

Semester 1

Unit 1: Objectification and Software Objects

The first form of objectification present in *The Lifestyle of Software Objects* is ownership. Digients, while sentient beings, are seen as things owned by people. The morality of the ownership of digients is ambiguous. The digients were essentially created to be owned by people and require an "owner" due to their need for training. However, the parallels between digients and human children somewhat justify their state of being owned because a child-parent relationship usually involves some level of "ownership" of the child at a young age. However, the ambiguity of the morality of this relationship is complicated because humans have more control of their digients than parents do to their children--in particular, they have the power to turn their digients off or erase portions of their memory. An instance of ownership (that also demonstrates denial of autonomy) in which Derek, Ana's friend, exercises his human power over his digient is seen when the digient asks to be "rolled back" following a fight. Derek denies the digient this luxury, which leads to a moral quandary: is refusing the digient's request exercising ownership and denial of autonomy, or would removing its memory objectify it more by removing a learning experience?

Another form of objectification present in the novella is instrumentality. Hints of instrumentality underlie the bulk of the reading, but it is clearly present in forum discussions on page 112 when Stuart mentions that the Drayta, a sophonce breed of digient specialized to solve puzzles, was useful to have on a mission. He then compares his proposed use of digients to that of a guide dog or a drug-sniffing dog. Digients are somewhere between dogs and humans on the

spectrum of intelligence/consciousness, so again, the morality of this situation is unclear. What if the digients are specifically bred to enjoy the work they are meant to do--is it still morally wrong? This moral quandary is similar to the one presented in the previous paragraph because it demonstrates the human ability to change the digient in some way that, while the human may objectify, improves the digient's quality of life in some way.

The third form of objectification is violability. This form is seen most explicitly in the actions of the griefers, who are similar to today's internet trolls except here, they are causing real pain to sentient beings by removing the digients' pain circuit-breakers installed by programmers. Violability is also seen when a hacker shows the digients pornographic content--these digients are at the intellectual level of human children, and exposing them to adult content is harmful to their artificial minds.

Unit 2: Theatre of the Oppressed Response

The final sentence in today's reading feels particularly relevant to the question. The sentence is "The practice of these theatrical forms creates a sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfillment through real action" (Boal 143). One of the exercises Boal discusses in his synopsis of the project to bring all forms of literacy to a Peru community involves having the spectator-actors plan and subsequently act out a revolution against a factory supervisor. This is an example of forum theater, which requires the participant to "intervene decisively" with the action taking place on stage.

Boal discusses his procedure for his forum theater in the third stage of his three-stage plan: "The spectator is encouraged to intervene in the action, abandoning his condition of object

and assuming fully the role of subject.” He lists parts of this stage: the first, to get spectators to intervene without them appearing on the stage; the second, to sculpt the bodies of those on stage in order to represent his feelings and thoughts; the third, to fully intervene in the action of the play and assume a power role. The spectator, via this process, slowly transitions into an empowered spectator-actor. By simulating a real-life situation in the theater setting, participants gain a sort of hunger for the real thing—the acting promotes that sense of incompleteness without the real world situation being fulfilled. The theater of the oppressed is always unfinished because it can be brought into and applied to the world in order to form a more productive society. By making these supposed spectators into actors, the theater of the oppressed returns power to those participants who did not before have it. Boal’s forum theater is a vehicle for justice and a catalyst for change.

Unit 3: Commonalities

The play, readings, and songs that we have engaged with in the Spirit Unit all reveal different realities of the black experience in America. Common themes emerged between the types of sources. One theme that was present in multiple sources was the idea of black Americans' view of themselves being heavily impacted by society. This theme was most explicit in the DuBois reading from *The Souls of Black Folk* via the metaphor of the veil. Du Bois describes the veil as being double-sided: it both acts as a screen through which society views black Americans and as something through which the black American views white society and themselves. The metaphor of the veil results in what Du Bois calls “double-consciousness,” or a splitting of the single human consciousness into two: one of oneself, and one of others’ view of

oneself. Du Bois' concept of the veil manifests in his short story "The Comet" when the elimination of society causes the black main character's veil to be removed. With society gone, Jim sees society through a new lens, and views himself as human for the first time. The re-introduction of society at the end of the story swiftly splits his consciousness again. This theme also emerged briefly in *Blood at the Root* between the main character and her white friend.

A function of multimodal forms of critique is to properly address every facet of a particular issue. When learning about systemic racism in the United States, having 4-5 different mediums through which we can view an issue paints a more developed picture of the problem and creates deeper understanding. For example, a play is an accurate representation of a real-life situation, whereas a reading requires more imagination but can delve deeper into the issue at hand.

Semester 2

Unit 1: Futurism, Dadaism, Oh My!

One obstacle I encountered when considering how to complete this exercise was that most of the fluxuses required objects (most of which were not immediately available). I inadvertently completed one exercise near the top—this one read "This sentence should not be read by more than one person at the same time." Because I read the sentence alone, I successfully completed the exercise (despite it being inadvertent). This exercise was particularly interesting because it only required one choice: to complete the homework for Humes (which included reading this sentence) alone. There was no choice directly involved in completing this task, just a

preliminary choice that ultimately resulted in the task being completed. I think this is very pertinent to the ideas we have discussed in class over the past week, especially the idea of Dadaism. "Dada means nothing--" the fluxus that I performed was, in this sense, Dada.

What I noticed about the tasks overall is that the body is foregrounded in the sense that it is a common requirement to complete all the fluxuses, but most of the fluxuses have additional requirements in the form of objects, setting, or other people. The body is often metamorphosed because it becomes an instrument to complete the task, and in this way, it is also effaced, because it is objectified (another relationship to Foucault). In fact, every fluxus performance is, in some way, transformational: the body becomes an instrument in order to convey a message, whether that message is built into the performance or is simply the inherent message in fluxus. And that message is, of course, the most important: the overarching concept behind fluxus that challenges our human perception of what is important and what can be considered beautiful. Fluxus is, of course, the ultimate purveyor of subjectivity, and it is intended to be this way.

Unit 2: Timeline or Chronology

1780 - Maxwell Chambers born in Salisbury

1784 - Chambers' father dies

1820 - Chambers returns to Salisbury after being in Charleston, lends money and obtains property

1854 - Chambers frees 19 enslaved persons

Feb 7, 1855 - Chambers dies and leaves \$250,000 to Davidson College in his will

Aug 7, 1855 - Meeting of the board of trustees at Davidson college to address Chambers' heirs' decision to sue

Nov 1855 - Rebecca M. Caldwell, half sister of Chambers, dies

June 26, 1856 - Meeting of the Davidson board of trustees

1857 - Enslaved persons who were required to work at the Rowan Factory are freed

1860 - Chambers building completed and named after Maxwell Chambers

Nov 2, 1861 - Davidson college trustees sell the Rowan Factory

July 15, 1862 - Davidson college trustees noted Sale of property was to Confederate officials - was used as a prison

1866 - Life of Salisbury commandant spared at trial

1921 - Chambers building burns

1930 - New Chambers building finished

I had no knowledge of Maxwell Chambers' life or will prior to this reading besides the fact that he did own enslaved persons during his life. All of the other information in the reading was new to me. Perhaps the most important part of the reading was the acknowledgement that while Chambers did free 19 enslaved persons prior to his death and freed more in his will, the vast majority of people that he owned were not freed following his death. I also found it interesting that Chambers' heirs decided to sue Davidson college after a massive sum of money was left to the school in his will.

The most apparent gap in my timeline is the time between 1866 and 1921. I believe this is because activities directly related to Chambers himself continued for the decade after his death, and then subsided until the building named after him burned in 1921. A more relevant gap was between Chambers' return to Salisbury in 1820 and his freeing of 19 enslaved persons in 1954. This gap is likely because the article focused primarily on Chambers' death and will and less on his actual life. It would be useful to write a continued version of this chronology, including events through the present day relating to the Chambers building. Perhaps additional discoveries would come to light in an in-depth study of the history of the building.

I do wish I knew more about Chambers' actions during his life, but this reading provided an interesting history of his connections with Davidson and why knowledge of his interactions with the school are important.

Unit 3: Discussing the Undiscussable

I disagree with much of Arlene Croce's review of *STILL/HERE*. Croce argues that the work is inappropriate because it uses victimhood as an art spectacle. She did not attend the show, however, despite thinking herself fit to write a piece criticizing it, because she does not believe she can review somebody she feels "sorry for or hopeless about." I don't believe it's right to attempt to review something without experiencing it. Croce also argues that victim art "is a politicized version of blackmail that certain performers resort to, even great performers" (Croce 55). I see why Croce believes this but I disagree—Jones is not creating "victim art," rather he is bringing out voices and giving opportunities to those with terminal illnesses to share their experience via an art form. If what he is creating is, however, considered victim art, this art form is not a "politicized version of blackmail." It is a statement, a call for change expressed through a group of people.

For me, the role of art is to provoke feelings in viewers or experiencers. While I don't find myself fully appreciating some forms of modern and postmodern art, such as the white painting phenomenon, I can experience feelings from a lot of different things considered "art." This is a difficult definition because it requires a line to be drawn—one that I cannot draw because everything causes us to feel things. That's the beauty of art: it is undefinable, it is to be

experienced by people and they can determine what they think of it. In this way, I think that nothing is undiscussable in the world of art. The idea of art should serve as a vehicle through which anything can be expressed, and *STILL/HERE* is an excellent example of this ideology.

Works Cited

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