in light of its current state. My own work has recently taken a considerable amount of influence from the Surrealist poet Dean Young. Based on his prestige and recognition in the literary world, Young is arguably the most prominent Surrealist poet alive today, and his collections of poems provide a worthy example of Surrealist poetry in its present state. By addressing select poems in Young's Strike Anywhere and Primitive Mentor, and discussing how they have influenced my own work, I will illustrate how the cognitive processes of Surrealist poetry may be translated through a lens of Hegelian philosophy.

The nature of automatic writing, especially its freedom to transition a thought without warning, is capable of exemplifying a poetic idea with various interpretations.

Young often introduces an image that seems absurd and out of nowhere. Again, this is typical for Surrealist poetry; however, in respect to the inverted self-conscious discussed in the Hegelian dialectic, one may interpret this transitioning of mental imagery as images being superimposed onto one another. In "Force of Rabbit", Young ends the poem with thoughts that seem to adopt this level of spontaneity:

> Now you lie peaceful in her ocean air
> not even bothering to fox the page,
> sleep a blue parallelogram,
> tomorrow an umbrella planted in the sand.
> A small rocket takes off for a distant star.
> A creature crawls from the swamp, mewing.
> Mrs. Crampton calls the children in to lunch
> even though they are all quite grown and no longer in the country." (Primitive Mentor 41)

The imagery in these lines, from the blue parallelogram to the rocket and the creature seem to emerge in an unnatural, almost out-of-body state, creating a subconscious catalogue of surreal occurrences that seem to climax beyond the reasoning of the reader. The nature of automatic writing, in effect negates one's expectations with a dreamlike sequence and allows the reader to feel either lucidly withdrawn or euphorically unconcerned with adhering to this reinvention of objective circumstance.

I attempted to do this in my poem "Trials" on page 34. After describing a past experience of going to church and coming to terms with guilt, the poem veers into: "He transforms, and while the Martians behind me were thus, their next sally, just 'checking up' on whatever the source of this poem is, Humanity accuses me of writing a poem that seems unclear." In the way I have perceived this, the superimposed image zooms out from the reliability of the poem and projects an outlandish view of reality back into the reader. I would like the reader to experience this negation like a kind of teleportation

through the imagination, from Sunday church service to an otherworldly scene where Martians are somehow metaphysically "checking up" on the source of the poem itself. By applying this device to the poem, I have found the Surrealist image created in these lines may be interpreted as a negation of the self-conscious speaker against a shift in his literary reality.

In many instances, Young breaks his stanzas before the end of a thought or after the beginning of a new idea, which allows the reader to more freely interpret the poem. In effect, this also stimulates the way the reader experiences transitions within his imagination, his subjective view. This forces the reader to experience a degree of choppiness in his literary consciousness, and seems to thwart the reality of the poem on itself. In his poem "Ready-Made Bouquet", Young's use of this demonstrates the degree this can be applied to the realm of Surrealism: "I'm the guy who always forgets / to turn his oven off pre-heat but I might," and "Flora hovering at his back, scattering // her unlikely flowers. Which is worse" (Strike Anywhere 5).

When considering the traditional use of the stanza in poetry, how it has commonly been used to organize a related grouping of thoughts and ideas, it makes sense why the use of breaking the stanza in mid-thought is conducive to the Surrealist poem. It forces the reader to project one fraction of an idea into another and abandon the sense of certainty that is traditionally associated with the stanza. A Hegelian interpretation of "scattering // her unlikely flowers" would have a completely different effect on the poem if we are able to imagine the stanza break inverting a line of poetry on itself. The stanza break encourages a wider spectrum of possible interpretations between "scattering" and

“her unlikely flowers” because they seem to project onto one another as separate occurrences.

I was able to use this technique in my poem “Morning” on page 31: “5-So bold in our lack of love, feeling nothing profound, only the need to leave finger prints all over new skin, until the morning / 6-Sun drenched my face in ice water.” Playing off the title of the poem, I attempted to use the stanza break similar to the effect of Young’s break between the ideas of “scattering” and “her unlikely flowers” in order to separate the idea of “morning sun” into two individual entities of thought. In result, “only the need to leave finger prints all over new skin, until the morning” seems to adopt a more rhetorical tone. The break allows “until the morning” to resonate out from the end of the stanza as if the thought was reflecting on itself and sets up a surreal image of the sun drenching the speaker’s face in ice water. The break not only holds the sun responsible for outlandishly drenching his face but suggests the notion of being “sun drenched.” If we consider Hegel’s philosophy and the light it brings to poetry, we might see how that the negation of the stanza break is responsible for allowing this image to be unveiled by forcing the thought to be aware of itself.

Ignoring the objective properties associated with the ideas of objects, such as the walls of a room or the green in the grass, is an effective way to invert the reality of a poem. In reflection of Hegel’s discussion about the arts, it’s important to utilize the freedom poetry has with image in its purely subjective form. When reading Young, one should be prepared to abandon his rational footing in the respect of objective consistency because his poetry is rich with surreal experiences that force the reader to rapidly modify his subjective ideas of objects. In “Learning to Live with Bliss”, Young describes an

instance in which a machete passes through ones brain on a subatomic scale: "It's like one vacuum passing through another / except for some infinitesimal nudging / infinitesimal excuse me's, / but who has time for that? / The car you drove off the cliff?" (Primitive Mentor 48). After absorbing the personification of the well mannered subatomic machete taking the time to excuse itself, Young's readers are apt to feel surprised by the suggestion that one "who has the time for that" is actually "The car you drove off the cliff". In turn, the poem also negates the preconceived concept of physical reality by inverting the conventions of the pronouns who, with and what. This ultimately creates a new subjective experience in the poem for the reader.

Referring to an artist or an artwork also proves to be an intuitive way to achieve this. When a poet attempts to paint an image in a poem, he has a more or less specific vision in his head. Unlike a painting which freezes an image into a kind of timeless existence, the poem adheres to an existence which seems to be in flux. The image that is preconceived in a painting has the ability to be stretched, skewed and inverted. In the opening lines of his poem, "Mannerist", Young writes:

> It is said a hole knocked in the ceiling
> of the flat Caravaggio fled, skipping rent,
> explains the light source of those late works.
> The problem for the authorities, a lot
> of pissed-off swordsmen, was catching him
> and we can only guess someone finally did
> as his body was never found. Constant
> in this world are the problems of landlords
> and lighting and the sense of something out
> to get you. (Primitive Mentor 14)

By referring to the lighting in Caravaggio's work, Young casts the same vivid image of the original work into his poem, but inverts the preconceived notions of beauty and luster into a maddening florescent glare beaming down on someone who is paranoid about a

landlord being out for him. One familiar with Caravaggio's work is able to negate the luminous projection of awe in the Caravaggio painting into the anxious madness of urban schizophrenia.

I attempted to utilize this technique in my poem "Faded" on page 24, by reinforcing the image of a strung out druggy kind of character in the poem to a Picasso painting: "And it's strange when you mention how opaquely white everything looks because you seem to have faded – Slouching like the Old Guitarist of Picasso's Blue, slipping like a thought on the tip of a tongue." I intended for the Picasso reference to merge the pathetic posture of the figure in "The Old Guitarist" with the character in this poem. The adaptation of the painting serves as a negation which inverts the pathetic image of the preconceived figure, the old decrepit guitar player, into a strung-out junkie. In effect, the poem encourages the reader to subjectively negate the image of the original work into an inverted subjective reality of itself.

6. Conclusion

In these examples, I've demonstrated how Young's poetry and his influence on my own work posit the cognitive processes of Surrealism into the lens of the Hegelian dialectic. An inverted reality of the self-conscious and the negation of subjectivity prove to be both relevant and progressive to the interpretation and manifestation of Surrealist poetry. In this light, the connection between the Hegelian dialectic and Surrealist poetry is clearly illustrated.

CHAPTER 2

INSOMNIAC TRIALS

1. zodiac poems

Dancer

Aries (Mar. 21-Apr. 19): You send me a photograph of yourself lying in a hospital bed, giving birth, wearing a black ribbon around your wrist like a noose – Like an umbilical necktie, strangling your stomach with a baby boy attached, looking like a science project gone bad, all wrinkled and grey and splattered with blood as he's pulled from your womb– You burst birth on my face after two years of silence, and for some reason I can't help but laugh at that – Maybe it's the same reason I laugh at the drunken aftermath of a Bukowski poem or at God, as he sits in front of heaven's gates amongst a longwinded line of used cars and waits for my ass to die – I laugh as though a chainsaw were lodged in my throat – I laugh because I used to tell you I loved you, and that left my mouth like a spray of aerosol, sticky and combustible – Now, I look at you as a mother, and I wonder what happened after I gave up on you – After I left you in the psychiatric ward and cried in the parking lot outside – You weighed only seventy pounds after I stopped looking for love and started looking for the black ribbon you wear on your wrist – It reminds you not to eat so you can control the weight of your body like a real ballerina.

Faded

Taurus (Apr. 20-May 20): You're counting cups on a tarot card – Most of them spilling all over your bedroom floor where you sit counting pain pills sealed in cellophane – I watch you wad them tight in transparency and ignore the itch beneath your skin – And the scratch of your rehab counselor's pen exaggerating the Oracle at Delphi – I wonder if you crave a fix like a martyr craves his mania – Like the death of Socrates along the beige surfaces of your teeth – They grind softly, crushing narcotics into the debris of dry wall as you bow humbly with a finger pressed tight against your nostril – Your spine curved like a wave of frequency – Your hands stained from ripping the little heads off all the medicine bottles – Your eyes were tearing up in a florescent sea of light bright enough to blind a prophet – And it's strange when you mention how opaquely white everything looks because you seem to have faded – Slouching like the Old Guitarist of Picasso's Blue, slipping like a thought on the tip of a tongue –

Roulette

Gemini (May 21-Jun. 20): You bartend a casino where true masochists of chance drink their pay and scrape poker chips across clover colored velveteen like teeth against rust – You lie with them – Pouring yourself shots – Gargling them with laughter – Driving your whiskey off a cliff – Moving about like a glazed sailor, swerving into a sloppy waltz – A bottle of some stranger's urine bounces in your coat pocket and clinks against your keys – Cocaine residue from a weekend in Vegas lines your insides as you gamble your job on a piss test – I remember when we drove through Kansas with your bag of green sticky weed and tried to dodge a drug check – I remember how the strobe of cop lights reflected off the rear view mirror onto you – All red, white and blue as you tossed it out the window – As the look of defeat crawled over your face when you turned around to see your green all gallantly streaming on the radio antenna.

Domino

Cancer (Jun. 21-Jul. 22) You dance at a club in New Orleans to support your daughter with the sad bills of dirty men – Where you found one of those men was me - Where you pulled soft soiled dollars from my teeth with your uncovered breasts and realized I was sad enough to tell you I hated you – Because my story wasn't as sad as yours.

Maggots

Leo (Jul. 23-Aug. 22) You're a conservationist with an apocalypse fetish – The sandals on your feet march toward coal companies, wielding warnings on tattooed cardboard boxes – "The End is Nigh" – a fate you foreshadowed when you moved out to find a roommate who was better at recycling – I'm also sorry I threw away your moldy peaches – I was sure the flies were expecting.

Hierophant

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) You were a Gnostic who unburied Judas from a pile of Catholic-Nazi bones and blame – Once a nihilist too – You felt no shame as you wandered through the white faced circuits of suburbs and watched your neighbor kill his cat then remove its skeleton to build a vertebrate lamp – You were dizzy with Robitussin and God's will, smiling as you watched your thoughts pour from the ember end of your big fat blunt – Feeling it coil around your skull with smoke and breath – I remember how you praised Allah, dangling your dick over a shelf of DVDs until you soaked them all in hot yellow gin – Your middle finger scraped the sky for me like a rocket as you slurred verses from the Koran, taking pauses between vowels – Taking time to change your mind about hell – Locked in your bedroom with posters of Lil Wayne and Cannibal Holocaust as you sign onto Anti-Zionist internet forums and pose politics on the holy land – Lights turned off, curtains closed.

Insomnia

Libra (Sept.23 –Oct. 22) I spend all day returning late library books and remembering how to write a check – At night, I crouch over a desk while the world is silent and dead, and wait for my fingers to click against the keyboard – Sometimes I stare at the words so long I forget I'm a human being; I write poetry – That means I'm a day dreaming, filth speaking, modern day exhibit on evolution – Means I'm gonna be poor too – Billy Collins is the exception – He took all the pennies in the thought jar, and that's ok – He deserves them – He's the poet is in the glass display at the wax museum, stuck between the 18th century pioneers, all posed founding our America with their little wigs, and the nativity scene where Yoko Ono is breaking up the Beatles, forcing rock'n'roll to just deal with it – And I'm not blaming either Yoko or Billy – Art moves forward - We're all gonna have to deal with that, just as those of you whom I've exploited in these poems are gonna have to deal with it too – So I hold my breath when I write this poem, but that doesn't mean these words don't need time to air out and light up a cigarette, or two – Just means I got a habit of doing it.

Dionysus

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) You're a librarian reading Nietzsche next to an old man rotting away on internet porn – He wanted to be Apollo – He wanted a wife and kids – A story – A tacky looking bass, all stuffed and mounted above a gas fireplace with a fake log – You wanted to be an eagle scout, not a Catholic – You talk about your priest as though he were a postmodern Wagner opera – How he took you to the movies and invited you to play D&D at his house – Where he could touch you with his wanky until it vomited shame inside you – And you tell me he would have – And you tell me you're frustrated with your English teacher for assigning a paper on morality – You don't believe it exists, but you believe the man rotting next to you does – So you write your teacher an email to the tempo of his heavy breathing.

Lynch

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) You're an avant-garde painter who paints the color blue in D minor – You murder the guitar, strangling its neck with a rope, a wire –

Housewife

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) You want to be a barred up Marilyn Monroe, pretty and safe in a pampered cell, sealed beneath the faithful rim of a wedding band – Bound behind a kitchen counter, all loony, puffing on tubes of ash, plumping up peppered eggs in the morning for a man who talks about retirement or heaven – You stare into a crisp newspaper fold, forgetting about the time I asked what you were thinking and shattered our silence – When we use to lie naked in love and lie to each other - when you answered, "nothing" – When I shivered next to you and cried, "liar-liar, you've thrown yourself against stained glass, the spire, the steeple that points to a place where prayers go and return as radiation, a place where your most sacred thoughts must be hiding" – But now I realize you were the one telling the truth; our future chimes with belles, ringing the sound of true lawful nothing.

Father

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You're an airline pilot who wants to quit the corporate bee hive and farm rich honey from the sweet bastard pollen of Kentucky – You wonder if the workers will go on strike again, sipping Starbucks in your uniform with gold and black bee stripes on the shoulders – You watch the throttle dance to the rhythm of autopilot as you and your first officer debate Big Business or the best way to hide a machine gun from the government – Teddy Roosevelt is giving a speech through a mustache made of tumble weed – He rides a bronze steed like a rifle round down an airport terminal - He conquers your executives as they're bathing in your retirement – You grin subtly, staring off into the horizon, at the edge of the Earth, deep in thought from the Rockies to the Grand Canyon –Wishing you could have spent your life like Lewis or Clark – Exploring the world beneath your shined leather shoes – And call to remind me my legs are running – Running out of days to explore the world too.

Mother

Pisces (Feb. 19-Mar. 20) You feared I'd be no Isaac – Like the two before me whose lives leaked from your groin and dissolved into ideas of children you'd never know – Ideas that made your fingers trace miles of Bible verses, until you found where Jesus spoke of me in red roman miscarriage – Where he told you I was a miracle, born with a purpose and a ghost trapped in my brain – I once believed this too, at the age of five or six, when I was curious about China, and Hell – I spent my time behind our house, digging holes with a dulled garden spade, thinking I'd dig deep enough to reach one or the other – I was invincible like the manic humidity of summer and wandered away from you after dinner to perch on a railroad track, to see what would happen if I never moved – The scream of locomotive steam caused my Uncle Bill to see me through the window as I anticipated self-sacrifice on the mount – That's what caused him to run outside and tear me from the rails – That's what caused you to tell me he was an angel – That's what caused me to question your tears as you embraced me as though I had risen from the dead.

2. gospel poems

Morning

CHAP I

1-We sat amongst the stains of black coffee and cheap beer on my rotten carpet and pieced together stories from the tips of our tongues,

2-Talking about our mothers and how they went to church differently, yours sipping wine, mine drinking blood,

3-Talking about how young we were when our stomachs boiled with tension and invincibility and sweet spiritual foolishness,

4-Talking until we stumbled upon the taste of merlot splattered across one another's lips, our bodies spilling all over each other like a heap of aluminum cans, pulling

5-At each other's clothes and hair, so bold in our lack of love, feeling nothing profound, only the need to leave fingerprints all over new skin, until the morning

6-Sun drenched my face in ice water. It was cold and you were quiet, putting on your shoes, scraping through your purse for

7-A cigarette. You kissed me quick, pulled away, stared silently into a thought, said goodbye and left in a way that was beautiful and honest.

Amputee

CHAP II

1-Frosty rays of pale skin reflect off the face of a girl in Berlin. They slap my cheek toward my shoulder as she passes, and I watched her disappear behind a cluster of winter coats.

2-She gets eaten by them, and forgets I exist as she is digested. Glistening drops filled with light flutter down like icy loogies from heaven. I realize the first flake of snow is something like beautiful women in Germany.

3-They're both something that become many. I follow a drunken flock of Australian mates, all scrambling along the sidewalk like a swarm of bees leaving the hive.

4-They lead me to a frothy discotheque, the floor full of good fashion and stiff shoulders, stiff legs, all brittle like the plaster of eye boogers in the brink of a hung-over morning.

5-Just imagine a party of mannequins, the ones posing in the window of the Diesel store, all wearing wet skintight jeans.

6-Imagine if nerves could be orphans of legs, if a catacombs thriving with the souls of ten thousand bastards was the origin of choreography.

7-That's how all the mannequins moved, except for one. She had one hand and moved with beautiful hesitation. She smiled at me, subtly pulling her sleeve over her wrist where her other hand was missing.

Spring

CHAP III

1- The girl sitting in front of me changed the background on her computer again, another picture of her and her boyfriend posing

2-Like a hallmark card that says, "I love you, goddamnit," straightforward with a red swollen Valentine next to a hand grenade and the robots from the Terminator.

3-The picture has two lovers embracing like a vice clamp that's squishing two muffins together and crumbling all over each other. It was like stumbling–

4-Into a Richard Gere movie, the one where he makes out with Winona Ryder and his tongue falls in her mouth like a beer belly flopping over a belt.

4-The title had something to do with autumn or leaves or something to foreshadow the ending when the girl dies from some tragic disease

5-From some tragic misreading of a Keats poem, drows'd with the fume of poppies and the picture on that girl's computer with blossoming bartlett pear trees all over it.

6-Those trees make my entire town smell like hot ejaculate basking in the breeze. I like that though. I like how they don't cover up the scent of smut with flowery perfume,

7-Or engagement rings, or chastity belts, or lacey lingerie, all things that eventually get taken off and refuse to reek shamelessly,

8- Like the stained squeaky mattress beneath Mother Nature and Father Time, and all their hard fucking, poignant with bitterness, raunchy enough to make you stay outside and write anode to autumn.

Trials

CHAP IV

1-In communion, I stood in single file with other cannibal-vampires. We took turns gulping down gore to wet our palates and cleanse our monthly screw-ups, all dressed in our best Sunday skin. I was eleven, eager to wash my hands of all the sinful semen I recently discovered how to ejaculate, feeling ashamed as I thought of Jesus tallying up all the babies I killed,

2-I shot them all into a dirty bath towel and had the feeling God was real disappointed about that, so I pleaded guilty as I prayed, and began chewing up a crispy flake of Christ's flesh. It screamed hallelujah as I ground it to bits between the flats of my molars then asked if it could get an amen as I forced it down in my stomach,

3-And The Lord may have smiled at that, as I knelt on the altar of crazies, forgiving me with a circus of doves, all flapping stupidly against a stain glass window, trying to look liberated. That would have been nice of him, but the prosecutor has already called me to the stand, a preacher draped in blood-stained robes, squishing the loaf of Christ against his chest and questioning the meaning of this poem.

4-He tells me I'm a fugitive, the phenomenal black character of night in a field of unripe wheat, reaping the unborn souls of my sperm in exchange for delicious bites of fluffy bread. I hadn't known, but for mankind, everything we need to know changes in the reality of cultivation, so he transforms into a statue of bread, and while the Martians behind me were thus, their next sally, just "checking up" on whatever the source of this poem is, Humanity accuses me of writing a poem that seems unclear.

5-And the Martians reveal the shameless truth. This poem is about nothing more than my fixation with the spiritual aspects of bread. I lose a lot of support from the academics in the lines where the bread starts talking about God.

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