

# DÉMAQUILLANT / DÉMAQUILLER



The very definition of the real has become: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction... The real is not only what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced. The hyperreal... which is entirely in simulation.

—J. Baudrillard

For while there is clearly a mask, there is nothing behind it; it is a surface which conceals nothing but itself, and yet insofar as it suggests there is something behind it, prevents us from considering it as a surface.

—J.L. Baudry

## CUT & PASTE

By Loretta Czernis

I will never see Brent Taylor's face again. Nor will anyone else. The note entitled DANGER EXPLOSIVES has been carved into his facial features. He now looks like TERRORIST/LITTON BOMBER/MAIMER OF THE INNOCENT. We have been taught that there can be no such thing as a good revolutionary. No cause is worth dying for unless it is the cause pre-selected for us by our country's bureaucratic machinery.

There are no innocents. We are all dirty. But some are a bit dirtier than others. They try to teach us to spot the middle-class face. Run, try to catch it; if you catch it, put it on. It will snap right into place. Because our faces are now contoured to receive this Happy Face.

It is really a TV screen. *Hart to Hart* is teaching us the subtleties of caviar and wine consumption; *Hill Street Blues* and *Mike Hammer* teach us the glamour of their side of violence; the soaps teach fashion and the news is a morality play; every ad is for comparison; every fitness show, game show and talk show is for competition. Don't you see the face? The screen and the page are staring back at us, reminding us how to believe.

I will never see your face, Brent Taylor. They have covered you with newsprint, and even if I could remove the wrapping, it would be hollow. I cannot see what I have not learned to see. Seeing is believing. Seeing is meaning.

You have been eaten alive, like everyone who steps into the vortex of media power. The media maggots are sub(con)suming an entire generation — yours and mine. The maggots have the scent and no one is safe. They can smell potential product a mile away. They go for the eyes first. It is with our eyes that we recognize faces. Without eyes we can be fooled, tricked by voice impersonations. Maggot ventriloquists prefer eyes which are still impressionable but not yet "paranoid". Paranoids can see the production.

## PAINTS & BRUSHES

By Rita Kanarek

Eye/I confess. I love eye shadows, lip liners, mas(k)ara, blushers, foundations (Max Factor pan stick, creme or matte finish; each producing a different effect on the flesh), and yes, God help me, even my Final Net hair spray. All made-up and nowhere to write.

"Quick! get in the control room, look at the screen, your pan stick no.3 made Brian Linehan's face look green."

Look, it is all out in the open. Eye/I am a closet make-up artist. In the trade you get paid for your art, in academia you pay for your trade.

"She couldn't be a serious 'academic', she's all made-up; nor could she be a serious 'make-up artist', she's all booked up."

The scholarly text read (red) through a face "made-up", renders her an institutional/industrial anomaly — a unique combination; Kant and Mary Quant.

For, you see, her unusual combination unmasks the political for what it is, neither correct nor incorrect, but just a mask to read.

Eye/I am a lover of the facial arts, a subversive painter of the face. But only the shadow(s) know. Only that which reads shadows; reads colours, tones, highlights, insights, facial textures, text-styles, contour texturings.

"She's a make-up freak, a 'freak' of culture, mutating in cultural mutagenics — it's all in our jeans."

We read from Goffman (the dramaturgist of social science) that the face is not (a face), from Baudrillard, that the real is not (the real), and from Baudry, that the mask is not (the mask). These "nots" are phantasmagoric fictions; tropes swept along a chain of signifiers.

"Face up to it, the face, the real, the mask, is all made-up."



**I have seen the face of a maggot. It was a film of people dropping dead in Ethiopia. I have watched people die on TV. Those times I was a maggot, too. I forgot then that I was watching a product. I couldn't see the faces of the dead.**

To see Brent Taylor's face, or to see behind the face of the TV screen, I would have to unravel all the productions of my life. But it is not possible to unravel anything. I am constantly being swept along, hyper, moving forward and upward to another production. Make-up, wardrobe, lights, roll 'em, TAKE 1,142. What will the critics say? Will my newest simulation of myself enter the media canon, a canon within which no negotiation can occur? It is like a wild, hungry tiger staring at me. I cannot kill such a large animal and I cannot run away from it because it is too quick. I can only hope that by staying as tense as possible this canon will forget about me.

Negotiation occurs in the unarticulated space, the motion before action, the margins on the page yet to become a page. It is not possible to unravel unarticulated unmeaning. Unraveling is labour and the unmeaning-space is not labour because it is outside of exchange time. Real negotiation, ongoing relations have no use-value on the set. Unmeaning is far more dangerous than any revolutionaries with their sticks of dynamite. This motion but not action is the ultimate enemy of all knowledge canons. This great subversion lies between meaning and nonmeaning. I seek the between — the unmeaning — in the cracks, in the hope that I will see some flaws in reality production.



**I may one day piece together the outline, or at least some contours, of a "real" face, and I will not know what I am looking at. In not being able to describe it, I will know that I have stood very tense and been successful (absolute anxiety and absolute peace are both completely still) enough to get a glimpse of what is behind the curtain. "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain. I am the great and powerful Wizard of Oz." But even the "real" Oz behind the curtain is an actor, chattering away about courage, anxious to finish his day's work on the movie set. He wants to get home, put his feet up and watch himself on TV. "Pay no attention to that man..." He is part of vulnerability gone public: always tell the truth, always be humble yet keep talking non-stop about yourself, be afraid and forget that you are afraid, hate your neighbour and covet her goods. We humans are frail, self-centred, greedy creatures. Amen.**

Faces are not "faces" but rather textual energy bursting through, as we read between the space (of) our inter(textual)-action. Reading the face is the story we make-up (neither false nor true) about the face that is all made-up. Stories about how we read our own stereotypes, concealment, masks and other fictions that seduce us to believe that the real "self" is masked behind the concealment.

"The visage is a face only in the face-to-face"

Reading Cosmopolitan "death" masks is now in Vogue in some circles. One may even take their readings on a video-slide rodeo show. If the audience is not capable of reading your pre-selected catalogue of signs, you can always decode the correct ones for them.

"See the model (those simulators of the real) in the advertisement? Her face signifies a simulation of death. Shiseido pan stick white = Geisha = death. The Geisha is a cultural model for western wom(y)n's reading of white as death" — the tyranny of colours.

Even Ms Brook is just a shield for her veil of make-up which veils nothing but the shield. And Max?, he's become an amassment of simulated facial factors that are inserted into the consumers (re)product(ion)-of model parts. Take all these factors home and you produce your own Max Factor face.

"Which ideological face do you wear? — Even au nature(le) is an -ism."



Whose parts are you wearing? In other words which parts of a/the text(s) have you amassed as your own? (A)massed as your "own" (inter)textual system? We are all parts of systems, notwithstanding the fiction that some systems read themselves as more ideologically/politically correct than "others". Rendering other systems incorrect. These binary schemes are killing us. Ministry of Correctional talk sounds too state therapeutic to me.

Correct/incorrect; Marxist/anti-Marxist; feminist/anti-feminist; Oedipus/anti-Oedipus — "It is always a question of proving the real by the imaginary, proving truth by scandal, proving law by transgression... Everything is metamorphosed into its inverse in order to be perpetuated in its purged form."<sup>2</sup>

"See the panoptic tower of Babel? Stand in the shadow(s) if you do not want to stand to be corrected."

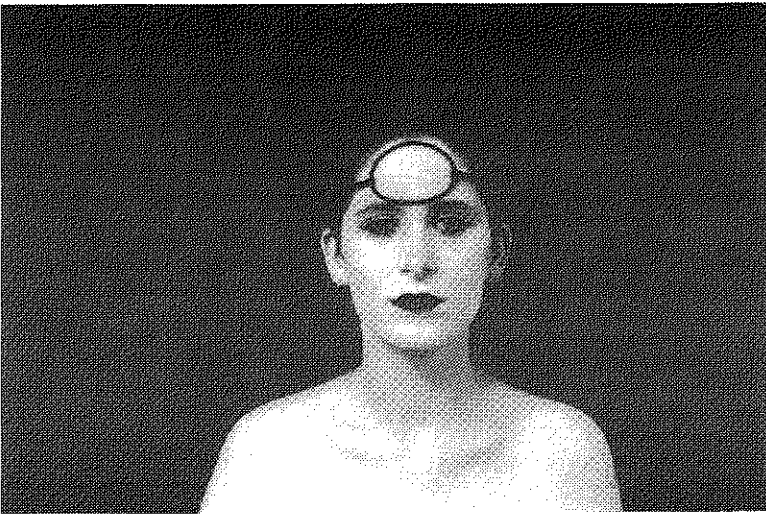
"Real" wom(y)n do not wear make-up, do not consume pornography (unless it reads "erotica"), do not wear high heels (but piercing the ear flesh for adornment is acceptable), do not "wear"....only the ideological incorrects display such practices.

"Which ideological genre is your system of parts governed by?"

If we do not think that "appearance" is an important issue (is anything not talked-up as an issue anymore?), maybe we should take another look. See the wom(y)n wearing make-up? You're probably empiricizing her up. Describing her in the same theory that made-her-up. Part social, part political, part thought.

What you're reading (her face) is your own nostalgic desire for the restoration of the "real". For the real that exist(ed)s prior to the production, processing, packaging and amassment of her facial parts. But, this is the cosmetic fiction; the fairy tale. Institutional tales which tell us how the real "self" is behind the making-up (in the text), just like the cosmetic industries sell the tale that the real "self" is in the making-up (in the cosmetics). One says **before**, the other says **after**; same fiction, just different sides of the make-up counter.

Eye/I am a make-up artist. My canvas — flesh. His face, her face, inter(textual) faces. One who paints face stories. Colour me sophisticated, punk, careerist, middle class, academic, Marxist, feminist — take your pick; it's all in the make-up artists' catalogue of texts. What you read is what you wear.



**Can I have your picture? Can I have your autograph? "Pay no attention to that terrorist behind the media face". He is already yesterday's news. Today an abused child is being worked up, talked up and produced.**

**I could not see the faces of the dead Ethiopians. The media makes even the pallor of death glamorous. At some point in the reflexive reading of myself in media documents, some electrical impulses intervened on my circular path, and took it over. The path was no longer mine. It became their loop. I gave up my power to them — a power I didn't even know I had — the power to be a knower, to trace a path of my "own".**

**Excuse me. I participated in handing over part of myself to some people somewhere, while in a state of uninformed consent. It was a high-pressure sell. I did not realize what I was giving up. Won't any lawyer help me? Who do I sue, and before what court? We are each our own judge, jury and executioner. Who said this? I don't remember. It was in literature, before TV. It is therefore not glamorous. Such a statement of pain without use-value is considered pathetic, but a potential contaminant to the production nonetheless.**

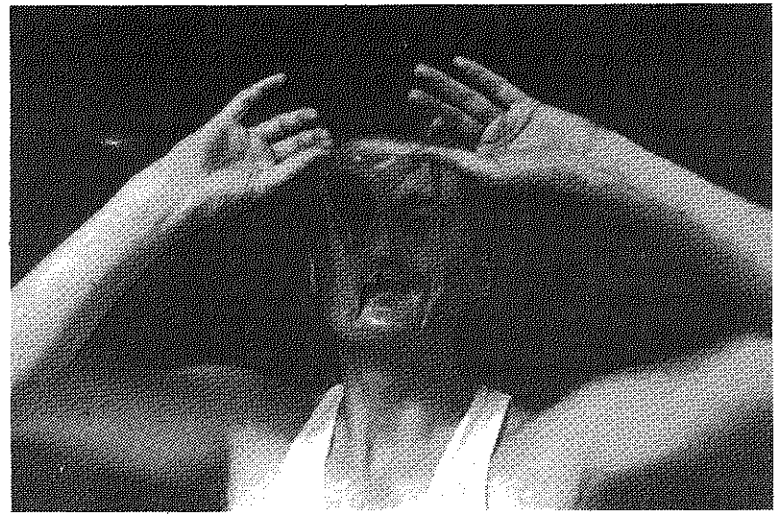
**No one with a face marked by explosives is allowed on the set. Maggot faces must be perfect, like the little boy on *Tiny Talent Time* who pretended to be the master of ceremonies (abused as child labour). In his stage fright, he could not remember the "right" line so he blurted out a "wrong" one (this little one does not realize what he knows), "We will be back in these messages."**

What you read in my face is never on my face. In/on are the ontological effects bursting through the energy of **your** reading. The reading is not of the other, but the "other" as a text to read our "selves".

Eye shadows, lipsticks, mas(k)aras and blushers are of the same order of things one finds in any artist's tool bag. Tools. But, the painted face on the wom(y)n evokes a linguistic violence we have all some time or another participated in (on both sides of the gender fence). The "whore", the "femme fatale", the "bitch", the "paper doll". Since time immemorial she has been the recipient of them all. Removing the paint does not remove this language. Nor does shipping men out of our writing remove "their" violence out of "our" discourse. The "Ship of Fools" tried a similar removal (i.e. remove the "mad" from our shores and we remove madness. But, we found out: that which is removed is always a part of our "selves"). Hence, this movement merely (re)locates our violence and situates "it" elsewhere.

Paint, brush, paint, brush; paint the violence elsewhere.

Why, when an actress does not wear make-up on the screen, do we applaud her courageous realism, since the realism we applaud is only a simulation on the reel?



The make-up, the making-up (products, production). All parts of the (re)product(ion) of the real, not the "real". The latter is the nostalgia for what is not here, not there, but always being simulated everywhere.

"What society seeks through production and over-production is the restoration of the real which escapes it."<sup>3</sup>

"Demaquillez vos yeux."



#### Notes

1. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1978), p.98.
2. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (Semiotext(e) Inc., New York, 1983), p.36.
3. *Ibid*, p.44.
4. The writers would like to thank the "Group of Seven" for their support: G. Caldwell, W. Dekeseredy, M. Pengelley, R. Greenburg, M. Boyce, C. Withers and R. Henry.

Contrary to popular belief, both **Loretta Czernis** and **Rita Kanarek** are pursuing graduate studies in the Department of Sociology at York University. They are currently writing revolutionary romances and sensuous novellas.

**Photography: Geoff Miles**  
**Facial Design: Rita Kanarek and Loretta Czernis**