

VIRTUAL CHORAGIRL'S VISION QUEST IN SECOND LIFE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC
ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN SECOND LIFE

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the production of identity within post web 2.0 virtual communities. Second Life, the community which this study focuses on, is a growing home of educational institutions. To better understand the process of constructing identity and community in the hyper-mediated future, this thesis grapples with the complicated process of creating oneself through analyzing the avatar as self and the home as community. Identity appears to continue to be both a liberating and constraining force, and creating oneself is not as simple as buying a new skin. Through a self-reflexive post-colonial virtual ethnographic exploration of the thesis writer's experiences in the virtual world, light will be shed on the ways that identity is being shaped in relation to race and gender.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the dreams of my mother, grandmother, and all my family. I must also thank my advisor Dr. Steffensmeier for all his patience with my crazy working styles. And I would like to thank Sarah and Justin Green for all their support along with the Kansas State Debate Team. And I must also thank Dr. Alfred Snider for pushing me to even continue school and helping me on my way to becoming a Master - Also I would like to give a thank you to everyone else who I forgot to mention. Without all the support of a million invisible hands I do not know if I would ever have finished this work. Bon Voyage!

CHAPTER 1 - Virtual Frontier

“Following the light of the sun, we left the old world”

- Christopher Columbus, *Isles of the Blessed*



Figure 1

“Rising toward the sun of presence, it is the way of Icarus.”

– Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*

“A theater where nothing is fixed, a labyrinth without a thread.

(Ariadne has hung herself).”

– Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*

In 1893 Fredrick Turner wrote that the closing of the American frontier would change our nation forever (Castronova, 2007, p. 15). Frontier myths created the American national identity and espoused a fierce individualistic masculine ideology (Harter 2004). In a review of books exploring turn of the century performance, visual culture became increasingly important as America adjusted to modernity with an aesthetic constructed by Wild West Shows (Davis, 2003, p.56). Just as the frontier was ‘closing,’ theatrical performances, photographic exhibits and policy rhetoric from Roosevelt memorialized this spaceⁱ. The frontier was frozen in time as the

spatial metaphor or home of American history and cultural values (Montoya, 2001). Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West* was a narrative of history that united immigrants and American born descendants of colonialism as American citizens united in their struggles against the hardships of the frontier (Dorsey & Harlow, 2003). The borders around America's frontier home were maintained through values of property ownership (Galewski, 2008, p. 300). America was a country united in its "pioneer heritage, its past triumph over wilderness, and its unlimited promise" (Kropp, 2006, p. 9). This image was solidified at the turn of the century as technological changes began to accelerate the mobility of this idea – the lone cowboy; who felt at home with himself riding into the dusk of an open horizon.

Today another migration towards a virtual wild west is occurring. Online communities are home to a new spatial topography. Individuals' identities were played out within the frontier space, constructing a collective American identity. At the turn of the century, theatrical performances such as burlesque shows became widely popular. Dime museums introduced edutainment in the form of burlesque, shows, theatre, and circus. Working class 19th century Americans learned moral values through these institutions where Ulmer (1994) contends the "display of the body as spectacle" began (p. 57). Women stripped in Burlesque shows demystifying the female body by advertising the evil of sexuality in order to rid society of such deviance. French strip shows are a "reassuring ritual that negates the flesh" (Barthes, 1972, p. 85). As the female body becomes a spectacle on stage the lived experiences of that body are denied. Barthes notes in *Striptease* that in Burlesque shows, the dancer's eroticism is lessened as the performance becomes a mechanical function. In a manner similar to industrial labor, the body's movements become the labor of the erotic, as seen within a competitive male dominated sports arena (p. 88). American burlesque shows continued the French tradition while as Ulmer

(1994) notes, blends theatrical associations with exotic cultures to “show the ‘progress’ from primitive to civilized” (p. 58). Females become spectacles and audiences identify the female body with as an object that is consumed by their viewing perspective. The male body becomes naturalized as the living real ‘normal’ body.

Performance that constructed identity did not only feature women; traveling shows advertised Natives American, African American and Asian cultures dominating the entertainment culture of the frontier. Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show and the repetitive performances of stereotypical representations of American Indian identity were crucial in creating a national U.S. identity (Opitz, 2006)ⁱⁱ. Romantic images of Indians attempted to define an authentic notion of Native American identity. The authentic Indian was removed from the context of his actual past to become a spectacle out of place in the modern world. These productions created glorified Europeans males as the idealized collective identity defined in opposition to marginalized ‘others’ (Dickinson, Brian, & Aoki, 2006). Indians were portrayed as savage, uneducated, and childlike. Our emerging National identity of necessity hid the colonial history of genocide. On stage American Indians became spectacles, ghosts of the past. American colonization was seen as the fulfillment of destiny (Deloria, 1999, p. 190). Euro-American guilt was relieved through these performances; allowing people to turn their heads at the continued racism and cultural genocide of Natives throughout the 1900s to the present. As the frontier closed, the already established rhetoric of the ‘Vanishing Indian’ gained a concrete place in cultural memory (Olund, 2002, p. 132).

Mahar’s studies of blackface in America observes that minstrel performances were the American version of French Burlesque performances. Key to the performances, actors used burnt cork to mark their faces black. Actors created a mask that served as home to an “authentic”

black identity, shaping the way audiences viewed race. Slavery was justified through a perspective that allowed audiences to imagine blackness as a spectacle that could be separated from the body and history. The performance of blackface on stage encouraged stereotypes of black Americans as uneducated slaves, thieves, and naturally lazy. Audiences came to identify themselves as viewers of the world. When they left the theater, the image they had seen stayed in the mind's eye. The performance was taken to be true at a certain level. In the same way that today I watch specific movies. When I am sad I cry more often when watching a film than in my daily life. These performances sink into the psyche of the viewers.

As communication technology shifts so does the rhetoric surrounding identity (Banks, 2006). During the industrial revolution African Americans jobs shifted from the plantation to the factory, yet racist ideologies still persisted (Alkalimat, 2001). Performances of American identity extended beyond the confines of small traveling troops in frontier towns. Brenner (2001) articulates the necessity to move towards an analysis of how social power is constituted through examining multiple spatial designations (p. 607). A booster spirit, characterized by rugged individualism, community pride and a faith in discovery rhetorically structures American identity; we see this in museums, films, plays, books, video games, and websites. In elementary schools, children reenact the Thanksgiving in the yearly ritual play where Pilgrims and Indians make stone soup as their parents proudly videotape them. Genocide is a game where Cowboy and Indian war reenactments take place in living rooms all across the country. Columbus Day commemorates the mythic discovery of America despite American Indian Protests and the United States being the only country to honor his legacy. Dickenson & Ott (2006) look at the how Plain's museums place Native American images on displays that portray a dichotomous picture of Indian as either savage or romantic. These displays reaffirm to the viewer that

American Indians are a relic of the past, not a member of their societyⁱⁱⁱ. These are but a few examples of the nostalgic representations of a romantic past. As Kropp (2006) articulates, the Booster spirit of Southern California in the early 19th century emerged from a fear of failing in the face of progress. In order to “regain a sense of control over their cultural environment, Anglos retreated into a comforting past” (Kropp, 2006, p. 3). Nostalgic recollections not only construct cultural memory but actively participate in the construction of a future shaped around the image of that memory.

As Deluca and Peebles (2002) argue, the public sphere has been transformed into the “public screen” or television. Audiences gather for public deliberation and education in their living rooms, eyes glued to the tube. Mass media produces a homogenous audience. Cultural difference began to be understood and filtered through the solitary experience of media produced images. Community was formed through the idea that the isolated viewer shared the same perspective with the world. With the internet the audience changes and there is more opportunity for creation of culture. The internet introduces a new space for public deliberation where new social networking sites create a return to a village like community (Thompson, 2008). The shape and space of this community is currently being debated. "For some scholars (Borsook 1996; Sochack 1993; Ross 1991), cyberspace is not only a site for communication and community but also a generator of discourse...two disturbing discourses of cyberspace have emerged: the Net as frontier and cyberspace as boy's town" (Silver, 2006). These discourses reinforce gender norms that identify women as weak and passive, coinciding with a historical perspective that has deemed women as inferior to men. Again the image of the quintessential American cowboy is conjured in the creation of current culture. And so the researcher asks how are racial and gender identities formed in virtual communities, specifically in Second Life?

Technological changes within communication—such as bookkeeping, print media, photographs, video, television, maps and museums—affect the ways individuals view themselves and identify with society (Lum, 2005; Ong, 1982; Anderson, 1991)^{iv}. Many first player shoot up games demand the players occupy a racist colonialist subject position (Ow, 2000). Schwartz (2006) argues that video games are “culturally constructed spaces” which “communicate cultural meanings”. Video games such as Suikoden III, Grand Theft Auto, and World of Warcraft, portray war without tragedy. These representations “reflect the desire to represent a utopian environment...well in line with the representation of America’s ideological wars on the evening news, in which the day’s deaths in Iraq are mentioned but only in passing, along with discussion of the progress of Iraqi democracy, and in which, like World of Warcraft, corpses and grieving families are shown briefly – if at all” (Schwartz, 2006, p. 323). Like the dime museum of the 19th century cultural values are disseminated through education as entertainment. Thus it is possible that children learn identity through video games, where a player interacts with history, in the same way that a moviegoer can feel a film as though it were real, and the player experiences the game as though it were real including its hidden representations. Race and identity shape the video game user’s perspective and character within the game. As users sign online, or enter a video game, they engage in “identity tourism.” Nakamura (2006) defines this as the process by which a computer viewer is able to experience “otherness” through playing alternate ethnic, race, and gender positions.

Gender and racial difference has been taught through performances of woman’s bodies as spectacle. Women’s performances have been limited to modes of consumption. Berger (1972) studied art history; finding that images of women’s bodies have been the object of fantasy. Naked and passive she is always on display in museums, or offices. “Men look at women.

Women watch themselves being looked at” (Berger, 1972, p. 45). Women thus not only see others when they walk into a room but see themselves. “Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen” (Mulvey 1973, p. 19) Images on display that are different reinforce a certain perspective; in which male viewers see themselves as powerful and the woman as merely an object not an active agent. In 1810 a Khoiki woman, Sarrtjie Baartmen was brought from Africa to London where she became a museum exhibition. She was forced to shake her buttocks and stand naked to show viewers her ‘abnormal’ body. Her body remained on display after her death in public view until 1974. Her remains were returned in 2002 after Nelson Mandela formally pressured the French government. There are numerous examples from history where aboriginal peoples were captured/displayed "for aesthetic contemplation, scientific analysis, and entertainment" (Fusco, 1995, p. 41)^v. Performances by those who are not in power are seen only when they have been put on display. Instead of seeing the person who is being represented they have the privileged viewpoint of outsider.

With the invention of the photograph, the image becomes reproducible^{vi}. Booth (1971) explains the significance of visual displays of the body: “the rhetoric of the image, reinforcing or producing basic attitudes towards life that are frequently not consciously faced by the rhetor, constitutes an enormous part of our daily diet of rhetoric” (p. 101). These common performances form American’s cultural and political ideologies. As individuals are increasingly faced with a diet of mass-produced images, the way people view themselves also changes. Those who do not see images where people look like them internalize a feeling of displacement. For example as Native American children grow up in a culture where their images are only reflected as

historical. There are rare popular culture icons who share their cultural history, so these children can feel that they are outsiders. The ironic over-performance of Indian identity contrasts with the denial of Native Sovereignty and blood quantum laws that aim to assimilate the display of bodies through images is where “collective social action, individual identity and symbolic imagination meet the nexus between culture and politics” (Hartley, 1992, 3). Shifting communication technologies changes the frame through which identity and social ideas are created in the public eye.

As the gaze becomes reproducible media creates culture, blurring our notions of public and private to a new extent, one does not have to go to a play or performance to see performances of difference. In line at the grocery store, in the bathroom and at the airport images of naked women sell clothing and the image is disembodied and seen as a representation that is easily accepted as a choice the model created. Instead bell hooks comments on these images which “subtly invites the pornographic gaze – we’re all invited to look. There is no longer a sense that only pornographers look at women, desire women, and long to violate and mutilate women” (p. 63). As the shift between viewer and viewed becomes blurred the relationship between other and self may also shift.

As society has shifted from small towns to a global community, authors such as Robert Putnam (2000) have argued that we are seeing a decline in local participation. Constantly moving around the country to get a better job, maintain a job, forced due to war, it is commonly felt that we are less connected with our communities than in the past. In response to the rising sense of isolation, people have embraced online communities (Stone 1991; Rheingold 1993). People engage in online communities to connect with friends and family that they are physically far away from. With the increased mobility of today’s world online communities offer a space

where users can connect with other people across distant geographic locales. One such community is Second Life (SL). SL is a 3D virtual world created by Phillip Rosedale, CEO of Linden Labs. This 3D Virtual Multiple Player Online Game (MPOG) is a place where users come together within a co-created world to talk, fornicate, learn, and play. The world is constructed by multiple players where, in the users design, the virtual topography, the objects and rules of their world, and their individual representation within it are artificially constructed.

Individual users within these environments are usually referred to as “resident” or “avatar”. SL users create an avatar or “an interactive social representation of a user” (Meadows 2008, p. 13). “Orientation Island” is the first space the SL user encounters upon registering with the website. This is the beginnings of a shared ritual of rhetorically constructing self that is the beginning of creating SL as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1991). The user-controlled space allows for shared creation of the virtual environment, therefore promising a new utopian space. The *frontier* of SL emerges through users creating a narrative that remembers the shared experiences of SL’s creation. The frontier metaphor relates to the utopian dreams of a new land to conquer and create. This metaphor “conjures up traditional American images of the individual lighting out from the territories, independent and hopeful, to make a life” (Doheny-Farinha, 1996, p. 16). This net-as-frontier metaphor establishes the web as a manly space where women are seen as weak and unsuited for its discursive terrains (Miller, 1995, p. 57). Old identities and memory are transferred onto this virtual space.

Cyber culture scholars have begun the process of documenting the history of virtual communities to shed light on the creation of virtual identity and memory (Dibbell, 1998; Horn 1998; Silver, 1996, 1999, 2000). *The Official Guide to Second Life* provides the reader with the site’s history as told by its corporate founders Linden Lab (Rosendale, 2007). The Guide is

reminiscent of a poor social studies elementary school account of US History. SL's history begins with Natives inhabiting its BETA space, proceeding to colonization by outsiders, followed by the inevitable rise of democracy. To top it off the history even has its own Boston Tea Party. A recent blog post speaks to the remnants of SL past: "Those who view real life as a chore can move to Second Life get married, have sex, make money and get divorced- indulging all of those big, juicy vices virtually" (Turton, 2008). The idea of a space where one can create constructs an identity free from social judgment is enticing to a public that has traditionally not had the freedom to escape their bodily entrapments.

Currently educators have mixed feelings about the possibilities of online education. Some believe it will detract from face-to-face interaction, and others hail it as the promise to education's woes. This project enters somewhere in the middle acknowledging searching for shifts in perspective which change notions of identity and community while recognizing that historically shifts in technology have not held up to utopian dreams. As SL works to create a sense of community, a historical narrative has emerged. "History museums and heritage sites came into being as the modern state emerged...stories, images, and artifacts of the past which are displayed in such museums shape national identity by creating an 'imagined community' or a 'community of memory'" (Gables, 2006, p. 108) SL history honors America's frontier origins through post-museum strategies, such as virtual lands that recreate Native American culture within the virtual world. SL's frontier story is also told in books, websites, and videos that document its rise. Multiple links between SL's historical narrative and the US historical narrative become clear to the analyst. As US collective identity was formed through the creation of a shared historical narrative it becomes imperative to question the relationship of historical narratives to identity (Anderson, 1991)^{vii}. Culture is created through sites such as museums

“where a public learns to look but not touch, if there are sites where a public learns to be bourgeois, there are also places where caretakers come to assume an inevitable specific ways of governing or managing a public” (Gables, 2006, p. 115). Historical images displayed to viewers “allow social actors to locate themselves within the frame of their place of origin” (Stuckle, 2003, p. 109). Defining what counts as a museum is elusive, yet it is heavily influenced by the ability to convey truth (Garreau, 2007). Within virtual spaces, second life may be a museum of the current virtual world.

SL differs from other MPOG’s such as World of Warcraft because it is not a game. SL offers users property ownership in order to foster a real economy that now averages around \$1.5 million US dollars being exchanged every day (Terdiman, 2008, p. 9). With no overall goal, the purpose and meaning of SL is up for debate by its residents. Technology analysts predict that 80 % of all internet users will have a second life by 2011 (Au, 2008, p. xiv). The space of SL is quickly being populated with nearly 2.4 million residents at the time of this writing. Au (2008) views SL as the beginning of a virtual meta-verse. “Meta-verse” is a phrase coined by Neal Stephenson in his science fiction novel Snow Crash (1992) that described an all-encompassing virtual environment where humans do all their social and economic interactions. The meta-verse even has its own manifesto published by a Second Life avatar Orange Montage (2007).

Burns (2008) investigates the shift towards “produsage”; where individuals no longer consume content but rather produce it. Burns highlights the potential for produsage environments such as SL and Wikipedia to increase “international understanding without leading to a homogenization of cultural specificities...entire nations and cultures in the developing world still remain left out of produsage environments at present...and in the process continue to be confined to industrially, proprietarily controlled forms of culture, information, and knowledge only” (p.

402). SL is one example of the future of interactive virtual environments that are a part of a larger cultural shift- which Jenkins (2006) labels convergence culture. Jenkins examines the trends of media creations to attract larger participation while simultaneously being distributed and owned by monolithic corporations. Content is becoming easily transferred between the cell phone, video game console, and personal computer. With the increase in wireless internet, virtual communities are increasingly at the average individual's fingertips (Au, 2008, p. 224). Second Life is an environment that can play host to a new world of production and consumption. Businesses are not naïve; they are looking to regain their slipping grip on culture.

Businesses stopped investing in online business ventures after the dot-com failures of the early 1990s. But now a re-emergence of interest in web 2.0 has emerged and businesses are embracing social networking sites. Boelstroff (2008) argues that SL is home to what "creationist capitalism...a mode of capitalism in which labor is understood in terms of creativity, so that production is understood as creation. Techne is the modality this creation takes; self-fulfillment becomes a means of production" (p. 206). Business's who have found success in the virtual environment market to avatars, instead of hosting a virtual store advertising 'real' products. SL has led to a large amount of grass roots entrepreneurs who have made large amounts of real money through land sales, skin designs, and other creative endeavors. Corporations have also moved into the metaverse, in 2004 Fizik Baskerville was the first corporation to buy a private island from Linden Labs (Au 2008, p. 163). SL offers businesses a unique space for personal interaction with customers. Businesses such as Coca-Cola and MTV set up shop in SL. MTV held a photo shoot in 2006, Coke promoted a live concert, and American Apparel opened a virtual shop. Au (2008) comments on this trend "these companies were to Second Life worlds what Web developers were to the dot-com boom, for instead of creating Web pages, they built in

3-D” (p. 165). The end result was corporate owned lands that held no avatars. This led to a shift in marketing strategies that have focused on creating community, and selling to avatars instead of using SL as a platform for real world sales.

Politicians have embraced this virtual terrain. Barack Obama campaigned in SL during the 2008-2009 election. Forbes magazine featured an article on businesses in SL “Virtual worlds allow for a level of participation and a level of dialogue that you can't get with 2D social media properties. They're very different, but I think they're complementary rather than mere substitutes. So I think in future elections we'll see virtual worlds play the same role that social media played in this election” (Greenberg, Dec. 12 2008). These companies and political campaigns are embracing innovative strategies such as customer involvement with product development by IBM and Coca-Cola hosting SL parties. Second Life has become political hotbed avatars raised money for victims of Hurricane Katrina (Meadows, 2008).

The most recent consumers of SL are Universities. More than 300 Universities have already built virtual schools within Second Life. The University of Kansas, the largest rival of Kansas State University, my current educational home, will open shop in 2009 (Rosner, 2008). Groups tout the interfaces ability to teach students about culture; for example Salmon of Leicester’s Media Zoo Project held a course where students researched ancient Sami culture through virtual ethnographic trips where students lived the experience of this nomadic culture’s lifestyle (Dodson, 2008). SL has also attracted the US air force with the launch of Mybase a virtual SL space that’s goals are to recruit and educate the public with hope that it will become a place for military education in the future (Rowell, 2008). In May 2007 Dresden State Art Collections opened the first virtual museum in SL to attract young visitors and has received

about 60,000 hits in its 2 years in the metaverse (Villarreal, 2009). Organizations are incorporating SL as a part of an integrated strategy to increase their significance.

Identity is created through imagining a shared community that is given definition through spatial metaphors related to the body and place. Lived memory of experience is replaced with the memory of images. These images are viewed and the relationship between self and community takes place in this relationship. Subjects locate themselves in relation to a larger historical and communal orientation. As the virtual world emerges, rhetorical analysis is necessary to question these sites as places of identity construction. The literature review will follow where sophistic roots of rhetoric are analyzed to understand how the role of rhetorical scholar and scholarship relates to the creation of identity. Feminist scholarship will be studied to enrich our understanding of gender and race differences and their relationship to spatial metaphors and community. Recent literature about communication technologies will be analyzed to make sense of the ways that race and gender are being studied online.

Chapter Three will outline the theoretical and methodological questions which guide the autoethnographer through this thesis. Chapter Four examines the process of creating identity through the narrative of my SL avatar. Chapter Five examines the development of community through the struggle of my avatar to find a sense of home within the virtual space. Chapter six concludes the journey we have just begun into Second Life.

CHAPTER 2 - *Literature Review*

In order to address how race and gender are formed within Second Life, literature that explores the relationship between rhetoric and identity is explored. To understand the way masculine white bodies have become the norm I examine Platonic and Aristotelian notions of identity. Critical rhetorical scholars and the Sophist provide a way of viewing identity as construed and right action as dependent on time and place. Next the relationship to self and home is analyzed as developed in feminist literature. Feminist scholarship provides the language and perspective which can allow the researcher to navigate and situate them amongst the “living text” of Second Life.

Sophistic Views on Identity

Sophist “appear now like forgotten kin...like most memories of distant kin, however, the question is less one of authenticity and more of the sense and value such memories, acquired in the present”(Vivian, 2002, p. 202). Disputes between rhetorical scholars over the usefulness, accuracy of texts from the sophists and their purpose today are wide ranging^{viii}. Sophists were outsiders who traveled to Greece around 500 CE teaching individuals about the arts of rhetoric. They were viewed by the Greek elites as dangerous because they did not share the same values as the Greek community. At the time of the sophists a massive shift to democracy was occurring which required active involvement in the larger community. Democracy emerged, and participation in the public sphere required speeches, and sharing stories.

Sophists held a concept of *disoi-logoi* which meant that what is true sometimes is not true in other instances. “For the pre-Socratic philosophers, speculating on the nature of being in fifth-century Greece, the oppositions between being and becoming, *techne* and *tuche*, and between *physis* and *nomos*, nonsensible reality and appearance, were the crux of a very serious argument...the prescription of what exists, what has value, and what – by implication – has no value at all” (Ballif, 2001, p. 35). Truth was seen as fluid and shifting depending on the place, time, and perspective one held. The sophists Protagoras and Isocrates both “described their instruction as political *techne*” (Atwell 1998, p. 6). Sophist techniques differed from Aristotelian and Platonic methods, viewing knowledge as a production instead of a product (Atwell, 1998, p. 7). Protagoras’s, a well known sophist, educational standards viewed individuals as possessing the skills to develop themselves despite their current economic or political status. Individuals were “not defined by [their] own coherence but by action in personal and public affairs” (Atwell 155).

Jarratt writes (1991) “the obligation of the responsible citizen, both for the first sophist and for some feminist is the choice of a position, in the full knowledge that the ‘economy’ of her selection leaves out other, less usable truths” (p. 70). A responsible citizen therefore acted with a partial perspective, they did not wholly commit to a truth that would forsake the betterment of the larger community. Sophists and women have both been condemned “with the responsibility for representing that which is other” (Ballif, 2001, p. 35). In Plato’s *Gorgia*’s Sophistry is compared to a woman and rhetoric is the art of putting on makeup. Sophists and women are described as artificial and lesser than men and philosophy.

Platonic texts have become the foundation of Western academic views on identity since the enlightenment. Plato’s dialogues with Socrates espouse a pedagogy which “sought truth and

to instill virtue in the student. Instead of viewing identity and community as variable, identity becomes stabilized in notions of truth and place. Plato “advocated an elitist individualism” (Ballif, 2001, p. 63). Women, slaves, foreigners, and landless peasants were not citizens and thus were seen as not in need of education at the time. But in Plato’s ideal Republic things would be slightly different arguing that women and men differed more in individual souls than sex alone. In Phaedrus the soul becomes separated from the body. The most enlightened souls strive for true formless, intangible knowledge.

Plato was writing at the time formalized language was introduced to Greece. “Essentially the same objections commonly urged today against computers were urged by Plato...against writing” (Ong, 1982, p. 79). Plato says the following about writing in Phaedrus:

If men learn this, it will implant forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder. And it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance, for by telling them of many things without teaching them you will make them seem to know much, while for the most part they know nothing, and as men filled, not with wisdom, but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows. (p. 67-71)

Writing was a new medium for knowledge and political use. It was the technical revolution of the time. Plato’s teaching methods involved defining objects to find their truth and in cultivating a strong sense of true knowledge that would operate according to logic. Plato was critical of the sophistic techniques for teaching which involved memorization and etymology. To

memorize speeches and information, Greeks would create mnemonic devices through walking through a house, and placing particular rooms of the house items to recall (Dickenson 1997; Virilio 1994). Orators memorized speeches through imagining a spatial structure such as home as a background place where they would place images to remember a speech (Gibson). When giving the speech the orator would walk through the home and collect the images and through following the imaginary path could memorize long speeches. Etymologies were a practice that allowed the individual to practice the process of finding the path that led one to the word they were studying. Sophist's memory should be thought of as the way a graffiti artist views their day. As the graffiti artist walks through the city they paint certain places the next day it may be washed over. But as they continue to go out at night and learn the streets they begin to learn where to paint without the fear of repercussion. The path they take each night changes dependent on the circumstances, weather, cops, but they learn each night the process of painting.

Sophists were outsiders who posed a challenge to thinking of the self as operating on the logic of logos in which "the very possibility of knowing oneself depends on being able to elaborate the subject's relation to truth and speech" (Butler, 2005, p. 130). Who you were in Greece was dependent on your belief in the truth of what you were doing. Jarrett offers a different path that escapes viewing identity as operating within a logos/mythos binary. She offers nomos as a third space to understand the sophist position. As Vitanza (1997) notes nomos relates etymologically to home and pasture and therefore relates to speaking of a space where people can come together and discuss social and political issues.

Identity Changes with Communication Technology

With the invention of the printing press knowledge production became mass produced. Media ecologist Eisenstein (1968) writes “the appearance of a Protestant ethic, a spirit of capitalism, a middle-class ethos, new concepts of the family and the child, educational reforms, and a bureaucratic officialdom all owed much to multiple, complex interactions introduced by typography” (p. 45). In the proceeding seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, legal equality replaced feudal power given through divine right, rapidly changing notions of identity. Identity could no longer be measured by birth right and needed additional measurements, behavior, race and sex became formal categories (Foucault, 1979). Proper names and classifications of people were put into a universal knowledge bank which objectively defined people. Lived experience was divorced from the way identity was understood. Scholars developed knowledge banks which gained authority not from personal ethos but from their adherence to formalized logic. Scientist including psychologist, sociologist, and economists began to theorize and standardize the body producing the normalized white male body. Identity was influenced by naturalist scientific work that assumed hierarchical human organization and extended zoological categorization onto humans (Webster, 1992, p. 4). "By the end of the 19th century...race typologies provided a solid foundation for explaining behavioral variation and social inequality" (Wander, 1999, p. 15). Identity was organized according to the hierarchal linear logic which served those in power.

Rhetoric was not a defined discipline as it stands today until Wilchen’s (1925) essay separating the study of speeches from literary studies. Wilchen defined rhetorical criticism as “not concerned with permanence, nor yet with beauty. It is concerned with effect. In regards a speech as a communication to a specific audience, and holds it business to be the analysis and appreciation of the orator’s method of imparting his ideas to his hearers” (p. 22). Rhetoric focused on the speaker instead of focusing on literary texts. Rhetoric was a way of uncovering

the strategic potential of an actor, Wilchen compares literary and oratory studies of Burke to prove that studying his work as speeches can help lead to understanding the communicative impulse of Burke – or any orator. Identity within rhetorical criticism is shaped by the speaker's intentions and audience and thus, "its atmosphere is that of public life" (p. 26). Through classifying and analyzing the speeches of Presidents and historical figures rhetorical scholars aimed to develop universal theories that would explain how to create an effective speech.

In 1947, Wrage expanded on Wilchen's definition of speech; from a scholarship focused on techniques of a speaker to a broader view that included ideas, values, and culture. This shifts the focus of rhetorical criticism away from studying a speaker's individual goals towards the study of ideas, focusing on the speech and its content (Wrage, 1947, p. 31). Parrish complicated this view in 1954 arguing that the effect of a speech can be measured outside of the immediate audience. An objective third party judge is introduced to analyze the effectiveness of speeches. In the 1960's Black proposed that previous rhetorical critics determined the speaker's goals through their effect on an audience not allowing a more complex view of the speaker's goals. Bitzer (1965) introduced the rhetorical situation as the means of framing a situation which can analyze a speaker as strategically affecting an audience. His method requires an objective evaluation that determined the value of a speech depending on its appropriateness for the rhetorical situation in which it emerged.

Rosenfield (1968) saw rhetorical criticism as an analytical argument that examined speeches in terms of source, message, environment and critic. His method espouses a more pluralistic mode of perspective. Black's 'Second Persona' (1970) argued that the rhetorical scholar should look at rhetorical text to see what audience the speaker was trying to reach. Black is arguing that speakers have hidden motives that may aim for certain audiences which can be

seen through their language. Wander (1983) argued that critics needed to go beyond examining how efficient a political speech was and openly challenge its basis. McKerrow's 1989 essay took the postmodern critical turn arguing that rhetorical discourse works within a system of power. The critic should see how the rhetorical text challenges or maintains power while also seeking strategies in which a change could occur within those power relations, he regards criticism itself as a performance. This performance is influenced by the context in which it takes place, by whom does it, and the power it serves.

Rhetorical scholarship has shifted from studying historical speeches in the early 1900's to today's multi-faceted field that has expanded its object of study. Rhetorical studies roots in the Sophists calls to attention that memory can be trained through associating ideas or images with place. Sophist notions of truth call to attention that what is true for one place and time may not be the best for another. Etymology trained one to see names as a process instead of an end. Their pedagogy required practice through which one gains the experience of navigating one's life and memory. Plato's demand for an ultimate truth and a focus on classification and proper names led to a philosophical world view that disembodied the practice of knowledge. This led to the categorization and racial and gender categories that came to a head with the printing press. Critical rhetorical criticism called into question notions of truth and representation. Seeing rhetoric and the process of critique as creating the way one understands the world and self disrupts ideals of objectivity and accurate representation. Now we will examine the contributions feminists add to a shattered world of representation.

Communicating Difference – Gender, Race and Rhetoric

“A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that as you will see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unsolved.”

-Virginia Woolf 1929 *A Room of One's Own*



Figure 2

Virginia Woolf was employed to write a history of Women and Fiction in the early 1900s. She found that there were few women novelist in history and her final product is a text which reads more like a novel than a history book. Woolf continually uses metaphors and poetic language to describe the process of her writing and that of women writers throughout history. In 1892 Charlotte Perkins Gilman's essay *The Yellow Wallpaper* was published, another example of early works that attempted to carve out a space for women's voices in literature. Her essay examines the madness that is felt in being confined to a life where one is denied the freedom of experience. Trapped in a room, without the freedom to experience the world she goes mad and is unable to write. Both women along with a host of other women writers were driven mad from living in a world that did not accept them and ended their own lives. Social changes in the 1900s from feminist activism opened the door for more women in the academy and in the 1970's feminism began to make a name for itself within the ivory towers.

Rhetorical scholars owe Campbell a debt of gratitude for introducing feminism to rhetorical studies in 1973. Arguing that the Women's Liberation was its own genre of rhetorical persuasion, she highlighted the unique features of women's discourse deeming it an area of analysis that should be analyzed on its own merits. Examining the strategies used by the Women's Liberation movement; she deemed feminist rhetoric its own genre that employed alternate modes of persuasion. The rhetoric employed did not engage in traditional forms of persuasion but rather worked to construct a sense of feminist identification with its audience through consciousness-raising. The nature of the discourse was substantively and stylistically different than what she defined as traditional male rhetors through its challenge to fundamental values held within society. Many feminist began the project of constructing a home for women through analyzing women rhetors in history. Through reclaiming lost histories feminist developed a sense of belonging to a history of women who shared their values.

Kramarae (1974, 1981) examined language arguing that it reflects male values and ways of thinking and speaking and thus excludes women. Helene Cixous (1973) offered an alternative way of writing and speaking to counter the male text. This mode of speaking is "écriture feminine" (Green, 1996). Biesecker (1992) reads Cixous as calling for a feminist rhetorical method – that calls women to speak their bodies – this requires a new language that does not constrict a women's identity to the constructed language given by a phallogentric language. Cixous use of figurative language which takes on multiple perspectives is a way of rhetorically constructing and calling for an embodied identity within text. Identity is claimed through the act of writing and expressed in the style of writing.

Anzaldua's (1987) essay articulated Chicana identity through the metaphor of "borderlands"; in which Mexican-American identity belongs to multiple spaces. Those who live

their lives in multiple roles experience themselves as having multiple fluid and contradictory identities. The use of spatial metaphors enhances the ability of those who do not occupy the majority identity position ways of describing the experience of home. Flores (1996) adds to this claim stating that “while confined geographically as a border culture between the United States and Mexico, Chicana feminist can cross rhetorical borders through the construction of a discursive space or home” (p. 143). Identifying one’s identity as different from the dominant culture creates a sense of personal and communal uniqueness which serves as a way to overcome the psychological effects of internalizing one’s marginalization. As Flores (1996) contends “marginalized groups then find security and a sense of home within” (p. 146). Through writing, painting, and other artistic endeavors Chicana feminist express solidarity with their history and claim their agency as producers of beauty.

This view can be described as “postmodern” by some or “intersectional” by others^{ix}. Such a perspective sees identity as problematic, it is fluid or multiple. Communities can be empowered through this feminist interpretation of self which aims to foster rhetorical empowerment through self and group identification. Rhetorical speech acts can be analyzed as coming from a speaker who negotiates multiple identities and cultural affiliations. Butler (1998) introduced the idea of drag as a way to subvert gender. Identity begins to seem more playful, and up for construction. Butler’s work has been heavily influential on the turning towards describing gender and race as a performance. Her work highlights the rhetorical processes that have created a world where women and men are identified as opposite one another. Identity in Butler’s view is a process instead of something one is born with. One only comes to know themselves through relationships with their community. Individuals negotiate the way others see them and the practices which have become normalized. Butler searches for ways that individuals gain agency

through reclaiming identities that have been marginalized by the dominant culture. For example she argues that identifying as Queer is a way to redefine oneself in a positive manner and through repeated performances that embrace Queer identity cultural values can be shifted.

Performance has been used as a way of explaining the intersections of gender and race. Peterson (1995) writes that “speaking and writing” can be a “form of doing, of social action” (3). Peterson examines the ways that African American women such as Sojourner Truth performed their racial and gender identities in ways that created an ethos of authority through both their discursive strategies and their bodily performances (Sage Handbook Gender, 2006, p. 223). Critics have analyzed the rhetoric of non-white rhetors through the lens of performance looking at Nelson Mandela (Zagacki, 2003), Native Americans (Clements 2002), and U.S. first ladies (Campbell 1998; Parry Giles & Blair 2002). Performance literature that comes from a theoretical heavy lens runs the risk of denying the reality of lived experiences, which are not shared or universal.

Grande (2002) argues that Native American identity is fundamentally tied to the land, and thus community must be formed through rhetorical and political struggles that demand Indian Sovereignty. Grande (2004) identifies as “indigena” instead of as a feminist and her “analysis is premised on the understanding that the collective oppression of indigenous women is primarily an effect of colonialism – a multidimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism” (p. 124). Grande critiques white mainstream feminism, she quotes bell hooks who says “[t]he force that allows white feminist authors to make no reference to racial identity in their books about ‘women’ that are in actuality about white women is the same force that would compel any author writing exclusively on black women to refer explicitly to their racial identity. That force is racism” (Grande, 2004, p. 139).

White main stream feminists should abandon striving for universally shared experiences of oppression and identity that is separated from the lived experiences of their own lives. Through attention to my own perspective and lived experiences as they relate to my autoethnographic experiences in *Second Life* I attempt to honor multiple races and not deny my perspective.

Although Leff and Utney (2004) take a different theoretical perspective than Butler, the same idea of creating a sense of self and community through rhetorically constructing oneself and ones relations comes to light in their rhetorical analysis of Martin Luther King's Letter from Birmingham Jail. Leff and Utney write that the letter "functions both as an instrument that uses constructions of self to alter attitudes and as a medium for constituting self within a scene composed of "exigencies, constraints, others, and self" (p. 47). The letter served to establish King's persona and spoke to both a black and white audience, but in different ways. King's letter embodies his and African American experience through figurative language; "Christianity is made physical through representation of the church as a walled, physical space; King, coming from a lineage domiciled within those walls, assumes an identity connected with that Christian space, and from this inside position his disappointment with the church can manifest itself only as tears of love" (p. 42). He thus situates himself as a member of the larger community. Through King's identification with "Amos, Paul, Socrates, and even Jesus" who also "behaved as agitators, then it follows that agitation to expose and overcome injustice is no threat to the common tradition, but is instead something needed to renew and sustain its integrity "(Leff & Utney, 2004, p.42). Through rhetorical strategies, King's letter embodied his persona in relation to those he was fighting against. Identifying himself as a member of America attempting to heal instead of disrupt his nation, his letter provides a blueprint for the ways in which marginalized group leaders construct self and community. King uses rhetorical embodiment to establish a

persona or identity to the readers, and creates a relationship to the white and black communities through his spatial metaphors.

Audre Lorde's famous quote "The master's tools will never break down the master's house" from a speech she gave at a 1979 conference aptly sums up the approach of standpoint theorist who critique engaging in the same scholarship techniques, ideas, legal strategies, and theoretical views of the dominant culture. Standpoint theorists fear that postmodern views of fluid identity may leave marginalized individuals without an ability to develop a sense of solidarity with their community (Bacon 2002; Crenshaw 1997; Davis 2002). Standpoint scholars are critical of the idea of the homeless self, afraid that this fluid identity becomes the new mask for denying marginalized peoples their claim to culture and identity. Holding that epistemology comes from "socially situated knowledge", standpoint theory privileges partial knowledge returning the fractured sense of woman to more localized identities with a purposefully non-essentialist viewpoint (Harding, 1991, p. 138). Research about women according to Harding should come from the perspective of the oppressed. Standpoint theory is thus a way to situate the author of a work in relation to their object of study. Through identifying their personal reality the objective epistemological basis is disrupted and a more critical scholarship emerges which opens the door to marginalized scholars whose knowledge was previously dismissed.

As individuals learn about their personal and cultural history a "sense of identity" is being constructed (Flores, 1996, p. 149). Through passing down traditions and stories culture is reaffirmed and a sense of familial identity and community is formed. As Chicana feminists begin to identify with feminism or other cultures they feel a sense of isolation from their own homes. Flores cites Anzadula "Because I no longer share their [family] world view, I have become a stranger and exile in my own home...Though I continue to go home, I no longer fool myself into

believing that I am truly ‘home’”(p. 150). Thus begins the desire to create a sense of home amongst others who share their ideological positions. Flores contends “by turning their space to their home, Chicana feminists find they are able to accept the contradictions of being both Chicana and feminist. The Chicana feminist comes full circle, first separating herself as a feminist, then rejoicing in her heritage, and finally using her history to establish herself as a feminist”(p. 151).

Feminist scholarship that embraces alternative methods such as Martin and Chaundry’s (1986) analysis of Pratt’s autobiographical narrative “Identity: Skin Blood Heart” embraces the idea of situated knowledge that engages a notion of a fluid self. Martin & Chaundry’s project attempts to understand the relationship between home, identity, and community. Chaundry & Martin write that “the form of the personal historical narrative forces [Pratt] to re-anchor herself repeatedly in each of the positions from which she speaks even as she works to expose the illusory coherence of those positions” (p. 295). This occurs not from taking a post modern perspective which collapses author and text but rather from continually realigning the writing with the author’s material realities. Through conceiving the self in order to her relationship with particular people and her lived experienced the self is conceived as a “bounded fortress that must be transgressed, shattered, opened onto the world which has been made invisible and threatening by the security of home” (p. 298). To explore how others are constructed from a feminist perspective that embraces difference the author must explore her own relation to gender and race as they inform her notions of identity. Instead of merely documenting this thesis will explore how the researcher comes to understand her identity and forms homes and communities.

While many of these authors call for attention to the lived experience of race and gender differences they do not argue that there is a biological foundation for either identity category.

Race and Gender, as social constructionist argue, has no genetic or biological foundations (Kolko, 2000; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Rather gender and race are created through socially constructed meanings that create stereotypes and identity markers which cannot be tied to physical characteristics (Frankenberg, 1993; Gates, 1985; Ignatiev, 1996; Omi, 1993). This does not mean that race and gender do not exist; rather they are derived from culture, not nature (Kolko, 2000, p. 2). Culture is formed in many spaces outside the traditional public sphere that scholars used to examine. Feminists have challenged the public/private dichotomy arguing that marginalized individuals have not had access to public spaces so analysis of these groups must examine non-traditional spaces. Spaces traditionally thought of as private such as the home, postcards, and letters serve as sites where marginalized groups develop a sense of self and community.

Identity that is marginalized in dominant culture is constructed as an empowering site of self and community through the rhetorical process of constructing oneself. "To have a virtual presence means deliberately constructing an identity for you, whether it is choosing an e-mail name, putting together a webpage, designing a graphical avatar, or creating a nickname for a chat room or virtual world. Within such a constructivist environment, the construction of identity becomes even more important" (Kolko, Nakamura & Rodman, 2000, p. 6). Definitions of gender and race change as the technology that communicates cultural values changes (Fernandez, 2002, p. 17). Analyzing the ways that the process is performed in new mediums can help reveal the translation of race and gender that is occurring from "real world" to "virtual world". This thesis examines virtual spaces which as McPherson (2000) found in her study of neo-Confederate websites, is often a space where race dominates the communication. Neo-Confederate websites preserve and protect Southern heritage through a selective white version of communication.

Marginalized groups can be empowered through rhetorical constructions of self which carve out a home that serves as a site of empowerment. Focusing on spatial metaphors and the constructing of gender and race can help make sense of the ways that gender and race are constructed within virtual spaces such as Second Life.

Virtual Spaces

The internet was introduced to the world in the early 1990's through popular media representations. Time magazine and Wired featured the internet and brought it to the average American Citizen. In the early 90's most cyber culture research could be divided into two categories, utopian or dystopian. The utopian rhetoric came from Wired editors, politicians such as Al Gore, and cyberpunk writers. Utopian theorist imagined the internet as a space where all problems from racism, to environmental and economic woes could be erased from history, on the other side were those who thought the internet would bring the destruction of all humanity.

As the internet reached critical mass, widespread academics realized they must join the discussion. Two critical issues were explored during what Silver entitles the second phases of cyber studies, when academics entered the field; self and community. At this time two large areas were being developed. Sherry Turkle's (1995) *Life on The Screen* studied the way the internet was changing our notion of self-identity. Rheingold (1993) was another pillar of internet studies and his work was critical to developing theories on how virtual communities worked online. Rheingold wrote "because we cannot see one another in cyberspace, gender, age, national origin, and physical appearance are not apparent unless a person wants to make such characteristics public" (1993, p. 26). Their work has been advanced upon by Critical cyber-

culture studies that can be defined as “a critical approach to new media and the contexts that shape and inform them. Its focus is not merely the Internet and the Web but, rather, all forms of networks media and culture that surround us today, not to mention those that will study us tomorrow” (Silver, 2006). These studies take issues of cultural differences as a key aspect in the way that rhetoric surrounding the dissemination and consumption of new technologies are formed and understood. Most work in the field has focused on gender (Cherny & Wise 1996; Kendall, 2002). However race has been absent from even critical approaches to technology, with Nakamura (2000), Rodman (2000), Hines (2001) and Ignacio (2005) as rare exceptions. The same practices that have plagued white feminist literature reappear in work on cyber cultures.

Internet studies are often overly text focused. Early work on MUDS, blogs, and newsgroups treated all text interaction as the same. “The internet’s earliest history is one of textual interaction, but it has developed into a highly visual medium” (Sterne, 2006). As the medium through which interaction online has changed, it is time to again return to the study of how the self is developed online. This field has been called overdone, or passé, but the medium of interaction is rapidly changing. Turkle and Rheingold were examining an internet in its infancy dominated with text based communication. Now a generation has grown up online, and they have begun to shape its visual interface.

Looking at cyberspace as a constructivist environment has led research towards studies of the disembodied cyber self (Kolko & Nakamura & Rodman 2000, p. 6). Disembodiment is associated with not only avatars or online identities that are not tied to physical bodies, but also with the idea of objectivity. Haraway argues for embodied research that demands a “politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational know claims...I am arguing for the view from a body”

(p. 398). Traditional research begins with the idea of an objective observer whose knowledge does not come from the body or experience but from objective knowledge bases.

Constructing an avatar, or an online identity, has become a daily practice for the average consumer of the internet. Every day as massive amounts of people are going online, these people are constructing an online persona with sites like Facebook, MySpace, even University Logins. People construct their identities in gaming consoles as well. On the Wii users create a visual representation of themselves that they carry from their living room to their friends through a Wii remote and an internet connection. All these constructions of identity are not, as Rheingold and Turkle thought, constructed outside the real world, and its cultural creations. When signing up online, or creating your Mii on the Nintendo, gender is regularly a question. But race is not. Yet race is portrayed through skin tone, etc. There is a large call to study these issues within virtual environments and SL mixing gaming, education, and advanced visual technological culture is a ripe environment to study these constructions of self.

But rarely is the dispersed self considered as a linguistic self. "While those versions of cyberspace that are more visual provide another set of issues than the text based venues of e-mail or chat groups, even a website or a graphical virtual world remains a site of communicative exchange, one in which participants are embedded in a rhetorical relationship" (Kolko & Nakamura & Rodman, 2000, p. 6). Jacob-Hey (2000) is an exception to this, looking at how identity and positions are communicated, demonstrating that race and identity are rhetorically constructed, through language. Lockard & Warschaur (2000) examine the ways that ethnicity and language are constructed in cyberspace through Hawaiian Language revitalization programs. Through constructing websites which documented and shared their language the students created a sense of self and community that was empowering. Lockard (2000) examines how cyber-

English and the erasure of race ignore the material and political identities of users. When English is assumed to be the natural language those who speak other languages are excluded and feel unwelcomed. They are thus unlikely to neither engage the virtual spaces nor benefit from them.

Identity can be viewed as a rhetorical construction. In other words it is not inherent in an individual but is learned through lived experience and formal training. Feminist scholars introduce identity difference as a rhetorical tool that can empower marginalized groups. Through identifying oneself as an outsider to the dominant culture, marginalize populations name themselves and recreate a sense of identity and community that is empowering. Virtual technology offers a new 'place' to study the process of identity creation. Through an ethnographic study of SL more light can be shed on these constructions and the way they are shaping not only representations, but user's cultural and political rhetoric's about themselves. In order to increase a goal of education that reaches larger audiences it becomes necessary to investigate how race and gender are formed online. The following chapter will outline the methodological approach of this study.

CHAPTER 3 - Method – Mapping the Autoethnographic Process

Crafting the methodological approach to guide this thesis serves as a map guiding the rhetorical scholar along the terrain of a chosen text. Creating an avatar is a rhetorical act that places the process into a figure. This figure is becoming both as a ghostly incarnation and its intersection with the user. The study of identity is a study of constructing the avatar as self, and home as community. Through a theoretical approach that draws on sophistry, antithesis,

parataxis, flows, the nomadic scholar engages the question: How is identity constructed within Second Life?

The critic who tactically engages criticism should be considered a “nomadic scholar who is not constrained by methodology, but driven by perspective” (Nakamura 1992, p. 92). Nomadic scholarship escapes the constraints of identifying with a method that prescribes the outcome of the text. Sophists were nomadic teachers who traveled Greece teaching the arts of rhetoric to the public. The nomad is a foreigner who as Derrida (1996) contends “carries and puts the question...the foreigner shakes up the threatening dogmatism of the paternal logos: the being that is, and the non-being that is not” (p. 5). Disrupting the idea of Universal logos, the nomad responds to the particularity of culture or nomos. The nomadic perspective is double, that of oneself as individual and as other. Gorgias the famous sophists was both an outsider and an insider; through positioning himself as an outsider to cultural logic and through practicing in the polis as a diplomat and public lecturer; Gorgias embodies the double move of nomadic methodology (Jarrett p. 98). Seeing oneself as outsider and insider allows one to recognize “local nomoi: community-specific customs and laws” (Jarrett p. 10).

Power is a force articulated through both strategies and tactics. Certeau proposes that strategies elevate the strategist as an objective controller of the power dynamics at hand; he proposes *tactics* as an alternative to *strategic* means of power (Phillips 2006). Strategies are the work of States, valued for their universal applicability. Strategies originate from a specific source – or site; while tactics are valued for their timeliness. Nomadic scholarship depends on the utilization of tactics for resistance to the universalizing of strategies. Disrupting the strategic use of state architecture Certeau investigates the practice of the everyday as revolutionary. The nomad is disruptive in maintaining a position that is at odds with the place they find themselves

in. Kennedy (1999) examines the use of exile as a way of understanding rhetorical theory that embodies exile making visible the invisible voice of displaced individuals.

Nomadic epistemologies realize that in the movement from what one has already known, the experience of learning is inherently one of exile. Nomadic scholarship is writing from exile “an ethical imperative to refuse invisibility, erasure, and silence” (Kennedy 1999, p. 62).

Nomads are not entirely free; they are connected to their displacement. Nomadic peoples, because of physical displacement, have been forced into exile. Diaspora peoples share two “nostalgias” Derrida tells us “their dead ones and language” (Derrida 2000, p. 87). Through the imagining of a place where their dead are buried and the investigation of the mobility of linguistic familiarity this thesis explores the ways that nostalgia functions in identity formation.

Phillips (2006) contends that tactics are “procedures that utilize a kind of cunning intelligence to capitalize on a momentary opportunity for disrupting existing relations of propriety and, thus, the essence of the tactic is the Greek concept, *kairos*—the right moment in time” (p. 318). Kairos is the sophistic notion of time, “that regards the present as unprecedented” (Balliff 2001, p. 80). Instead of demanding that history repeat itself through mimicking the actions of a well-rehearsed past, a tactical nomadic perspective engages the practice with a view that sees all knowledge as particular to certain places and times. Boelstroff (2008) finds time is refigured as a resource in SL where users experience ‘lag’ time waiting for the medium to catch up with the visual loading as an “an interruption in the throwness of temporality”(p. 106).^x In virtual communication, time is interrupted and does not follow the linear progression of a march towards the unending future. Time interrupts the ‘throwness’ or idea that time is a determinate by which an individual negotiates being.

Nomad scholarship sees time in a non-linear fashion, where each moment presents an opportunity. Each event is a sign that points toward desire, a yearning for wholeness from its particular moment. “The one vocation of the sign is to produce desire, engineering it in every direction” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 39). Deleuze and Guattari critique identity based on the idea of negation of difference. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) see identity as multiple in the figure of the schizophrenic^{xi}. Delanda (2002) relates Deleuze’s ontological relationship with time to his theories on identity arguing that “we cannot take for granted the existence of a linear flow of time already divided into identical instants bearing such close resemblance to one another that the flow may be regarded as essentially homogenous” (p. 106). This is due to the fact that being is always “becoming” for Deleuze and this becoming takes place on multiple flows of non-heterogeneous instances where the nomad/schizophrenic finds themselves(s).

Rhetoric as Energeia

Rhetoric provides a way to explore the dynamic process of identity construction. A rhetorical lens sees “that, in any moment of interaction, some act to persuade, others are the targets of persuasion; some work, others are worked upon. The eventfulness of life, the historicity, is moved by the rhetorical will, *the energeia*, of those who for the moment hold the floor and aim to realize a plan or intention through, and upon, others” (Carrithers 2005, p. 83). Steffensmeier writes that viewing rhetoric as *energeia* bridges rhetorical scholarship with visual design literature thus assisting in the creation of sustainable communities. He notes that while “Aristotle’s “*energeia*” commonly has been translated as “actuality,” the term can be re-read to account for the visual nature of rhetorical invention. *Energieia* is the process of “making the lifeless living through the metaphor” (Aristotle, p. 249). The process by which identity online is

no longer lifeless, but living. That premise is explored in this thesis through a method that embraces the process of invention.

Rhetorical studies experienced a crisis in representation following the cultural shifts of the 1960's. Along with feminism, civil rights and Vietnam was the loss of faith in existing structures and a break with Socialist Marxist in the academy (Hebdige 1986, p. 414). The ideological turn revive a neo-Marxist critique of ideology. Wander (1983) critiqued 'text' focused criticism for its inability to confront social realities. He examines Heidegger's relationship to Nazism in terms of the rhetorical strategies and social groups of the time period. Therefore he proposes that the critic take an "ideological turn...to situate 'good' and 'right' in an historical context, the efforts of real people to create a better world (p. 111)". While Wander does not cite Gramsci - their answer to the crisis of the 1970s is similar. Gramsci demanded that scholars examine processes to "use them to effectively contest that authority and leadership by offering arguments that capture the popular imagination" (Hebdige 1986, p. 421). Gramscian cultural studies resisted universal theories to explain truth - seeing power as 'complexly articulated' (Hebdige 1986, p. 422). Calling into question meta narratives, objectivity, and realism the crisis in representation posed not only a political challenge but also a challenge to modes of interpretation, method, and text^{xii}.

Sophistic Weaving Virtualities and Reality with Parataxis and Antithesis

The text being analyzed can be described as the virtual analogy between my avatar, Wander Kips in Second Life, and the researcher Megan Jean Harlow in real life. This thesis will examine the ethnographic process of over a year in Second Life to analyze the creation of identity through creating an avatar and creating a home. Drawing on the sophistic historical

methods, Jarrett (1999) propose the scholar engage in multi-disciplinary historical analysis of theories at the edge of the subject studied. Jarrett argues that a sophistic history must also focus on the “denial of progressive continuity” (p. 12). Also this approach must explore antithesis and parataxis according to Jarrett. Antithesis is the pairing of opposite words to open a world of possible relations. Parataxis is associating clauses without hierarchical connections that can be understood in the idea of storytelling. Engaging in a similar method Browning’s (2006) ethnography of dance took a rhetorical view that brought to light the “denaturalizing” possibilities of ethnography. Through viewing culture from the perspective of an invested participant with a critical perspective strategic operations of power are made visible.

Separating virtual and real are ways of reinforcing their existence as separate realms of space. Boelstorff writes that “Virtuality and actuality are both the place of homo faber, the human as maker” (p. 21). In both Second Life and Real Life lies the place for rhetorical invention. Denying the ways in which the virtual can be a space where issues of violence and love can take place reinforces virtual as a utopian dream. Humans have always been virtual Boellstorff argues. “It is the hallucination of heaven, the peyote vision, the Dionysian stupor. Dreams, rituals, imagination, even language itself (as claimed by Nietzsche; see Poster 1998:188-189) could all be considered virtual” (Boelstorff, 2008, p. 33). Virtual and reality are rather as Deleuze terms spectrums on a plane of immanence. Immanence is a way of understanding concept of the world as given; there is only one plane from which all potentiality emerges. This is not towards an end but rather a process. This process is never the same, but is grounded in difference, multiplicity, and flows (Colebrook 2002).

Virtual/Real coincides with previous debates surrounding popular culture. The field is “haunted by a high-low culture binary” (Brummett & Gunn 2004, p. 706). Rhetorical scholarship

focused on 'high culture,' presidential speeches and oratory from Ancient Greece. Bourdieu (1984) contends that the illusion that portrays taste as a matter of natural distinction is based on the power of a dominant class imposing a definition of good taste that is their own. Culture is reproduced through expressions that lay claim to a notion of hegemony. Rhetorical scholarship must turn towards an analysis of popular cultural texts, viewing the audience not only as consumers but as producers. Scholars should also move towards producing alternate texts that do not rely on the style of academic elitism that analyzes identity, ideas, and texts from the voice of the disembodied critique.

Seeing the virtual as surface, as opposed to the real, is responsible for the popular rhetoric that focuses on the ability of mediums to technically communicate information. Poser (1995) comments in his work on virtual communities that "what is at stake in these technical innovations...is not simply an increased 'efficiency' of interchange...but a broad and extensive change in culture, in the way identities are structured" (p. 79). Computer culture exists as a site of "battles over contested terrains" (Turkle, 1995, p. 70). This conception expands on Halls (1981) view of popular culture as a site for resistance between "culture and hegemony" (p. 484). Taking dominant cultural productions and using them against their originating aims is a way of taking power and turning it against its original aims (Fiske, 1987, p. 542).

Virtual reality is often associated with fantasy. As Fiske (1987) contends popular culture is often dismissed as "escapism" or "fantasy" (p. 544). In contrast to 'escapist' popular cultural texts - representations are related to "reality". Separating reality from fantasy is a gendered process where popular culture texts -such as soap operas, romance novels, are associated with women and "their inability to come to terms with (masculine) reality" (Fiske, 1987, p. 544). The virtual when severed from the reality of embodied racism and sexism creates rhetoric of denial.

Fernandez (2002) furthers this idea, leading to a denial “that racism is alive in digital spaces in overt and invisible forms” (p. 41). Associated with the fantasy/real binary is the “perceived opposition between authenticity and commercialization or globalization” (Brummett & Gunn, 2004, p. 707). Brummett & Gunn contend that this binary is no longer possible in today’s world, where “a few remaining pockets of folk culture remain here and there: on the Sea Islands, in Amish country, in departments of English. The rest of folk culture is now 50% off at Wal-Mart” (p. 707). This characterization runs the danger of romanticizing authenticity as a relic of the past. Sophistic approaches call into question all appeals to a history of continuous progression. The self has not been headed towards an apocalyptic ‘post-human’ subjectivity within a world of Matrix simulations as Baudrillard theorizes. Wilson (1990) contends that focusing on the uniqueness of the postmodern historical moment “flattens out the contradictory, refractory reality nature of contemporary existence and seeks to create a stereotypes of past in the present” (p. 436). The critique views history as a narrative told to legitimize the powers of the person telling it. Sophistic history turns the logic of a progressive narrative around through seeing multiple ways that any present moment can be articulated.

Popular culture studies focus on pleasure can be seen as a way of masking capitalism in the guise of fun and pleasure. Webster (1990) dismisses these criticisms for failing to articulate an alternative that would not return academia to distinguishing between high and low culture; separating academics from the ‘poor & dumb’ masses. Webster (1990) faults post seventies academics in “locating pleasure in audiences, leaving the academic or critic as secretary or analyst of these pleasures, transcribing commentary, explaining, but disembodied” (p. 580). Joe Lockard argues that virtual community’s rhetoric of inclusivity is a form of “techno-universalism” which masks race, and class inequities. Lockard advocates that users turn off the

network and address 'real' issues of race and class. Lockard's internet is a "place" that exists only through its opposition the "real", and his analysis does not incorporate any researcher participation. Ignoring ways revolutionary groups use the internet to mobilize international support that has been critical to the group's members 'real' lives Lockard's critique fails to identify resistance (Kahn 2004). More research is needed on the ways that oppressed identities are constituted and constitute the Internet "to negotiate a sense of individual self and diasporas virtual communities" (Hughes 2008, p. 554).

The text of identity production within Second Life is elusive. Unlike traditional popular culture texts Second Life is a 'living text'. The virtual space changes daily through users co-creating the visual spaces and culture. "The investigation of the making and remaking of space through mediated interactions is a major opportunity for the ethnographic approach. We can usefully think of the ethnography of mediated interaction as mobile rather than multi-sited" (Hines 2000, p. 64). Paccagnella (1997) notes that "ethnographic research on virtual...might mean focusing attention on the subjects playing an active role as senders or recipients (and often both) of the messages" (Paccagnasella, 1997). For instance, Trujillo's (1993) rhetorical ethnographic analysis of the JFK assassination memorial site required him to interact with the site (p. 463). Entering Second Life the researcher moves from analyzing a site or text that they did not create.

Self Reflexivity



Figure 3

The researcher takes the second step towards identifying the researcher as producer of the text. Entering the research from the perspective of a producer of culture can highlight the realness of the virtual. Second Life requires that the researcher actually creates the text they analyze. This requires an invention that is documented online; the process of creation becomes a part of the critique. The process of invention will be analyzed as a text, which as McKerrow contends must be understood “in its fragmented unconnected, even contradictory, or momentarily oppositional mode of presentation” (p. 124). The critical ethnographic/rhetorical reading should be considered a ‘practice’ which “maximizes the possibilities of what will ‘count’ as evidence for critical judgment, allowing for creativity when assessing effects of ‘truth’ on ‘social practices” (McKerrow 2005, p. 125). Performative rhetorical ethnography becomes a method and principle where the researcher embodies their research as an alternative to observing culture as artifact (Conquergood 1992). Culture is no longer separated into the domain of the real but rather it is a place where struggles emerge.

Digital ethnography requires a shift in thinking of culture as a place, to seeing culture as a process (Hines 2006). Rhetorical ethnography provides a unique way to bridge social scientific approaches such as participant observation, and rhetorical theory in the perspective through viewing the scholar as a nomad. Through drawing on the tips of the traveling scholar that ethnography brings combined with critical theory that rhetorical scholarship embraces along with

sophistic views the thesis uniquely navigates theory and praxis. Nomadic scholarship focuses on finding connections between modalities and subjectivities. Phillips (2006) contends embracing “subjectivity as fluid and dynamic” requires a movement between subject positions – thus the researcher becomes the researched (p. 314). The nomad is journeying towards an uncertain future; Guattari focuses on experimentation is a rhetorical process.

“Virtual ethnography can usefully draw on the ethnographer as informant and embrace the reflexive dimension” (Hines 2000, 65). Self-reflecting on the researcher’s experiences recorded on blogs and private journals is a part of the ethnography. Moving beyond self-reflection - the researcher becomes the researched, challenging the researchers own interpretation. It offers “not only a challenge to one’s sense of self but also to the disciplinary networks that seek to position one” (Phillips 2006, p. 315). This is no longer participant observation, but rather observant-participation, which according to Lassiter (2000) “moves from observation of the Other to the observation of the very human relationship *between* Self (the ethnographer, whoever he or she is) and Other (the people with whom the ethnographer works to create the ethnography). Here, the ethnographer can no longer claim to be the "objective" and "observing" participant: ethnography is defined and shaped by human relationships; not an "objective" search for knowledge” (p. 607). Moving away from an objective position the researcher can avoid the Western impulse to impose the researcher’s knowledge on the culture being observed.

Methods that fail to pay attention to the ethnographer’s influence on an object of study “reinforce a status quo in which Western observers are invited to perpetually colonize the bodies and imaginations of others, resulting in an 'ethnopornography'” (Whitehead, 2009, p. 6). Richard Drinnon contends that a “national metaphysics of Indian-hating was central to the formation of

national identity and political policy in the United States" (Friedberg, p. 36). US national identity rested on the Western doctrine of Manifest Destiny - in which the Western colonizers did not see themselves as colonizers - but rather adherents to Manifest Destiny - God's Will. Methods which speak for displaced peoples tend to portray these cultures as victims. Instead of speaking for others this thesis speaks for the self as other. Ethnography and critical research must be wary of the ways in which the researcher approaches their subject of study. Reflexivity is a way to blur the boundaries between participant and observer. Reflexive analysis assumes that all knowledge claims are situated within a specific context (Haraway 1998). Instead of seeing the researcher as having a privileged universal perspective that mimics the Euro-Colonizer, one must turn inwards and examine the desire that drives the production of their research.

The researcher who aims to work against the colonization of history must first examine himself or herself in relation to history. The first step to undoing racism, sexism, and colonialism requires an unlearning of privilege (Spivak, 1990). This requires recognizing how the individual in question benefits from systems of power. As a white, middle-class, highly educated woman, I benefit from a skin color that allows me to choose what ethnic association I want to describe when recounting my personal history to others. Band-aids match my skin color, and I am surrounded by role models who share my skin color. Originally this thesis focused on the performance of gender identity with SL, but further research and self reflection proved this aim to be unsatisfactory. Failure to understand racism and neocolonialism "avoids questions concerning ways in which we see the world; it is to remain imprisoned...by conditioned ways of seeing...without the self-consciousness that must be the point of departure for all critical understanding" (Dirlik, 1990, p. 395). Griffin's (1994) analysis of Wollstonecraft argues that as women redefine their identity an "experience of alienation" creates a critical self-reflexivity (p.

537). This experience is the process of seeing oneself as an image, doubling one's idea of self. In seeing myself, I will explore the creation of myself as an avatar, the image of what I am becoming.

This approach could be considered post-colonial. Taking a post-colonialist perspective can help explain how diasporas communities create a sense of self and collectivity online (Ignacio 2006, p. 186). Examining the ways that stereotypes are rhetorically constructed reveals the ways in which images continue colonial ideologies, while simultaneously highlighting the possibility of recreating this rhetoric's in positive ways (Ignacio 2006). Anthologies of the internet tend to draw from high theorists such as Zizek, Butler, and Spivak. But when questioning cultural difference these theoretical approaches tend to be described by non theory types, such as ethnographers or artists (Nakamura 2006, p. 29). "Internet studies need to meld close interface analysis with issues of identity and match considerations of form, the user, and the interface, with an attention to the ideologies that underlie them" (Nakamura, 2006, p. 35). Dwight Conquergood (1992) elegantly states that "ethnographers offer methodologically intensive, self-reflexive, and committed to action research programs that navigate the tensions between political realities and academic scholarship" (p. 95). Through performing research rhetorical scholarship is productively reconnected with politics.

Creating The Avatar-Unveiling The Bodies Repressions

Avatars originate from Sanskrit as Godly Incarnation. The avatar created is not only the double of an idealized self, but rather can be understood as a vehicle that partially expresses the desire of its user (Apaté, 2008). The desire is to make visible the sources of struggle within my

personal identity to construct a liberated vision of myself that can serve as a bridge between my work and my emotions, “avatars have the potential of making the virtual feel” (Apate, 2008). Nakamura’s analysis of “vernacular assemblages created by pregnant women on these sites demand the creation of a different stream, one that brings a critical stance to popular new media practices” (p. 161). It is not enough to highlight the ways ideology works to constrain agency but to find “‘lines of flight’ that permit new “forms of becoming out of virtual personae and communities” (Nakamura p. 169).

Sutton (1992) writes that “rhetoric is implicated by this truth of the veil: To be good, style must clearly express that speech plainly (Aristotle, 1954, 1404b5). To do anything else is to lift the veil, expose hair, and risk having rhetoric do something other than what it was supposed to do”(p. 114). Clear style in Aristotelian rhetoric’s is described as urbanity; a style that hides itself by appearing natural. Browne argues that through rhetorical artistry Jefferson crafted an inaugural address that expressed American Republic ideals with “the genial urbanity of cultivated conversation” (p. 174). This study creates the avatar in the image of exile, an alternative to a style of the city of knowledge. Johnson (2004) introduced the idea of nomadic urbanities in which identity is not tied to the locations of the past, but rather is embodied in creating familiarity through the process of creating a sense of self. The sense of style developed is no longer attached to physical structures or memories associated with a strict sense of identity. Instead style is developed through the processes of creating oneself, for example the practice of dressing for one’s self instead of fashion on a runway.

Attention to the politics of dress is a feminist practice that tacitly explores what Guattari would refer to as micro-fascisms of the body. “Dressing is a “‘vestmentary envelope’ that holds body and ego together. Our finished ‘appearance’ therefore, is the end result (yet itself alterable

and altering) of an elaborate construction, both bodily and mental, of identity itself” (Wilson, 1990, p. 435). In shopping for clothing I will search for representations of identity that are on sale in the virtual space.

Gonzalez points to the way that purchasing body parts normalizes the marketplace as home; devaluing the traditional home, family or other spaces. Attention to the techniques of the body as they are created and performed can help unveil embodied ideologies of domination within the internet (Fernandez 2002, p. 41). The choices available to an avatar educate individuals on the norms within the society internalizing ideas about race, gender, and class that are associated with the body. Gonzalez makes the connection between the construction of avatars bodies to imperialism. Imperialist nation may see the subject of the colonized subject as an appendage to the centralized state, the construction of bodily pieces is related to the larger universal space of SL (2000, p. 27). Gonzalez critiques avatar scholarship that views identity is seen as a commodity achieved through the insertion of subjectivity onto the ‘other’ calling the assembled body a new form of the enlightenment subject. A potential exists to create “ways in which lived bodies could speak, could be represented, other than as commodities in an endless chain of equivalencies” (Sommer, 2002, p. 131). Looking not only to reinforce previous critiques of avatar identity as reinforcing consumerism, the thesis looks for ways where creating an avatar can be a metaphor for resistance to dominant ideological systems.

Creating an avatar can be described as the creation of a self-portrait. Watson (2009) examines her self-portrait that hangs in her office as a part of an auto-ethnographic critique of ‘validity’. She sees within her portrait “a sense of the uncanny-the self as other” (p. 538). The ‘uncanny’ is a concept introduced by Jentch (1906) to explain intellectual uncertainty. The uncanny is a feeling of familiarity in the unfamiliar; Freud (1925) traces its roots to *Unheimliche*,

not at home. Freud reinterprets Jentsch's reading of "The Sand Man" by Hoffman which tells the story of Olympia a doll that comes to life; arguing that it is not the animation of the doll but rather the fear of losing one's eyes that creates an uncanny effect in the reader of the story. The uncanny produces the idea of the 'double' which he articulates as the same desire which led Egyptians to develop the art of making images (p. 630). Freud (1925) writes 'Love is home-sickness; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country...we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body' (p. 637). The uncanny experience of seeing oneself as double can be discovered through attention to repetition. Also the experiences of silence, darkness, and solitude provide metaphors by which to understand the experience of the uncanny. The uncanny explains the way that computers to call into the privileged space of our mind according to Turkle's research on childhood development and computers. A Turkle (2005) note that psychoanalysis and anthropologist share the idea of learning about a culture from the experience of outsider, but articulates what is needed is "immersion of oneself in something foreign so that upon return home the familiar has become strange" (p. 3).^{xiii}

The danger in ethnographic approaches to identity in virtual worlds is that the researcher engages in "identity tourism" a common practice where individuals play stereotypical representations of racial 'others' (Nakamura 1995, p. 149). The user instead is not creating a final image of the self but rather exploring the process of creating the nomadic urbanity, a style that creates a sense of home in the process of becoming instead of place as ending. Through tying the choices made to a real narrative of self the researcher engages in a more serious play, where the risk is not the misunderstanding of another but the misunderstanding of the self. Butler (2005) writes that responsibility to the social requires a return to ethics which

requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness, when what forms us diverges from what lies before us, when our willingness to become undone in relation to others constitutes our chance of becoming human. To be undone by another is a primary necessity, an anguish, to be sure, but also a chance - to be addressed, claimed, bound to what is not me, but also to be moved, to be prompted to act, to address myself elsewhere, and so to vacate the self-sufficient “I” as a kind of possession. If we speak and try to give an account from this place, we will not be irresponsible, or, if we are, we will surely be forgiven (p. 136).

Butler’s articulation of returning to the social as a gesture towards the future is similar to the ethical perspective of Deleuze. An ethics that orients itself toward the future in Deleuze is centered on a celebration of difference which is empowering to Ethics, for Deleuze, is about maximizing the capacities of all bodies to affect and to be affected. It is also about affirming difference and the production of the new. Rather than limiting the future to what is already known, ethics involves opening up the potential for the unknown” (Hickey-Moody 2008, p. 6-7). Hickey-Moody (2008) argues in their analysis of Second Life “that disability should be appreciated as an articulation of difference: the life-force upon which all humans depend” (p. 13).

Derrida (1994) writes that “One should not rush to make the clandestine immigrant an illegal alien or, what always risks coming down to the same thing, to domesticate him. To neutralize him through naturalization. To assimilate him so as to stop frightening oneself (making oneself fear) him” (p. 219). When the researcher creates an avatar they begin to recognize their own identity as they are a stranger, this discomfort should not immediately be washed away through attempting to incorporate this identity into the previous notions of who one

was. Hernandez-Avila (1995) furthers that only an identity politics that celebrates difference and doesn't attempt for universals can create an atmosphere of respect where she can feel at home. As the researcher constructs an avatar, the researcher should pay attention to where difference emerges. This thesis engages in the theme of difference to see identity as a radical possibility. What emerges is not the certain future of unrestrained freedom, but a future to come. Only through the act of separating or creating difference between time, space, idea, is creation possible" (Biesecker, 1999, p. 237).

As Guattari (1996) writes "the history of desire is inseparable from the history of its repression" (p. 143). I desire - recognition and flight from identity that is violently forced on the subject. What has been repressed - Cixous says it is feminine (not woman as such - but the feminine - or those identities which heterosexual masculinity defines itself against) creativity - wildness, Lorde refers to the suppressed erotic. Guattari (1996) contends that "the question is neither of innocence or guilt but of finding the micro fascism one harbors in oneself, particularly when one cannot see it" (p. 13).

Sacred Spaces- Creating A Home

"home is a site where oppressed and disenfranchised people restore their spirits, and continue the process of self-recovery" (hooks 2006, p. 98)



Figure 4

The thesis will examine diasporas communities to explore the ways that identity is created as a form of agency. People who have been displaced from their original homeland – diasporas peoples - seek identity as a response to assimilation and convergence within the internet (Igancio 2000). Individuals desire identity online as a response to the technological worlds increasing sense of isolation. The rise of industrial capitalism transferred agricultural communities to cities where an increasing sense of isolation from traditional culture and family took place. As technology has increased so has mobility separated families. From trains, highways, planes, to computers, the internet increasingly works in an isolated manner disconnected from agricultural family traditions. With the internet, comma an increasing sense of anonymity has arisen leading to a crisis of significance. With so much information, it becomes hard to develop a sense of self. In response to this feeling of ‘anomie’, people develop online personas to create a sense of self in the midst of anonymous asymmetric communication.

Understanding desire requires a larger understanding of the cultural world of cyberspace. Whitehead draws on Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) idea of desire as "being productive rather than imaginary ("not theatre but a factory") and about the "desiring machines" which we become as a result of these productive and socially situated desires" (Whitehead 2009, p. 3). Desire

thought of in terms of theatre ignores the material reality of how desire is produced. Desire is not merely an illusion but rather a producer of ideology and culture - highlighting the consumer as producer. Diaspora peoples often fulfill the desire of returning to their homeland through imagination, inasmuch as many cannot afford to physically go home. Examining the imaginary return to a homeland can provide insight into the complexities of forming community based on a static definition of culture (Ignacio 2006). To analyze the return to a homeland, I will explore SL communities that lay claim to a particular identity, nationality, or religious affiliation. Through expressions of physical identity and membership in groups, one can examine how SL users participate in creating diasporas' communities and negotiate authenticity.

I am currently living thousands of miles away from home; this experience is common in an industrial era where mobility has caused a mass exodus from the family home in search of success. Imagining a home not just as a place but as a feeling or ethos is a powerful way to inspire the desire for freedom. hooks (2006) writes about how slave narratives focused on the ability to create an independent home (p. 100). Creating a home online will involve the creation of an alter mains-base (2006) refers to the practice of Chicano alter creation in which you place reminders of the dead and living centered around the family linking it to the present (hooks 119). Using personal memory can be criticized as a narcissistic confessional hooks (2006) writes in response, "when we are engaged in this psychological, archeological dig - when we rediscover not just the facts of history, but the psychohistory - we learn about our ancestors in a different way"(p. 109). Mesa-Bain's alters are created not in honor of a singular sacred figure but rather for example, "Dolores del Rio alters...is raised on several steps made with mirrors, and actresses. This altar is stacked with feminine paraphernalia such as perfume bottles...the image of Dolores del Rio as a 'cinema goddess' becomes literal" (Ulmer 2003, p. 111). Alters honor

community through documenting family and cultural history in the home. The thesis project can be thought of as creating mini alters to honor the multiple identities that create the researcher's sense of identity. Alters of self will be constructed with the raw material of feelings, pictures, memories, and objects from the researcher's process of exploring Second Life's living text. As Holland (2007) writes in his study of Hindu and Jewish diasporas, community religious practices are linking together individuals through virtual pilgrimages.

Within Second Life, users teleport to locations through searching terms and following links set up by other users. They are able to collect items through purchasing, gifts, or freebies. Users also can collect their experiences through photographic images. Items can also be created and edited thus leading to an infinite amount of mutations. The virtual home becomes the visual space that accounts for the researcher's journey through the virtual space. As the researcher searches for identity, she will not limit herself to national identity. Fiske writes (1987) that for subordinate groups searching for an empowering site of collective identity, often is not best served under the banner of "national identity"; for example Australian Aboriginals identified with black reggae culture (p. 547).

The created home moves the critique from a site where the rhetorical investigation situates itself in relation to a determined audience of rhetorical scholars towards the unknown. In SL the home can be a site where anyone can visit. Here the home attempts to create an ethos of 'absolute hospitality'. "Absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names" (Derrida 2000, p. 25). Through

creating a home the researcher invokes an ethics of hospitality that creates a rhetorical space that is open to the future. The home can be altered by visitors, the home may never be visited, and the home will never be finished but is an offering of the researcher.

Creating the home is a visual narrative which gives ‘place’ to the process of constructing identity. Home serves as the site where the schizophrenic subjectivity explored in the previous section can heal. Through creating a visual space that links together the non-hierarchical journey of the nomadic SL researcher, a paradoxical rhetoric emerges. Studying the home is a microcosmic study of the larger society created from the uncanny effect of double-consciousness. Paul Miller aka DJ Spooky (2008) writes of the network which emerges in the uncanny world of the internet

An intangible sculpture that exists only in the virtual space between you and the information you perceive—it’s all in continuous transformation, and to look for anything to stay the same really is to be caught in a time warp of another era, another place when things stood still and didn’t change so much (p. 17).

The home becomes the site where a collective consciousness is formed. Individuals see themselves as a part of a community; home is a node within the network. This center serves as the ‘place’ where individual users see themselves as individuals tied to their specific memory, and as a hostess to a network of collective selves. The collective conscious created from a network of communities linked by multiple articulations of identity creates a stage where identities play out the process of becoming.

The researcher will address cultural memory as it is constructed in SL. American national identity has been shaped through multiple performances that created a nostalgic memory that serves to articulate a future that has been imprinted with its colonial history. Virtual museums

dedicated to SL's history will be visited to explore the ways they portray culture. When looking for sites of memory, the researcher witnesses planned displays of history. Trujillo's auto ethnography of JFK's assassination found that media representations of the site altered individual and communal experiences of participants; "memories of individuals were cut apart from those individuals and then spliced together in a way that presented a very limited sense of a shared community and that provided relatively little information to help us reconstruct our collective memories of our community in the early 1960s" (p. 461). Although SL is a mediated environment, it has its own media and is represented within mass produced media. Examining these remediated historical narratives of SL will develop a contextual account of how SL rhetorically constructs its past to unveil the larger strategies of power at work within SL.

When studying the history portrayed by SL the researcher looks for metaphors that link construction of history with the creation of Colonial power. The researcher will search for ways that SL aligns itself with dominant cultural narratives of history and ways that it creates an 'ethos' of nationality, capitalism, and suppression of desire. The internet as the next frontier and other metaphors links the internet to the new frontier continue an imperialist mindset (Sarriera H. F., 1996; Sarriera H. J., 2006). Examining rhetorical tools used in public historical narratives of SL through the use of antithesis and parataxis will highlight the way in which cultural memory draws on a nostalgic past to preserve history in the name of the future.

This chapter has argued for a rhetorical method that draws on the sophistic practices of an ethos of exile. Through an auto-ethnographic critical rhetoric the thesis will proceed through the following three chapters constructing the 'uncanny' avatar as doubled self. The following two chapters narrate the construction of this thesis, my identity as I type these words, and the identity of Wander Kips. The narration is the combined work of journal entries I kept throughout the

ethnography combined with published blogs I wrote as I constructed the avatar. I have drawn on outside sources to further the depth of the analysis and provide myself with academic legitimacy and to be honest I enjoy reading. The reader may note a shift in an increased use of personal language, and I apologize but to narrate any other way would have been extremely difficult and left behind the post-colonial nomadic perspective I try to engage through returning the disembodied 'idea' to the body. My avatars story is my story as I see it, and as I fail to see it. I attempt to continually question why I made certain decisions in Second Life, why was I attracted to this area and not another. The problem with Second Life is the text is constantly changing and returning to lands is not always possible nor does it create the same results

This chapter has argued for a rhetorical method that draws on the sophistic practices of an ethos of exile. Through an auto-ethnographic critical rhetoric, the thesis will proceed through the following three chapters constructing the 'uncanny' avatar as doubled self. The next chapter explores the sacred space of returning to a homeland through creating a home that serves as the garden of community. The final chapter will weave together the artistic rhetorical creation of self through a self-reflexive examination of the implications of creating my 'second sel(ves)'.

The next chapter explores the sacred space of returning to a homeland through creating a home that serves as the garden of community. The final chapter will weave together the artistic rhetorical creation of self through a self-reflexive examination of the implications of creating my 'second sel(ves)'.

CHAPTER 4 - Creating (My)Self as an Avatar

Every rebirth accompanies a death. As Wander is born, a death of my previous non-Wander self occurs. The future identity of Wander is currently under construction. Wander will walk this path alone with only whispers of Megan's ghosts to guide her. I conjure Derrida (1998), and he writes the following after Deleuze's death

I will continue to begin again to read Gilles Deleuze in order to learn, and I'll have to wander all alone in this long conversation that we were supposed to have together. My first question, I think, would have concerned Artaud, his interpretation of the "body without organ," and the word "immanence" on which he always insisted, in order to make him or let him say something that no doubt still remains secret to us. And I would have tried to tell him why his thought has never left me, for nearly forty years. How could it do so from now on? (p.1)

His comments hint at the questions I as an avatar must begin to grapple with. Wander Kips is a body without organs who plays in the field of immanence, the term Deleuze used to describe the plane upon which virtuality and reality attempt to define its borders. This thesis follows the story of Wander Kips, a name that houses the process of creating, the reality of me in the skin of fiction. Wander Kips at this young age did not even know she had began a journey already in exile, but one never can be sure of where a story begins. Wander Kips now named has entered the linguistic order of Second Life.



Figure 5

What follows may be a schizophrenic autoethnography of Wander Kips. In examining Wander's history, I am also examining Megan Jean Harlow, the researcher, her history and travels. Deleuze and Guattari write that the body without organs, the body of the schizophrenic "deliberately scrambles all the codes, by quickly shifting from one to another...never giving the same explanation from one day to the next never invoking the same genealogy, never recording the same event in the same way"(p. 15). We shall see in what follows an attempt to bridge the virtual and real. Wander and Megan, and the multitudes of realities between, being an analysis which attempts to continue shifting of realities, because it is on the surface of Wander's body that the recorded history takes place. "The schizo maintains a shaky balance for the simple reason that the result is always the same, no matter the disjunctions" (Deleuze and Guattari p. 15). The schizo will survey the terrain and attempt to heal in the next chapter. Following I will address the process of creating my avatar, dressing the avatar, and the synthesis between Megan Jean Harlow with Wander Kips.

The Grammar of Bodies in Second Life



Figure 6

Names

To sign onto Second Life, I go to the website and create a user account. This process has become a common practice in today's world of ever increasing applications, and social networking websites. As I sign onto Second Life, I create a user name. The first name is up to the user, the last name must be chosen from a pre-given set of names^{xiv}. As I type in my name, I choose Wander for the first name and for the last name I selected Kips. Screen names are important as Boelstroff (2008) adds due to the significance of names within Western traditions (p. 123). Wander was not significant at the time but foreshadowed the approach to identity I have found most fitting of Second Life. As a nomadic scholar influenced by the rhetorical traditions of the sophists, Wander speaks of the life of a roaming individual. Last names in Second Life are selected from a list of about five names. The five names rotate over time. Therefore Kips was not completely up to me. Regardless Kips is my last name and as I chase the reasons down, I find, according to Wikipedia and Online Dictionaries, that Kips is either 1) a unit of Laotian currency 2) the hide of a small animal 3) a place to sleep; a bed 4) a unit of weight (1,000 pounds)^{xv}.

Wander Kips now emerges as a valued, animalistic spirit, with a place to lay her head and the weight of 1,000 lbs upon her shoulder to explore Second Life's virtual frontier.



Figure 7

Above is a screen shot from Second Life (Figure 7). The image shows Wander Kips shopping for clothing at one of many stores within the metaverse. This is the default screen view for users in Second Life. The camera can be adjusted to multiple views. The camera can be moved 360 degrees and there is also an option where users can see their interactions through the eyes of the avatar.

Adjusting the Body

The Sanskrit word for avatars refers to the incarnation of a Hindu God. The avatar represents the incarnation of me as God (Au, 2008, p. x; Boelstroff, 2008, p. 128). The avatars customizable self stems from what Castronava (2007) contends is “an almost irrepressible desire to construct little models of people and places and display them as an extension of their own being” (p. 51). The avatar becomes the site from which an individual’s subjectivity is displayed through adjustments to the avatar body.

After choosing a name and downloading the software Wander Kips was ‘born’ and arrived on Orientation Island. I felt nervous as I looked around the virtual space where I saw other avatars roaming. Generic white skinned strangers glanced with empty eyes at me. A strange sensation of being watched overwhelmed me. This is unlike other video games I have participated in where you know that behind the mask no one is there. Second Life presents a unique feeling of presence that is referred to as “immersion” (Castranova, 2008). I was in a rush to edit my body and quickly found the how-to guide for appearance editing. I stood in front of a large mirror and opened the appearance editing box. Surrounded by a dinosaur and two average looking male avatars I started the process of altering the stock body into a something a bit more comfortable. Following the logic of bureaucracy tourist signs attempt to guide the process of invention making the virtual experience akin to visiting a historical site. As signs guide me towards a slightly less generic Barbie doll body. Invention is limited by the options available to an avatar. In this process the invention of an avatars persona becomes bureaucratized.

The procedure of invention itself (the very essence of the imaginative) has been bureaucratized. Since the time of the Renaissance, the West has been accumulating and perfecting a methodology of invention, so that improvements can be couched by routine. (Burke p. 228)

After briefly reading a sign that instructed me on the appearance editing screen I dived in. I could not wait and ignored the warning on the sign advising against spending too much time editing before visiting the Main Land and picking up freebies. I spent about three hours playing with the tools. The options are overwhelming to the novice, with plenty of room for error. Appearance is controlled through the use of sliders that change nearly every feature of appearance from stomach thinness to plumpness, to foot size, height, or lips. I feel that I am in total control of my avatar. Boelstroff (2008) agrees that the slider adjustments “assumed near-total intentionality with regard to virtual embodiment: very little was randomized or left to chance” (p. 129). The avatar body is controlled by the options available. An illusion of total control over the way one constructs one’s self is achieved through the wide range of options on slider bars.

Gender, Sex & Race

Upon entering Second Life one chooses a gender, which unlike a screen name can be changed at any time (Boelstroff, 2008, p. 141). The female body is smaller and comes with animations in which women sit with their legs closer together than their male counterparts. At the same time Second Life residents have the freedom to choose their gender which makes “thinkable not only forms of transgendering...but also the possibility that actual-world women and men could embody manhood or womanhood in new ways” (Boelstroff, 2008, p. 141). *The Official Guide to Second Life*, a book published by Linden Labs in 2007, warns of the dangers of gender-bending, “The default gender choice for your primary avatar is your real-life gender. If you go the other route, be prepared for unexpected twists and turns in your virtual friendships.

The rules that apply there are the same as the rules in real life: friends don't like to be deceived” (p. 77).



Figure 8

The common chatter about sexuality in Second Life mirrors the real world. I was a part of such a conversation on the island Barcelona where a ‘female’ avatar responded to a ‘male’ avatar’s advance saying, “sex in second life is like sex in real life, men ask for it women say no”(Figure 8). I have been approached within the game but have found that if you are not looking for that kind of encounter, it is easy to avoid. Sex in second life takes place through the use of animations. People pay good money for working sex ‘parts’ and animations. Avatars purchase genitalia with animation from shops. The average shop tends to feature sex parts that portray genitalia that represent hyper idealized sexual parts. The image below features an advertisement for “highly realistic nipples and pussy” (Figure 9). Striving for authenticity sex sells when the animations can simulate the most realistic sex moves and images.



Figure 9

Race is not an option that can be chosen within Second Life's slider scales such as the male/female option or body adjustments. At a shop in Second Life I searched for skins that represent my race (Figure 10). A typical feature of virtual spaces where race is a matter of skin color therefore divorced from its importance (Nakamura, 2002). On Second Life, race is represented through skin and clothing. Skin is acquired through either purchasing custom made skins or using the default skin option. Boelstroff notes that "by controlling skin tone, facial and body features, and hair, it was possible to appear racialized in any way one wished...whiteness acted as a kind of default" (p. 145). Skins are the most expensive commodities with SL because of the craftsmanship and skill required to develop them. This cost relates to the value of beauty which, as Saltzberg and Chrisler (2006) contend, "depends on in part on the high costs of achieving it" (p. 165). Within the metaverse, race is a commodity that comes with a hefty price. A sign of the times when race becomes a fashion object, denying that for some people race is not just a fun outfit to dress up in.



Figure 10

In real life I flew home for Thanksgiving and, sat next to a librarian from Cornell University. We began to discuss Second Life. My companion had recently created an account where he was a black woman. I was a little shocked at his dive into what Nakamura terms “identity tourism” in part because I was afraid to play as ‘other’, partly because I held myself as above the desire to experience otherness. I asked if he had experienced racism within the metaverse, and he said no, but Bolestroff (2008) related that several users had encountered racism when embodied black personas. My cautiousness had deterred me from beginning my journey as a member of another race, while he just jumped in. A middle aged white man sitting next to me was a black woman in the metaverse. Does this identity play reinforce stereotypes or break us free from them? Identity tourism can reinforce stereotypes and racism according to Nakamura. The librarian’s position becomes strategic in relation to his avatar, unlike a tactical position that would demand the user to identify as the avatar they embody. A body without organs cannot bleed, but the person behind the keys might.

Burn's (2008) writes of a black college student who entered SL as a black female avatar and immediately "was chased down by cars, their passengers yelling racial slurs" (Burns p. 59). In my time on SL, I never attempted to create a black character, as I did not want to be in a position where I would be attempting to define a black females experience in SL. Instead I affirm the powerful black women that I cite within my thesis. I am attempting to encounter racial difference as not merely a mask but as a home. Perhaps I was clinging to my white privilege, but it seemed to me that simply dressing up as 'black' without having a desire rooted in anything other than uncovering difference would be unethical.

Shopping to Outfit the Self



Figure 11

Back in the metaverse I left Orientation Island as a thin white, dark haired female. I ventured to the Main Land to find one of many 'freebie' islands where noobs like me wander in search of themselves (Figure 11). Freebie Islands are like Wal-Mart's with long hallways and posters of clothing to obtain most of which are not actually free. The walls are lined with links to exotic locations and there are a variety of scams to entice naïve victims. Realizing most of the clothes I wanted would cost me money, I quickly realized that I needed to make some quick cash. Numerous signs offered free money, so I clicked. I was offered the not so alluring option of entering my email address and taking multiple surveys with the promise of SL cash in return.

Reminded of emails from distant princes offering wealth in exchange for bank information, I declined. But another option remained. If I would sit in a location I could earn Lindens per hour. So I sat, and watched myself sitting. This was beyond boring; watching oneself be bored is perhaps the most torturous activity one can imagine. Where was the land of opportunity advertised around me? I got up without making a dime.

Back to shopping for something that would highlight my personality I flew around Freebie Island until finding a red glamour Hollywood dress. Perfect. I clicked and my inventory now possessed the goods. But how to wear the goods I had purchased puzzled me. I attempted to put the dress on and all of a sudden a large box appeared on my body. They say being a teenager is awkward, well I tried to put on a dress and found myself wearing a box. Somehow I managed to get the box off. I was turning so red I worried my avatar would soon start blushing. After struggling for a good thirty minutes I was wearing a beautiful flowing dress. The dress was a 'prim' design, an animated feature that some objects in Second Life have. As I turned, the dress followed me. Clicking on the dance animation I was mesmerized by my new style. It may have been free, but I felt like a million bucks. I was embodying an image of myself as a star, calling on my middle name perhaps.

I share my middle and last name with the original 'blonde bombshell' Jean Harlow. Chicana artist and activist Mesa-Bain (2006) was given her name by her mother because "she said it reminded her of a movie star's name: 'Mexine Mes.' And in the 1930's and 1940s- I- was born in 1943 – Mexicans saw boxing and movie stardom as the way out" (p. 12). Her sense of identity and artwork is influenced by this name. It was an idea placed on her from her mother. In the same way my mother set up a trajectory for me. Growing up dreaming of being a movie star felt like a way out of the mundane. Jean Harlow embodied the paradox of feminine subjectivity

during her time. Her films mocked domestic values, while they were also crucial to the culture that defined an emerging suburban housewife (Cohen 1998, p. 267). Female movie stars walked the tightrope of female roles, mother by day, wife by night, housewife in private, star in public (Cohen 2008). Marilyn Monroe imitated Jean Harlow in the 1950's. Jean's look epitomized American sexuality. Banner (2008) highlights Harlow's blonde hair and the association with prostitutes and lower class women –she redefined a cultural aesthetic. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* explores the themes of whiteness and beauty and its dangerous psychological influence on the African American characters of her novel. Paula Breedlove says in the novel, "I remember one time I went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on a magazine. A part on the side, with one little curl on my forehead. I looked just like her. Well almost just like" (p. 96). Morrison's novel delves into the damaging effects white standards of beauty have had on a community of black women, pointing to the dangers of internalization of the dominant cultures gaze perpetuated through Hollywood.

In the early 1900's film stars and their audiences shared a "para-social" relationship. There was an illusion of intimacy between fans and stars that was consummated in fan magazines and the like. On Second Life it appears a new relationship is possible between the user and their own image as a movie star. Intimacy according to Boelstroff (2008) is predicated on language's ability to mediate selfhood (p. 151). Interpersonal communication scholars describe intimacy as an expression that describes relationships characterized by, "the exchange of warm, involving, immediate messages" (Anderson 1998 p. 303). One element key to the creation of intimate relationships is "self-disclosure". Self-disclosure can be explained by "uncertainty reduction theory" (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), when people meet online high levels of uncertainty lead the people to strive to reduce the uncertainty of the situation. Burn's (2008)

notes that one of the advantages of SL is what Joe Walther of Cornell termed the “hyperpersonal-effect” where users lose their real social phobias and engage in deep relationships.

Yet few have talked about the intimacy of avatar and their user. As I continue to disclose myself I am attempting to illustrate through method, a relationship between reader and writer that does not assume a traditional scholarly relationship characterized by dry style and a lack of intimacy. Instead I am defining myself through self-disclosure and a linking between disjointed moments that follow Jarrett’s vision of sophistic style. As I am becoming - I am making my own home - The home regardless of how "ephemeral" it may be is the base that all people create - this is a site of resistance (Bakardjieva 2005, p. 73). But simply because it is ephemeral does not mean one should not question the materials being used. In Second Life everyone gets to choose their name and choose the way their body will be presented. There are entire industries built around creating ‘star’ skins and clothing where you can buy an outfit and be Brad Pitt or Lindsay Lohan. The para-social relationship between actor and self as actor changes our notions of relationships. As I dressed up in multiple costumes such as the Alice in Wonderland costume I began to see myself as a celebrity (Figure 13).



Figure 12

I was sitting among friends who were curious about my exciting computer screen that outdid their Facebook and Microsoft Word screens. As a result, I quickly had 5 avatar

companions. Traveling together, we wandered the metaverse in search of some trouble. It took about 20 minutes for us to figure out how to find each other. We went to a dance club. Our entourage arrived at the virtual club; I with my dress accompanied by a short chubby shirtless old-man-looking figure, a dark skinned man wearing only gloves, and a young couple dressed in conservative clothing. The dance club surprised us. It was an adult watering hole. On stage cyber beauties danced seductively to the music. The club was full of patrons using dance moves beyond any dance animation I had available. It was white night at the club and you were supposed to wear white. I tried to adjust my clothing colors but soon found myself topless and noticeably without nipples. I could not figure out how to put my shirt back on. The ladies warned me to put on my shirt, but I couldn't. The crowd snickered. I first became aware of the term "newbie" at this time. As Boelstroff (2008) explains "newbie status was often revealed by lack of facility with embodiment, social norms, and the interface" (p. 124). My red dress couldn't cover up my newbie status and my even more 'noobie' friends were not helping. A little short boy was being ridiculed and the crowd kept telling us to donate money or leave.

My confidence waned after experiencing "griefing" a term which involves intentional acts that cause other residents to enjoy the virtual world less and the griefer more"(Boelstroff 188). This is the negative side of 'disinhibition' experienced in virtual spaces. Feeling unwelcome, we left the club and jetted off to a Buddhist Zen garden where we could explore our newfound selves without the pressure of the crowd and dancers. The garden was beautiful; I flew around and found the man with gloves sitting on a meditation seat. I kept turning around, while everyone commented on my dress. Soon we had been in the metaverse for nearly 5 hours. Sensing the impending doom of my homework and life we scattered back to the real world.

Later that night I signed back on. I could not stay away. I went exploring, solo. I felt less likely to be attacked for my noobie status without a bunch of obvious noobs around. I searched reggae and quickly arrived at an empty reggae Island. I was greeted with a freebie box where I obtained my favorite T-shirt. It was a Free-Tibet T-Shirt; the freebie box also contained a flower, sunglasses, a cigarette and a necklace. Wearing my new T-shirt, my red dress became a red skirt. Now I had a style more fitting. I felt comfortable. I explored the land and went to the empty dance floor where I discovered that by clicking on the blinking balls placed around the floor I could do dance moves far beyond my personal inventory of dance moves. I danced by myself for a while.

A few days later I went to another reggae club. This place was hopping. There was good music and a crowd of people dancing and chatting. I stood at the side and a friendly avatar greeted me. I told her I liked the music and she informed me that her husband was the DJ. I didn't dare ask if it was her 'real' husband. I confessed my newbie status and asked for some tips. She empathized with the frustration of being a noobie but did comment that most noobies didn't do much to help their stereotype. And then I received my first gift from an avatar; hair and skin (Figures 14, 15, 16)!

This was the positive side of disinhibition in virtual spaces that leads to kindness. I felt grateful for the experience. She instructed me on putting on my skin and hair – alas I was beautiful. My skin was no longer stock, I had a deep tan and my dark 'prim' hair flowed like my dress. I felt like I had truly become something big. Next thing you know I would be the most popular avatar in SL. My computer kicked me off and I went to bed still feeling exhilarated with the feeling of being beautiful and having made a friend. This second life was seeping into my moods; I remembered in Junior High I would watch the television show Dawson's Creek. It was

a cheesy teen drama that weekly dictated my perspective on the world. Were the show to go well, the week was destined to be a success. What was dictating my reality?

The appeal of reggae may lie in the transformative nature of its message. I was introduced to reggae music's history and theory by Alfred Snider, the director of debate at UVM. I often attended reggae music shows in Burlington and enjoyed the music and vibe of the scene. Smith (2005) writes that reggae "is not happy-go-lucky, pot- induced, 'safe' music; it is transformative pedagogy, intended to engage the people to take action against all forms of oppression and injustice". Reggae music originates from Jamaica and was made popular by Bob Marley. This music is derived from the Rastafari culture that believes that Haile Selassie I, the former Emperor of Ethiopia is the messiah or Jah. Its basic tenets include freedom from Babylon through a lifestyle that embraces love openness and resistance through the beats of music.



Figure 13

Figure 14

Fat or Phat – Beauty & The Beast



Figure 15

Signing onto Second Life again, I arrived upon login where I had been kicked off the night before at the reggae club. But there was no show and no avatars chilling so I decided to play with my appearance. The reggae club was perhaps not home to the traveling feeling of rastafari I had experienced earlier in my journeys. Changing my appearance quickly turned into a terrible idea. Faster than I could scarf a cheesecake I accidentally gained massive amounts of weight and couldn't figure out how to put my dress back on. In the middle of this crisis, an avatar appeared (Figure 18). This young man's non-newbie animations delivered an obnoxious belly laugh before he skirted out of the club. I felt self-conscious of my overweight naked self. Rarely in the metaverse do you see an avatar whose body is not sculpted in the image of a futuristic Barbie doll. As Saltzberg & Chrisler (2006) contend "psychological effects of the pursuit of the perfect female body include unhappiness, confusion, misery, and insecurity" (p. 166). The ideal body type is thin and has led to social pressure that increases anorexia and bulimia amongst women. At least one million American women have anorexia (Saltzberg & Chrisler p. 167). The psychological effect of a culture obsessed with a strict notion of feminine beauty creates a death culture where women are caught between a beauty/monster binary. As women gain and lose weight they walk the tightrope between beauty (thin) and monster (fat).

I realized that my new skin was complete with the body parts I was missing before; I had a fully female genitalia and nipples. Avatar beauty standards for the most part adhere to the 'real' world. Skinny, light skinned, well-defined avatars speak to the vision of beauty that dominates culture. The owner of perfect skin is in a position of risk. The risk for women in real life has been being the victim of sexual violence. Sexual violence even occurs in virtual spaces. Dibbell's essay accounts a virtual rape by a voodoo doll that forced users to become victims of sexually explicit acts in a LambdaMOO. In Second Life Brussels' police entered the metaverse to investigate a virtual rape. Wired Magazine published a piece on the virtual rape calling it distasteful but not a crime. Boelstroff (2008) notes that a resident told him of a SL sexual abuse group meeting where an avatar came who played sex animations during the meeting (p. 189). These are forms of grieving that take on a sexual nature. The real world consistently reappears in the margins of cyberspace. Searching to escape the perfect body and the culture that valorizes a passive female body that is always at risk I searched to create armor for myself. A shield that would serve to refigure my body as something else – becoming strong I prepared for a new becoming.

I have been threatened by my beauty. As a young girl I grew up fully aware of being pretty. I became obsessed around the age of 13 with perfecting my beauty. I would run on the treadmill for hours chasing a vision of myself on the cover of Teen Vogue. I left behind the world of science and math and reading that had nourished me. I instead started consuming a diet of trash media; middle school gossip and I could not keep it down. I became bulimic and have struggled with bulimia and eating disorders throughout my entire life. Perhaps it is my bulimia that shoves these stories onto the pages that do not invite it. I remember the pain of fullness and the joy of being empty. I no longer feel my bulimia makes me ugly. I have overcome it but it

may come out of hiding. I remain strong day to day, but in an attempt to face Medusa I will show you my monstrous morphing body. You can shiver or cry but in dealing with eating disorders please do not shut your eyes. Something hurts and so girls are throwing up the knives of beauty that don't fit. If my body was unhappy then I had one less concern. I could be further away from the dangers of true beauty, of true femininity as I imagined. My experiences with eating disorders started with trying to obtain an ideal female image but it turned into a run away from that same body. In throwing up I made myself ugly. I felt safe as I emptied my mistakes.

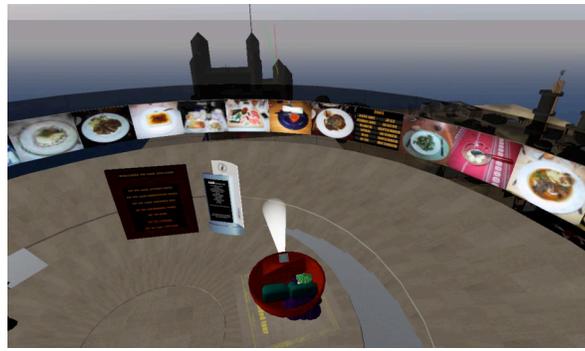


Figure 16

A virtual island documents everything Antoine Lancaster ate for 365 days (Figure 17). The pictures are time stamped and Lancaster says in an informationa; brochure that “this exhibit can maybe help people with eating disorders: if you eat too much, you might not be so hungry after seeing 1500 pictures of food! If on the contrary, you don't eat enough, some nice food might convince you to try it”. There is a virtual support group for people with eating disorders that I have only recently attempted to join but have as of the time of writing not heard back from.



Figure 17

After my experience of shame as a bloated avatar, I seized the moment and embraced the monstrous female figure as beauty (Figure 18). Medusa was an outfit I found at a fantasy store. The store carried costumes that were bore no resemblance to anything human. The Medusa skin was complete with a moving tail, hydra head, and pink skin. These fantasy costumes represent the creative potential within Second Life. I was immediately drawn to the costume because it reminded me of my favorite feminist article by Helene Cixous. *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976) demands for women to “write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement” (p. 875). She calls for a double movement to both individually write the body and seize the moment. Cixous essay is marked by a style that rejects male authorship and clearly comes from a female author dedicated to a female audience (Bruggman, 1993). Writing the body is an embodied style of writing and empowered action of claiming agency that displaces the power of patriarchy which has suppressed women’s erotic power. “Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a ... divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to

...speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn't thought she was sick?" (Cixous, 1976, p. 876). Medusa is this monster, the suppressed beautiful erotic agent who turns men to stone. Women operate between two horrifying myths "medusa" and the "abyss", these are the two unrepresentable things in phallogentric logic, sex and death.

Medusa is a mythical monster from Greek mythology. The myth tells a story of Medusa who is raped or seduced by Poseidon when he finds her worshipping in Athena's temple because he is overcome by her beauty. Athena punishes Medusa for desecrating her temple and disfigures her turning her hair to snakes and anyone who looked at her would be turned to stone. In the Iliad, Athena dons Medusa's face on her battle gear and later Agamemnon wears her on his shield as he prepares for battle (Garber & Vickers, p. 9). Medusa transforms from beauty to monster as a result of her tragic tale. Gonzalez contends that the "monstrous is...a product of tragedy" (p. 35). The Medusa avatar is a hybrid of beauty and beast that "is never considered immune from the vicissitudes of fate or the repercussions of unnatural union" (Gonzalez p. 35). Medusa is a subject that embraces the disjointed identity position of women, who walk between beauty and beast in the process of performing identity that is dictated by a beauty regime.

But beauty lies within the beast depending on how you look at her. Coluccio Salutati (The Chancellor of Florence from 1375 to 1406) associates Medusa with "artful eloquence" that can make a listener go dumb (Garber & Vickers, p. 55). Salutati contends that snakes symbolize wisdom, being the most cunning animal. Cixous's retelling of the myth transforms her cunning and rhetorical power to a sense of empowerment. "You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" (Cixous, 1976, p. 885). Dolmage (2009) writes that Cixous "is suggesting that Medusa's beauty lies in her ability to threaten and shake up a male-dominated society, that this is in fact where her "monstrosity" *and*

beauty come from” (p. 5). Biesecker would agree that Cixous’s reading of Medusa is a call for women to constitute themselves within the paradoxes of phallic logic that have deemed them both the symbol of home and eternally homeless; “more function than territory, the margin is that which shores up the center and makes it visible. In a word, woman’s place is the uncanny realm of the ‘in-between.’ She is at once both inside and outside the center and, thus she “always occurs simultaneously in several places” (Biesecker, 1992, p. 94). Since women have no proper place in history or life she must define herself as the space between. Medusa can be thought of as the parataxis of the antithesis of phallogentric logic which has defined the world in oppositions that excluded women’s space.

Medusa’s myth justifies violence against women; woman is always on trial for her beauty and thus deserving of violence. But when the story is told through an empowering lens that sees her beauty and power women are no longer victims and instead can be embodied agents who can refigure a new history. I have felt the torture of Medusa as a young girl growing up. I remember becoming aware of my female body that served as my imprisonment. Walking down the street I was never safe, walking into a room I was never innocent, as the gazes and voices deemed me an object for sexual pleasure. Saltzberg and Chrisler agree stating that “street harassers put women ‘in their place’ by commenting loudly on their beauty or lack of it” (p. 169). Young women grow up in fear of their beauty and in fear of their monster. Sexual violence and eating disorders and body image all weave together creating a dangerous space for young women to grow up in. It is through rhetoric of difference that retells Medusa’s story encouraging young woman to create a definition of them outside the dominant narrative that can create a new history and a new beauty as Delmage (2009) contends:

Through such an embodied rhetoric, we would write and communicate and persuade; we would rhetorically *deliver*, affirming the possibilities and the limitations of the body, and in so doing we would refuse rhetorical and philosophical economies that silence that deny the body or normalize it. Importantly, instead of stigmatizing embodied difference, we might advocate for a range of body images, an awareness of body values and a critique of the powerful discourses of silencing and delimitation that surround embodied rhetoric. We would look for what is beautiful in what we have been told is threatening (about ourselves and about others. (p. 29)

Wander Kips dressed as Medusa traversed the metaverse with confidence. Openly rejecting conventional norms I felt at ease as I walked into a room. I did not feel the same self-awareness that came with my more human avatar skins. Such costumes are popular in sub cultures within Second Life.

Becoming Man – Phallogentric Logic



Figure 18

Medusa then shed her skin. I searched for a home in the eyes of the ‘other’. Deleuze writes that desire is becoming-woman, but I turned this around and decided to attempt becoming-man. I shopped for the male figure that would represent my male self (Figure 19). I purchased skin and was pointed in the direction of a shop where I could purchase the one piece of

equipment that would define me as male. In the virtual world to be a male, one can purchase a penis. They come complete with animations that can help the avatar engage in realistic sexual intercourse.

The association of men with their penises is a common cultural phenomena. Stoltenberg (1990) critiques the focus on biological markers for sex division writing that “penises and ejaculate and prostate glands occur in nature, but the notion that these anatomical traits comprise a sex – a discrete class, separate and distinct, metaphysically divisible from the other sex, the ‘other sex’ – simply that: a notion, an idea” (p. 267). Searching for a penis was searching for an idea, an idea of masculinity that has concreted itself in the image of the phallus. Simply obtaining genitalia did not create me as male; it simply recreated the idea of male that was a fiction to begin with. Sabo (1994) writes “in our culture many men suffer from sexual schizophrenia. Their minds lead them toward eroticism while their hearts pull them towards emotional intimacy” (p. 278). This schizophrenic condition may be tied to the idea of sexuality in general. As women have gained sexual freedom they also experience this schizophrenic experience. Deleuze would contend that instead of repressing this nature we should see this as natural and perhaps then we would stop perverting our sexualities and pushing sexuality into violence and instead embrace a radical view where sexuality exists as a spectrum that expresses intimacy without the ties of a history of male and female societal roles.

The animations that come with the penis allow for realistic sexual performances. Unlike the female genitalia in Second Life that focuses on aesthetic appearance, the penis is meant to perform. Sabo (1994) notes in his work on male sexuality and athletes that our culture relates sexual relationships as sports games with sexual intercourse as the main goal; “the sexual values that derive from patriarchy emphasize male dominance and the purely physical dimensions of the

sex act while reducing women to delectable but expendable objects” (p. 277). Focusing on the penis’s ability to perform sexual intercourse is also damaging to men whose self-esteem becomes focused on their genitalia that is often the cause of “the sexual dysfunctions they fear” (Sabo, 1994, p. 277).

SL real estate agent Anshe Chung was attacked by a thousand flying penises at a news conference within the metaverse. This incident was blamed on the group Anonymous. The attack made light of the penis and also represented its political power. Stolzenberg (1990) contends that penises are “a political entity that flourishes only through acts of force and sexual terrorism” (p. 267). The political power of making an idea of male sex real through its symbol is seen in this staged attack. Flying penises resemble missiles and the war that has been associated with the power of one. As I obtained one I knew I was crossing into occupied territory.

Becoming-Man I realized the penis focus was the wrong goal. I should instead try to understand myself as a man. I imagined my father and my brother and I imagined being them. I want to be them, I always have. Man is antithesis of Woman, as woman is defined only in her relationship and difference to man. Through the varied performances of lived experiences is united in parataxis. I often approach the world a bit too harshly, a bit too honest, too blunt, perhaps a bit too much like a man? I also judge myself as I imagine a man would. I see myself in the mirror and imagine how men view me. I see a thousand eyes and I feel their burn. I wonder if they dare look so hard at those who share their home. I began to feel uncomfortable and my research shifted.

Homesick in the Metaverse



Figure 19

To navigate within SL the user opens a search screen (Figure 20). The screen has a search bar similar to a google search screen. There are tabs which feature featured events, arts & culture, shopping, and land sales. There is no shared land that everyone is forced to interact in after Orientation Island at the time of my study. In doing my study it became difficult to decide where and what I should search for. I had imagined SL as more of a shared space that would guide me along my search. Instead I was left with an overwhelming amount of options. One can literally type in any word and there is somewhere you could navigate to. After a few months of aimless wandering waiting for something to appear I took the reins. I decided to aim my searches at my family history. Whiteness gains its power through remaining invisible. I was determined to mark the terrains of my whiteness in order to confront my identity and my ancestors.

Sick of the false joy that quickly faded with flowing hair and a flowing skirt, I yearned for something more. Now I turn towards a more direct analysis of the creation of home within Second Life. Why would one desire to develop a home online? First one may be homesick, yearning for home. This yearning is Deleuze's desire, the flow that causes us to invent, to move, to become rhetorical agents. Energia animates the lifeless, the avatar flows but she is lost. She is

a wanderer in a valley of no homes. I began a search for home. I was dressed, or as dressed as I was about to be. Without a home, I felt alienated in the metaverse. But what is a home? Burke writes of the dangers of attempting to analyze a word and conjure an image in the head. What did you just imagine? Burke writes of the mistake of reading “your-house-this brightly flower” and becoming lost in a false image of a home or attempting to make a home like a flower; instead home “names an attitude” (Burke 242). Creating an attitude of home is precisely the hospitality Derrida speaks of. Home in Deleuze’s A-signifying semiotics points towards possibility, home is pointing towards my-becoming. Not merely a place – be it virtual or real – an image, but an attitude.

As a nomadic critical autoethnographer I continually reflect on my approach, hoping to avoid tainting the text with the scholar’s inevitable trail of ‘ethnopornography’ that Whitehead warns of yet gets trapped in. Months after my virtual experience that I will soon account I began writing this piece. First I attempted to uncover my desires for home that can best be described as being homesick. I read a letter I wrote my mother after my Uncle Andy passed away in 2005. I lived in Burlington only 2 hours from my parents but at this time it was further than I live now. I wrote the following in an unsent letter December 12th, 2005 at 3:44 am

I just want to go home and live with you I hate not being with people who I know love me no matter what...It seems silly while I do love the experience it’s hard because I see how much I just wish the world was different I don’t want to continue playing in a part of a game I don’t like the rules for. The game I want to play doesn’t make people leave each other as a part of success. Neither does it allow for people like Andy to just fall through the cracks I don’t want anything like that to happen to anyone else in our family...I love being in school and all the opportunities you gave me but I can’t take it in a lot of ways I

just want a family and to be safe and around people who love me without all the stress of being judged by people who don't know me.

Andy and I grew up together; my parents practically raised him until he was around 16. He was only 7 years older than me, the same distance between me and my younger brother. Heroin entered his life and chased him to his death. He had recently married and had a beautiful boy after exiting a recovery program. He still lived in Portland and I had not attended his wedding. The regret still burns in me. I flew to Oregon for the funeral, but I was too busy for the wedding. This was a major turning point in my life that defines my values now. Never again will I miss a chance to celebrate family and life through love, I don't want to know my family and friends through tragedy only. During my mourning all I wanted to do was return home to family. I wanted to heal. Perhaps writing is healing. This is a way of commemorating Andy through honoring his presence in my yearning for a home.



Figure 20

Separated from family I felt as though I was living in exile, not only separated from home but from people or places that could understand my grief (Figure 21). There is no time in our society to mourn, we must always return to the work at hand. Success is always on the horizon, and I continued traveling, and I continue traveling. I was not forced from home and I had a real

home to return to. I was privileged but through my mourning I find a connection to the experience of diasporas populations who do not have this privilege. We are all homesick for something that we cannot return to. We live in dreams and hopes of a place where we are understood to a place of healing.

My reasons are now clear and I stand naked amongst the words and the empty page. We shared a moment in my home, I invited you the reader, and now we are not strangers. Derrida warns of internalizing the stranger and quickly attempting to assimilate him. So I keep you at a distance out of respect for your difference. I will return to your tongue to explore the desire of creating a homeland. History is a good starting point to create roots for the schizophrenic subjectivity to remember the kindness of hospitality. But in keeping with such an ethos, remember kindly that what at first may seem unusual may simply be the way things are around here. So read accordingly.

CHAPTER 5 - Homes The Locus of Community

Dwelling in Virtual Place

“I dwell where rebellion is taught”-Common



Figure 21

To live is to dwell “to live in the traces that past living has left” (Illich, 1982, p. 119). This chapter explores the formation of communities. It could be said that in creating an avatar one builds a house. Castronova (2003) observed that avatars are essentially a combination of attributes that, like houses, are valued differently depending on the market. Talking about place as though it is an attribute or accessory misses what Boelstroff (2008) agrees is “absolutely foundational to virtual worlds” (p. 19). It becomes essential that when you begin describing the behavior of any person, animal, or force of nature you must discuss their relationship to a larger whole. There is rarely a verb to describe human actions which is not associated with the home (Illich, 1982, p. 119). Where is my home in the virtual sphere, I wonder, as I attempt to define myself as a member of a community. Illich says that “the domus not people, seems to be the subject of history, the basic social unit” (p. 117).

I thought perhaps if I built a space with four walls and a roof above I could collect my disparate ancestors and let them take shelter in my home (Figure 22). I took the cheap way out and moved into a friend's place. My real life friend Kyle had decided to buy some SL land to test his building skills, when he wasn't busy developing his SL Monopoly Board (Figure 23). The house was two stories high, the main entrance was through a garage. The living room was decorated with a rug, lamp, glass coffee table, and a trampoline. Hardwood floors contrasted with the white bare walls. This home was a part of a larger virtual neighborhood that was very crowded due to the low cost of the real estate.



Figure 22

SL's 3D visual technology heightens the sense of place that exists in previous internet technology, which can be described as a place, because more than one person may be present at the same time. In SL place is a painting with a window. Other people who visit your home share the painting with you and they alter its landscape through their presence. SL's virtual places are rapidly changing our notions of vision. The change in perspective that accompanied the photograph that Berger (1972) researched has now extended further. The camera is fully rotatable and you can either view your avatar while they interact or enter first person mode. The eye can leave the direction in front of you and the user can have a staring contest with their

avatar. Sharing virtual places is critical to the feeling of embodiment in my experience with SL. Having others suddenly fly into your world is a shocking experience. The world one is accustomed to having is a one-way pornographic perspective. This is shifted and it is rather hard to hide from the show you thought you were only watching.

Going Native – Chasing Lulu down the rabbit hole

I desire to uncover the roots of my Native American ancestor. My father's grandmother Lulu is rumored to have been Algonquin. This data is impossible to 'validate' due to the inaccuracies of census documentation at the time and the strong social stigma associated with claiming one's Indian heritage. My search for my paternal genealogy and oral history was a chase down Lulu's rabbit hole. Lulu means "rabbit" in Algonquin dialect; the rabbit is a trickster in multiple different myths from different places, times and peoples. "Nanabozho (or Manabozho) the Great Hare...is a powerful figure found in the tales of the Algonquin, Fox, Menominee, Ottawa, Ojibwa, and Winnebago tribes... a revered culture hero — creator of the earth, benefactor of humankind, the bringer of light and fire, and teacher of sacred rituals. In other tales he's a clown, a thief, a lecher, or a cunning predator — an ambivalent, amoral figure dancing on the line between right and wrong" according to a virtual encyclopedia. The trickster spirit is the ghost I now attempt to make present — yet she repeatedly avoids me through absence. Rabbits are said to make their fear appear to them. I fear that I do not share a relationship with her or this culture. Perhaps this is the story of becoming Lulu.



Figure 23

Shopping for Native American ‘skins’ and clothing found in SL at a Native market do not represent the entirety of possibilities within Second Life, merely my experience. In Figure 24 the store is shown as a wall of billboards with representations of Native clothing displayed as billboards. I will examine the Female Bison “Adol” costume which is the one I purchased.

Chrysto’s a Native American feminist poet writes against cultural appropriation of Indians:

One has a solid red bonnet & bulging eyes ready for war
 Another has a headdress from hell
 With painted feathers no bird on earth
 Would be caught dead in
 All around them are plastic inflatable
 Hot pink palm trees grinning skulls
 Sheered beer steins churchlike check books
 Black rhinestone cats
 & a blonde blow up fuck me doll for horny men (p. 9)

Shopping for Native identity in SL is akin to the image of Native identity for sale in Chrystos poetry. A thin, blonde haired Adol who has no ties to any Native history or memories but only with the mythic Bison is one of the available representation of Native identity at this SL story. The female Native body is displayed as sexually provocative object hiding and repressing

a painful history that is inscribed in Native women as internalized colonization. Miranda (2002) furthers this contention “we accept being made invisible as a kind of Novocain rather than endure the constant grinding of historical traumas that directly targeted Native women’s bodies and our ability to express ourselves in language and literacy”(p. 138). European colonizers raped Native women to either kill them or in the Spanish form of love to create their mixed-blood children as citizens of the New World. Native girls were put into boarding schools where they were often sexually abused and from the 1950s to the 1970s massive sterilization campaigns destroyed Native women’s ability to procreate (Miranda 138).

On Adol’s billboard the descriptor “female bison” is printed to the left of the image of her. Female is in pink curved over the Green Bison text. Natives are often represented in association with nature placing them in the wilderness as savage nomads; foreigners to the modern city. Laws (2004) furthers “we all know the stereotype of the rugged Plains Indian: killer of buffalo, dressed in quill-decorated buckskin, elaborately feathered headdress, and leather moccasins, living in an animal skin teepee, master of the dog and horse, and stranger to vegetables” (p. 1). Laws propose a counter-narrative to the story of Indian as nomadic hunter from her Choctaw heritage. She says that in Oklahoma the Choctaw were vegetarian agricultural tribes and that European introduction of rifles to America caused the rise in hunting. Colmon (2002) furthers this story showing the shift to nomads "atomized" native societies, disrupting the lines of authority and the cultural restraints that prevented overhunting. At the same time, drought, wars, alcohol, and debt prompted hunters to kill more bison. The nomads began destroying their principal resources as colonization limited their options” (p. 446). Buffalos and their story of extinction in the West, when aligned with Natives as Buffalos, tell the story of the

vanishing Native. Reaffirming their extinction Buffalo and Native are sent into the mythic past where they serve as sites to resolve Euro-Americans of their guilt.

“Being Indian, then, may mean adjusting the definition to the tribal reality at hand rather than living nostalgically in a mythic past. People move from one place to another, or conversely, live in areas that change as other cultures move in. Human time, place, and culture are carried through cyclic evolutions that never stand still” (Lincoln, p. 188). Identifying as an American Indian is less about situating me in a nostalgic outfit that is more ‘playing Indian’ than being Indian. Modern day Native American’s live on and off the reservation. To define one as Native is about finding a home in the struggle of Native resistance to modern day American culture.

Wendy Rose is a modern day Native American poet who is white skinned from a background of ‘Hopi’ and ‘Miwok’; she has an MA from Berkley and was not born on a reservation. “Almost-Indian, Indian-ghosted, an identity older than language waits to peak through Wendy Rose” (Lincoln, p. 202). Through her poetry and activism she fights to redefine herself as a modern day Indian. “This poet-activist teeters in battle, rocklike, on the cliffs of vertical city walls: she opposes the violence of American city culture. She makes use of the energy of imbalance, a doubling self winding through the torque of Indian redefinition in contemporary society” (Lincoln, p. 203). I attempt to follow in her footsteps, to remember my ancestors through the words of poetry and self-definition. While I may have no skin that matches this mood, I have a sense of home that dwells in poetic resistance. Chrysto also uses poetry as her way of forging home; a first read of her work causes a feeling of discomfort for me (hence she has succeeded); I become fearful that I am the white hippie wannabe Native she hates. I accept that my identity is home to this plastic self that I am a contradiction. In her poem They’re

Always Telling Me I'm Too Angry the conclusion provides a guide as to the means of creating an Indian home:

I'm angry that others are always telling me
that they feel the same way I do but they're afraid to say so
or they don't know how
or they'd lose their job or their lover
If you can speak
you can be angry
if you can't speak bang your fork
If you're furious with me
because I haven't mentioned something
you're angry about
get busy & write it yourself
There is no such beast as too angry
I'm a canary down this mine of apathy
singing & singing my yellow throat on fire
with this sacred holy purifying
spirit of anger (p. 45)

Chrystos is an ardent critic of Native identity being used in the service of continuing cultural oppression. Her home is in poetry that embraces the erotic voice of the Native body (Miranda 2002). Through giving voice to the erotic the wounds of 500 years begin to heal. "The cultural romanticization of Columbus's imperialist legacy includes romanticization of rape"

(hooks, 1994, p. 203). Through poetry and artistic works which value Native American voices the suppressed history can be healed.

Anger is an appropriate response to injustice. Anger is the voice of oppression and should not be silenced. Anger can be a path that moves one from silence to speech. Audre Lorde (1981) writes in response to white feminist and critical scholars who argue that anger produces guilt and is an ineffective rhetorical strategy in the creation of movements. “I cannot hide my anger to spare you guilt, nor hurt feelings, nor answering anger; for to do so insults and trivializes all our efforts. Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one’s own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness” (p. 130). Through recognizing the guilt that I felt when attempting to create myself as Native, I first attempted to chase down genealogical narratives that would confirm my Native self. But then I was falling into the colonizers logic. It was they who demanded blood quantum and definitional logics. So instead I tell what I can, and make clear my uneasiness in a home I have never known. To create a home is a careful process of weaving with ever changing threads through the language of poetic parataxis where the disunity of monotone “I” as opposed to “You” is weaved together in a vibration that sings “We”.

And now I wish to make a bridge out of my anger. So I respond in the language of poetry

I am angry

That if I am not smiling the old man next to me will ask me why I am so angry.

I am angry that I pretend to be the collector
All I want to do is stab the collector of dead bones in the eye
I am angry my Uncle Andy was taken from us
I am angry that I couldn't stop him from shooting up
I am angry that I am afraid to write something real
I am angry that I am scared to walk down the street at night
I am angry at people who tell me feminism is a fad
I am angry that my white skin covers the histories of darker colors and muffled screams
Lurking demons muffled under this damn white skin
Lulu is a trickster goddess in my eye but a ghost in my mind
I am angry that I know I am one step away from being a victim at all times
I am angry that because I have been a victim I am supposed to be silent and weak
I am angry that my father drinks away the shame of a past that is buried deep
I am angry that my Grandfather is the keeper of a history
I am angrier that I don't ask for the key
I am angry that she is the weaver of all
But keeper of little
I am angry that so much value is put in a name *Harlow*
Grandfather waited until he was 80 to unburden that lie
She who is swallowed is now expelled
I exorcise her ghost speaking red on a blank
skin
that is always turning back

Anger is a bridge between me and movement

Without her I drown – Inside her I fester

Between myself and my past and my dreams I attempt to call on my anger

To breed a space of resistance – at home in the blood of none but my own

bell hooks says “In Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (one of my favorite novels), there’s a moment when the little girl, a victim of rape/incest, says to another little girl whom she wants to be angry, “Anger is better—there is a presence in anger,” I was always moved by contrasting victimization versus being victimized; it’s important to maintain the kind of rage that allows you to resist” (p. 213). My anger remains a tool that keeps me from becoming a victim of the experiences I may encounter. My rage at a world I did not choose, a life that is always unfolding is my power to resist and be. This is the power of embodiment. My anger at history is necessary, my anger at myself is also necessary, I can cultivate this anger to develop a sense of myself as a warrior and not a passive victim of the world. Instead I can be present, I am here, and I am angry.

Kristeva comments “Strangely the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder” (Kristeva p. 1). The foreigner to my present is the past, the foreigner to my land is the Native, the foreigner to myself is the other, who strangely makes themselves at home in my skin. I attempt to remain self-reflexive in exploring my Native ancestor. I wish to emulate the attitude towards my Indian ancestry as Wendy Rose does. Lincoln writes that Rose recognizes that Natives are not artifacts and she attacks those who wish to have Indians play their part in the greed for Native land stoking the “engines of ‘progress’”, she is hard on herself and through her poetic expression she is “hardened into being, again as granddaughter to the Hopi creator” (p. 204). So I do not swallow this difference to make it silent, I do not claim this difference as my own. Instead

I attempt to give voice to the multiple stories of difference that escape between the margins of this page. Giving space to the past honors cultural associations that are groundwork of community. By honoring those who have passed and one's relationship to the dead a bridge is formed between tradition and practice.

“Plastic shamans” is an essay that talks of the appropriation of Native American spirituality that denigrates spirituality to the purchasing of a dream catcher. I own a dream catcher, and I am concerned about my participation in the commodification of Native spirituality. I recognize that I am a descendant of Native American ancestry but I am neither Lulu nor her Grandmother. I am also the descendant of America – the colonizer and colonized mix in my skin. Deloras explores ‘wannabes’ in *Playing Indian* the phenomena of white people who attach themselves opportunistically to Native identity. I am aware of my risks here. My white face covers the muffled screams of a history that wishes to erupt and bleed its dirty past through parched skin.

Museums – Mascots and Minstrel Shows



Figure 24

The KIVA Indian Resource & Learning Center (Figure 25) is a virtual land dedicated to honoring Native American heritage. As I enter the land a virtual media guide lets me know the benefits of this space “be in more than one place at once...It is crucial for our own health and the health of our communities for Native Americans to be physically present in widely dispersed, often very rural locations”. The virtual island is home to museums and spaces where Natives honor and cultivate their culture.

The Island is home to museums dedicated to Native history which in April 2009 held a show dedicated to Native mascots. Featuring images of Native mascots alongside images of black face the political message is clear. What is now universally accepted as racist against blacks is also racist against Natives (Figure 26). Edward (2002) furthers this claim arguing that “Power resides in naming and co-opting a marginalized identity. Some argue that lumping variant groups into one consumable package of traits allows for easier suppression through a hijacking of this identity” (p. 19). Through performances that create stereotypes Natives were grouped together and thought of as an image one could play. This was similar to the racism experienced by blacks in the US. They came from multiple places in Africa, and some immigrated after slavery, yet blackface performances lumped them all together. Blackface was a performance where white and black actors would paint their faces black in minstrel shows that displayed an authentic slave identity of an ignorant happy entertainer. As Radona (2003) furthers these performances hijacked black identity making blacks enslavement and cultural inferiority appear natural to audiences (p. 144).



Figure 25

Another exhibit at the museum is a dream catcher where the avatar clicks on a feather to hear a story. One of the stories is “Rabbit calls a truce”. The story is about a rabbit and otter that play tricks on each other. They come to a truce to discover who is plotting against the Indians. They discover it is mice and weasels and follow them around discovering what they are up to. Once they realize that the mice and weasels are attempting to kill the Indians they know they must do something to stop this. But they have been chosen by the mice to lead them to the Indians. Rabbit recalls a piece of joking wisdom “the best way to trick a snake is to think like a snake”. Rabbit tells the mice he will lead them to the Indians but instead leads them to a hill announcing the Indians are right on top – the mice run and plummet to their death. Lulu means rabbit and this story continually appears to be weaved of the trickster. I quote Haraway for she too sees the relationship I am dancing around,

The Coyote or Trickster, as embodied in Southwest native American accounts, suggests the situation we are in when we give up mastery but keep searching for fidelity, knowing all the while that we will be hoodwinked...feminist objectivity makes room for surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production; we are not in charge of the world...I

Like to see feminist theory as a reinvented coyote discourse obligated to its sources in many heterogeneous accounts of the world. (p. 401)

The message of Lulu and the rabbit trickster figure is the double movement of attempting to define oneself through a feminist lens that strives for partiality and honest perspective but inevitably knows that no account will ever be without contradiction. As I furiously trace down Lulu I am furiously chasing a ghost. The leaps between the virtual and real – create a home for a trickster. The trickster has no home but the no-home, which is home.

Lulu is from a town in Eastern Maine and through research I believe she may have been Passamaquoddy, this can not be confirmed due to the trail of whitewashing which occurred during the past two centuries in the United States. In census records she is recorded as white, but her pictures reflect differently as do the stories from my family. Regardless, she and my recent family have embraced ‘white’ as their ethnicity. This is not surprising due to the harsh social disdain for Natives in early 19th century following the Revolutionary War. Whatever her ties with Native Americans they are not recorded and did not continue in our family line. So I searched and I did not find her. Arnie Neptune, a tribal leader of the Penobscot Tribe of Maine, a part of the larger Wabanaki Tribes, says that names became important with the European and French. Before then the recording of names was not captured in an image, a census recording or even paper.

I spent nearly three whole days searching census records and genealogical records as I became obsessed with tracing Lula. The number of times I saw her name or her ancestors was useless. I wanted a story, and lists are not stories. Feeling again without home I turned towards my mother’s history to question the other half of my family who occupy and created the home I grew up in.

Presence Absence and Immersion

In Second Life you may be having a conversation with a room full of people and one avatar is bent over unanimated. The person behind the keyboard is 'afk', slang for away from keyboard. The user has been booted off the metaverse by computer error or a distraction in the real world but their avatar remains present to other visitors of the virtual space as an empty shell. This experience is described as "presence without immersion"(Boelstroff, 2008, p. 112). Immersion is the feeling that one is a part of the virtual environment causing the user to forget the 'actual' world. 'Afk' is a unique feature of virtual worlds that separates presence from immersion. One can be present but not immersed in the environment.



Figure 26

I remember a story my mother told me of my Great Grandmother from Siberia. I attempted to find out more in the virtual world. I searched Siberia and found a Siberian island. I transported to the place and walked around a bit and was shocked at the group of 10 or so individuals gathered in a circle talking in a foreign tongue. I remembered having read on the teleport link that Siberia was a place for sharing the tongue of the Siberian language. As a large polar bear approached my avatar I became frightened and did not respond (Figure 27). Speaking to me in a strange dialect, I was overcome with fear that cannot be logically explained. I just stared at the computer. Here was a strange land that I had imagined as my homeland. But I was a

stranger, after about 10 minutes of my frozen self the bear, who had lost interest, typed afk I did not respond. I was overcome with feelings of loneliness, darkness, and I could feel the cold Siberian air. “AFK” he typed into his keyboard, I suppose that is a universal symbol of disembodied avatars. I played dead and wished I would just type something. The bear stood over me perhaps moving my shell or making fun of the strange visitor who was too afraid to speak. I left the computer walked around my apartment and then logged off with my real eyes closed so my avatar would disappear.

The feeling I experienced was one of isolation and rejection. At this time, more than ever before, I was incredibly aware of my presence in the virtual world. Immersion within the metaverse was complicated due to the emotional character of my experience. The language barrier frightened me having been privileged to the experience of only knowing English virtual communication. I felt that I was not welcome because I did not know the language, but perhaps I should have tried to speak. I wish I had spoken. I should have tried. Why did the cat have my tongue, or was it curiosity that killed the cat. As I reflected on the interaction I asked myself if my great grandma feel the same way as her family stepped onto American soil? I imagined her curled up in a hay wagon frightened but with the dream of a young girl that perhaps America would be the promised land some dreamed of.

I realized that my fear was rooted in a lack of knowledge about my Siberian history. I knew enough to mention the story at a party but I was not prepared to discuss my history with anyone who shared it. I scoured the internet for information on Jews in Siberia. Searching for Jewish heritage online is what Gruber (2002) terms “virtual Jew”. With the rise of the internet many people have been able to enter virtual spaces of Jewish heritage searching for Jewish history and identity. Gruber (2002) criticizes those who attempt to identify with their Jewish

history in a way that is “constructed from desire rather than memory or inherited tradition” (p. 27). I am traveling dangerous terrain between exploitation and empowerment and claim to not have discovered my Jewish self but rather have only began the journey towards understanding my history.

So like any good ethnographer I turned to the tribal leaders; in this case it was Paige Harlow my mother and Alice Lynn my Grams (Figure 28). In an attempt to uncover the root of my fear of an unknown terrain I attempted to bridge the virtual and the real through communicating with my family. I also picked up the book my Great Aunt Levy wrote about our history. I began to start connecting my desires with memories. Through my research I gained a much better grasp on what exile, home and community meant in my maternal history.



Figure 27

Exile – Strategies of Fortification



Figure 28

All my searching for homes in Second Life were ultimately unsuccessful. As I would find homes on virtual islands there was no sense of comfort (Figure 29). I approached empty home after home, it turned out that developing a sense of home was achieved through learning my family history. My Great Aunt Laura Levy (2005) published a historical novel that traces my maternal ancestry. Her story is an example of feminist historiography. She engaged in extensive research; interviews, reading, and gathering of official documents. But the story reads more like a novel than a history book. Through narrative format the story of my ancestors comes alive in a way that would be impossible were it merely a family tree or a list of significant dates.

The novel begins with Joseph Sadovitch, a rabbi turned wine clerk, was sent into exile to Siberia for hitting a Russian police officer who watched a burning Jewish home being looted and took no action to stop it. Joseph walked over 4,000 miles towards the dreaded GULAGS of Siberia on his marches towards exile. Aristarkhova writes about her experience as a Russian born in Moscow. Her autoethnography creatively explores the relationship between space and identity through Russia association with fortresses she writes the following useful explanation of identity and the home for my study:

“To be a Muscovite (temporarily or permanently) is to have “propiska”...this practice today has at least two dimensions: Spatial and legal. Spatial dimension is characterized by being allocated to a particular space, by being localized in a particular home, being fixed into a space and also being granted a space to place one’s body. So it is spatio-corporeal inscription. It provides control over the body and its movement in a city space. To be a Muscovite in this sense is written through one’s body, it is to have a Muscovite body” (p. 85).

Aristarkhova writes that strategies of Russian National Identity strategically create a homogenous Mother Russia, “found its earliest instantiation in the strategies of exile and deportation” (p. 86). Through exclusion the nation fortified its walls. My family history is defined in this state of exile. As I attempt to document creating a virtual home I also exile the thesis from the virtual and enter the narrative of my real family. This family story is defined in exile from Russia. As I define the story of a real life, I am creating the walls that define my home in Second Life.

Joseph married Freda a headstrong brave Siberian whose story is an inspiring account of a person with what may be perceived as little material power, but a well of spiritual strength. Joseph was bitter due to his exile from Russia and took out his temper on Freda and became violent, miserable and dangerous to be around. So one day when Joseph had gone out she packed what she could carry and walked the 600 versts to her family home. In Aunt Levy’s story she recounts the nature of Freda and Siberian identity in an interior monologue of Joseph’s. “Freda, though far away, was born and bred a Siberian. He had been an embittered exile on the verge of middle age while she had been a young, strong, woman of independent spirit. It was clear that he and Abraham were of the old generation, more at home speaking Yiddish and remembering old scenes, old times and old ties back in European Russia” (p. 67). Freda knew she had a home and refused to be treated worse than she would be at home. Freda returned to her home in Irkymek out of choice. Joseph had found himself in Siberia by force and continued to find his home in exile. Thus he employed the hospitality of those who rejected him internalizing his displacement and externalizing the pain on his family.

Megan Harlow: How did [Great Grandma Clara] speak about Siberia - did she miss it fondly etc?

Alice Lynn: I don't recall her bringing it up a lot but I'd often ask her for stories. She liked Western TV shows, like Gunsmoke, and later I realized it must have been because Siberia's landscape was a lot like the background in those early Westerns. And it was a frontier (Harlow, 2009)

Watching similar landscapes returned my Great Grandmother to her homeland in her living room through the television. I wonder how exciting a place like Second Life could be for her if she was alive. Family members can reunite on a virtual terrain that they shape in accordance to their memories. Instead of all frontier memories assimilating into an image of the American West, multiple spatial topographies of cultural memory could be constructed where people can connect in real time. In Second Life I visually experienced this frontier.

Siberia was the Russian frontier a promised land for the Gladsteins. Jews in Poland who had suffered a history of suppression that included forced living settlements and dress and religious restrictions. Levy writes of the Gladsteins adoption of western dress that placed them in opposition to orthodox Jews who resisted the assimilation; “Michael knew in his heart that he was not being assimilated. He would always be a Jew and observe the faith, but in the modern way which enabled him and his family to get ahead. One must change with the times, he always said, while still holding onto the old beliefs, the Jewish religion” (Levy, 2005, p. 125). The Gladsteins had been exiled from Poland in 1845 and had made it to Klevlan it was not until 1865 that their dream of Siberia would come true. Traveling towards Siberia at the time was the “first trickle of pioneers, later known as the Old Settlers” (Levy p. 286). In 1867 they arrived in Eastern Siberia where they made a home in Karymska where “Jew and Russian lived side by side in harmony as neighbors” (Levy p. 354). The Gladstein family’s son Boris eventually married Fanny, Freda’s granddaughter. They were the parents of my Great Grandmother Clara.

“Old Settlers” is a name that marks a hybrid cultural group of mixed indigenous and Russian immigrants. Old Settlers “can best be understood as ‘mixed groups’ along a continuum ranging from ‘native’ to ‘Russian’; The end points of the continuum, however, are merely ideal types today and probably have never been anything else” (p. 147). As Schweitzer (2005) writes identity in Siberia is best understood in a relational model instead of a genealogical method. Rivaktin (2005) writes that “in eastern Siberia and in Alaska, when Russians fell sick, they often sent for local shamans. The reverse was equally common: Natives would often send for a priest in a similar situation” (p. 35). These stories offer a radically different story of colonization than the US narrative. The Old Settlers were not looking to change the Indigenous and together they created a hybrid culture. The Siberian frontier was an icy frontier that served as home to a wide ranging group of settlers who sought a place to share as home.

The scholarship which emerged during the 1900s under Soviet funding attempted to define the mixed identities of Siberia according to ethnic lines and cultural names. The Populations of Eastern Siberia have a long history of relations with Mongolians and Russian fur traders and Chinese and do not identify in the same way the scholars attempt to define them. People were united through sharing language, space, and culture not by a name. Habeck argues that ethnicity may be better understood in the metaphor of bricolerus. The brick layers did not design the building but are still a part of the process by which the building is created, identities are buildings, who is supposed to live in them” (Horn 2002, p. 23).

Voyages to America



Figure 29

I typed in exile to the search engine of Second Life. I arrived at an island that was home to a store specializing in dramatic costumes. There is a large ship and dock at the entrance to the store. I took a picture and attempted to imagine my avatar as my Great Grandmother boarding a ship to America (Figure 30). I was interrupted during my photo shoot by a female avatar on the docks who was dressed in skimpy clothing she told me she had bought a thong but did not know how to try it on. I am pretty sure she was propositioning me, playing the role of a stripper on the docks. I was annoyed and attempted to politely tell her how to try on a thong. My response was not what she wanted and she flew away to find a new waiting spot where she might meet another avatar in search of sex in the metaverse. I was searching for family history.

It appears my Great Grandmother left Siberia twice with her family, first in 1906 for two years in San Francisco. They returned to Siberia around 1908 and Lynn recalls a story her mother told her about when she and her sister were at the University in Tomsk “they went out to go to class, pamphlets were being distributing saying that the Revolution had started and students should go home”. My family, well trained in the process of quick exits prepared for the next journey. In Eastern Europe political discussions took place within the home because it was there

as opposed to any public space where transcendence could occur (Bakardjieva, 2005, p. 75). Their discussion of escape took place in the safety of the home and soon they were again in journey.

Alice Lynn: She and her sister Sue and her parents escaped Siberia during the Revolution. Christian missionaries took them across the Gobi Desert into China. Mama and Sue lived in Harbin where Mama worked in a Russian-English bank. Since she knew English, she was a valuable translator and employee. I think they finally got passage to America in about 1920 or 21; maybe even 1922. (It was during this voyage that an admirer gave her the little Buddha from India that I have.) She was also engaged to a young Jewish man, David Greenspan, but she "gave him the mitten" in favor of my Dad. She and my Dad got married in 1923 and Laura was born in 1924. She worked as a dental assistant. Her brother, Abe, and I think George were going to Stanford and knew my Dad. Mom was invited to sing at a party given by a professor and that's when Dad first met her. She said she came home from work the next day to find a bouquet of flowers tied to her door addressed to "My Princess Sunshine." (note; we are a family of unrepentant romantics.) (Harlow, 2009).

As me and my grandmother conversed about our family history through email I was shaping my identity through history.



Figure 30

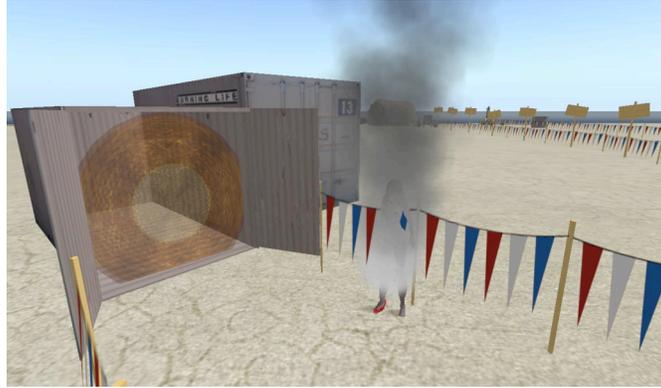


Figure 32

I found myself in one of my wanderings throughout Second Life at Burning Life. Burning Life is a virtual art exhibit in Second Life (Figure 31). I first encounter ["Sumo Cyborg"](#) by Latok Neumann (Figure 33). I see in the distance a large tunnel so I fly towards it (Figure 34). As I go through the tunnel I emerge and my avatar is burning (Figure 32).



Figure 31

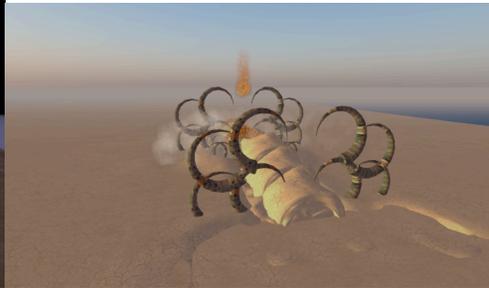


Figure 32

I attempted to return to Burning Life while writing this section. I searched for Burning Life when but realized that the Island, like its real island was temporary. The search results brought me to an island dedicated to informing avatars about Burning Man (Figure 35). A tunnel invites my avatar to wander in as the words what is Burning Life loom in the air.



Figure 33

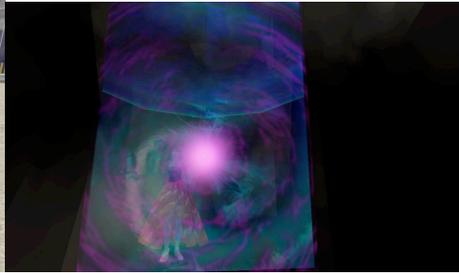


Figure 34

In the tunnel music begins to play (Figure 36). I enter a room that documents the history of Burning Man (Figure 37). I learn that Burning Life's virtual island was created after Linden the creator of Second Life went to Nevada the current home of the annual festival and experienced this alternative community. Burning Life is based off the real arts festival that began in San Francisco, Burning Man. Burning Man originated in the late 1980's when Larry Harvey and Jerry James built the first Burning Man structure and light it on fire in honor of the summer solstice, as the figure burns the crowds on Black Rock Beach in San Francisco. Figure 34 is a flyer for the 1987 event, one of the few photos of the first Burning Man, on Baker Beach in 1986, taken by Jerry James. San Francisco is also the birthplace of Second Life. San Francisco is also the place my Great Grandmother's family moved after their escape from Siberia.

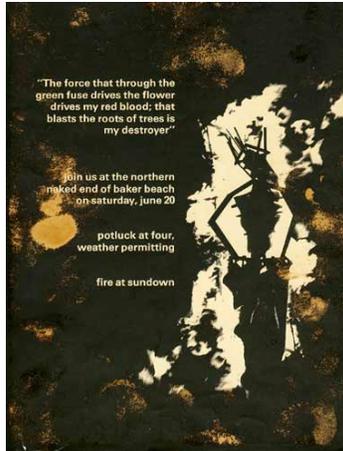


Figure 35

Steenson explains Burning Man

You belong here and you participate. You're not the weirdest kid in the classroom — there's always somebody there who's thought up something you never even considered. You're there to breathe art. Imagine an ice sculpture emitting glacial music — in the desert. Imagine the man, greeting you, neon and benevolence, watching over the community. You're here to build a community that needs you and relies on you (p.1).

Burning Man (Figure 36) is a temporary community set up by its participants complete with an FAA approved airport that lasts only for one week. The community constructed by over 50,000 people is then tore down leaving no trace behind. “But you'll take the world you built with you. When you drive back down the dusty roads toward home, you slowly reintegrate to the world you came from...At the end, though your journey to and from Burning Man are finished, you embark on a different journey — forever” (Steenson, p.1). The community is dedicated to immediacy as one of its ten tenets states “Immediate experience is, in many ways, the most important touchstone of value in our culture. We seek to overcome barriers that stand between us

and a recognition of our inner selves, the reality of those around us, participation in society, and contact with a natural world exceeding human powers. No idea can substitute for this experience”. Afterburn is the next island I find in my search for more information on this visually stunning landscape and alternative community (Figure 37).

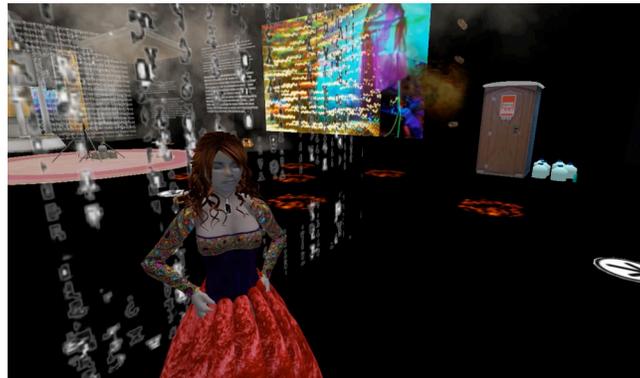


Figure 36



Figure 37

Above is a photograph of my Great Grandfather Joseph Chamberlin (Figure 38). My Great Grandmother Clara gave up an offer to sing with the San Francisco Opera due to pregnancy. They got divorced when my grams was young^{xvi}, He obtained his PhD from Stanford and studied his scholarly accomplishments redefined work on pseudo-scorpions (Judson, 1998). Chamberlin wrote in an unpublished manuscript of the spark which inspired his work

My interest in the false scorpions dates from a chance encounter with one while still a school boy...Among the candidates for this zoological garden was a queer flattened tick-like creature with enormous crab-like claws which it handled as dexterously as a boxer

his gloved fists which, to my unaided eye, they resembled. I made a number of penciled sketches of this mysterious 'boxing bug' showing its various stances . It possessed an enormous fascination for me, what with its sudden alerts, its tentative advances, and precipitate retreats . I never forgot it, in spite of the fact that it was years before I saw another representative-this time as a sophomore student in entomology at Stanford University in the fall of 1920 . My interest and memory-immediately revived, and now with books and microscope at hand I was able to identify my mysterious 'boxing animal' as a pseudo-scorpion. That was the spark, and with an inspiring teacher at hand in the person of Gordon Floyd Ferris, I was encouraged to find out 'everything I could' about these little arachnids. (Judson, 1998, p. 412)

His account of his first encounter with the bug is vivid and highlights the importance of embodied knowledge. The bug is a little boxer who was to be placed in a garden. Through giving the bug place his childhood memory sparked an entire career. In Burning Life as in Burning Man, nothing is paid for. Embracing an anti-capitalist vibe I went to a free tent where I picked up an object called "sand bug". The bug sat on my shoulder (Figure 39) as I navigated away from SL and found his Wikipedia page and in the spirit of women writing history and sophisticated historiography inserted an important lacking feature, his family! I put in his marriage to my Great Grandmother and his children.



Figure 38

In the 1960's-70's a second group of Old Believers who escaped Siberia at the same time as my Great Grandma, had settled in the Chinese mountains and now arrived in America. They were fundamentalist orthodox Christians whose beliefs who solidified during their time in the

Mountains. Clara taught them English and tutored them in her home extending her hospitality to the recent arrivals from her birthplace.

I was taught the art of palmistry, astrology, and tarot from my mom and grams. My mother brought us to Christian Churches when we were young. She said it is good for children to be involved, I like that. Mom instills a sense of responsibility and a deeper sense of empathy for all quite voices. The general openness to religious beliefs may come from our Siberian roots. Alice Lynn recalls no connection between occult, or native religious practices with her mother but provides me with the following information. Alice Lynn had the following to say about her religious practices:

She was born into the Jewish faith but told me that they weren't very observant; didn't go to synagogue regularly. She married my Dad who came from a Mormon family but he wasn't a regular church attendant either. She let me attend several churches with girlfriends and was nice to Mormon missionaries. Then when I was about 14, I think, I started going to the Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints (they're the ones who split from the main church that followed Brigham Young (my great-great uncle, I believe). She started going with me and became a Christian which would have freaked out her more conservative sister, Sue, who remained in the Jewish faith. How observant Sue was, I have no idea. But Mom believed that Jesus was the Messiah predicted by the Jews and they had just failed to recognize him. (Harlow, 2009)

Great Grandma always wore a hat, I remember my mom saying. Is it possible that culture was swallowed, or that culture doesn't have to be officially sanctioned by the rituals we think? Can I recreate the culture? I am a lover of the paths of myths. I am the only one to never miss an Easter

Sunday with my Vermont Grandmother. I like everything about the ancient order. I was not raised lacking spirituality, just perhaps a specific one.

During Soviet rule, religion was oppressed and following the collapse of socialism a new rise in religious interest has rose. Their escape to America was motivated by the fear of Jewish suppression. In SL I visited a virtual holocaust museum. As I enter the museum I am greeted by text that tells me to take on the role of a journalist documenting one night of November 1938, the Pogroms (Figure 40).



Figure 39

Audio plays clips of survivors one says, “I must document this, it should never happen again”. Another voice says, “I want people to understand that if we see injustice and are not bystanders we can do something and not be like the policemen who went along with the rules the Nazi’s had, if in the beginning we did something it could have been prevented”. As I explore the museum I exit the room into the town that is inspired by survivor stories (Figure 41).



Figure 40

Audio plays accounts of survivors in different buildings. The buildings come alive with the voices of the past. One man tells a story of having a distant relative in the US at the embassy building. He says that even if you could leave, how could you afford to leave. My family was privileged and lucky that they left. As the stories often refer to family members in the US I become curious if they could have been distant Jewish relatives of mine. I am overcome with the realness of this virtual space. A woman narrates her account of the night, she says she had blonde hair and blue eyes and tried to pass as not being Jewish. She watched people being beaten and taken away to concentration camps. As I listen to her story I read an information booklet that says, “Significantly, Kristallnacht marks the first instance in which the Nazi regime incarcerated Jews on a massive scale simply on the basis of their ethnicity”.

I enter a school building where former student's audio narrations are played. A woman says that she arrived at school and was greeted by men with German Shepards who turned them away telling them saying no school for you. As the children left the school they noticed the Synagogue was on fire. One man accounts a lesson he learned from the strength of his teachers who continued to teach during this scary time "It teach us the heros they came to school everyday, even due to immanent deportation, I didn't realize we were being true to the profession, I realize what they have done and I am eternally grateful". Following Kristhancht Jewish children in Germany were banned from all schools. They had already been banned from attending common public schools, museums, playgrounds, and swimming pools.

Leaving the school I walk into the synagogue where I hear more stories, an information sheet tells me "On the night of November 9, 1938, however, the violence became nationwide. After seizing the archives and valuables, Nazis destroyed the interiors of synagogues and desecrated religious objects". As I exit the building I am asked if I want to tell my story. I post through small chats large chunks of my thesis. If approved by the museum curators my story becomes a part of the ongoing narrative about the Holocaust. Through such revival of history programs what was once written dates and numbers becomes real stories spread and shared in a living text. Such revivals are taking place in the real world as well.

A large number of Native populations have embraced Pentecostal congregation that blend true religion and pagan beliefs, a practice that calls upon the history of intercultural mixing in the area (Rivakhtin 2005). In Siberia many contemporary Jews have recently began to recover their Jewish heritage after years of suppressed religion following Socialism. Harris (2004) wrote in a recent article for the Cleveland Jewish News after being invited as one of 7 Jewish Journalists

from the US, Canada and England to Russia to examine the awakening of Jewish Religious Roots in Siberia. Rabbi Shneur Zalmen moved to Siberia from Israel 5 years ago at the request of the head of Rabbi's of Russia. During his families stay the Jewish community grew from a handful of Jewish families to over 2,000 families but Zalmen predicts there may be 25,000 more in the area that are not yet ready to embrace the silenced religious practice post Socialist Russia. So where is home is it religion, is it ethnicity? What is my identity?

In Post-Soviet Siberia feminist turned towards Orthodox beliefs that had an established relationship towards rejecting mainstream society and provided alternative definitions of feminine empowerment (Korovushkina, 1999). Korovushkina (1999) found in her research on feminism and Russian religions “the Orthodox church emphasizes the motherhood rather than the virginity of St Mary: the title ‘the Mother of God’ (Theotokos) rather than Virgin is more accurate in Eastern Christianity when referring to the woman who gave birth to Christ” (p. 575). Orthodox Christianity in Easter Europe valued women for their role as mothers instead of sexuality providing a more communal model that provided an empowering model for women that created within 18th and 19th century Russia a large amount of educated women.

CHAPTER 6 - Conclusion

Universities are facing cuts due to the current economy. The production of knowledge within universities is now competing with Google search. The internet fundamentally changes the rules for information access. Instead of searching through libraries and academic journals, students can access a host of material free from a Google search. Daniel Pink author of *Right-Brained Thinkers Will Lead The Future* suggests a focus on design for success in Second Life. “If you think of every offering as a combination of what design academics would call 'utility' (it has to work) and 'significance' (it has to have some other attributes), you realize that in the absence of a giant leap in utility, margins come out of significance” (Gough, 2009). But a useful product or fancy design means nothing without the creativity to make it part of your own repertoire. A liberal arts degree, a varied background and a willingness to learn new things may be the best preparation for the job market of tomorrow” (Gioia, 2005)^{xvii}. What this liberal arts degree will look like, and who or where it will be taught, is up for debate right now. Communication and rhetorical departments need to utilize and research these new trends to ensure their sustainability.

Currently education makes up 20% of SL’s economic activity (Greenberg, 2008). Within the next few years, virtual learning environments are expected to take an increasingly important role in educational settings with one in five people expected to participate in a virtual environment (Prins, 2008; Traphagan, 2007). Students can take classes in a 3D environment with real time interaction between teachers and classmates. This is a radically different learning environment than traditional text based online classrooms. SL gives the user the possibility to change their virtual environment through 3 dimensional alterations to the sites landscape,

animations of their avatar, programming, and allows a platform where any user can encounter someone from across the world and speak through the use of customizable non-verbal animations and voice technology.

Many think that Second Life is a new technology, a 3rd environment with open ‘access’ to all students (Virtual World News, 2008; JoyKay & Fitzgerald 2009; Long 2009; Obineme 2009 ;). A recent ethnographic analysis of an online communications course taught at Harvard argues that SL overcomes many of the difficulties of traditional distance education programs (Nesso, 2008). As scholars move beyond enabling students the ability to materially access technology the picture becomes more complex. Behind the pull towards Second Life has been the ideology that there needs to be more material access to technology in education. Assuming that having the materials (computer, technology, software) is enough to bridge the technological divide assumes that any student regardless of race, gender, or class can effectively use these technologies while at the same time overlooking the skills necessary to change a student from passive to active user of technology (Sterne, 2000). As a form of emancipation the internet within the classroom promises a space where any individual can have equal access to education and gain intercultural literacy as interpersonal communication scholars have found (Prins, 2008). With buying the proper white board, or high tech gadget, educators can be deceived into thinking they are utilizing the technology well. Yet the digital divide has not decreased. Scholars of critical pedagogy contend that the classroom should be a place that teaches students to question knowledge not merely reproduce it. In order to do so, attention to identities and cultural backgrounds are necessary to engage the power dynamics of the classroom.

In creating an avatar I participated in the process of creating identity as multiple. Yet instead of simply assuming each of these identities is a mask disconnected from my ‘true’ self, I

desperately sought to uncover the connections and lines of flight that emerged from each role that I played. The person I created is multiple, moving, and wandering, yet she found a home through the process of creating. Within virtual worlds identity construction comes to the forefront of the user's perspective. Literally the user watches themselves sit in a chair, change their outfits. Instead of assuming one's eyes are the center of the world, one has a bird's eye view of their experiences in Second Life. This environment demands embodiment and attention to one's actions. Instead of simply watching a screen, or daydreaming when sitting in a classroom the user constantly watches himself/herself doing whatever it is they may be doing.

Such a shift in perspective opens an exciting possibility for engaged participation that may be useful for students to create a view of identity as active instead of passive. It also encourages creativity as users develop their characters. The possibility for Second Life to create homelands and avatars in which students feel comfortable may encourage a more liberatory practice of education, allowing students to feel comfortable in the classroom. Literally they can take classes from wherever they choose. They can also create the way they will be viewed and what spaces they participate in. If students become comfortable and at home in the virtual space perhaps educators and students can engage in a new relationship that will help grow the University beyond its current walls. The University of the future within Second Life may create an ethic of hospitality that accepts strangers and differences without attempting to assimilate them into their culture. A larger respect for culture and others is the dream I hope to advocate for in the future of online education.

I have talked about school, not goals or diplomas but places of learning and maturing. Because even if there is, in the person writing, 'an aptitude for fairyhood,' a relationship to legend, a state of creation – this is not enough. We must work. The earth of writing.

To the point of becoming the earth. Humble work. Without reward. Except joy. School is interminable (Cixous, 1993, p. 156).

More research on the effects of classrooms within Second Life would add to this study that has found the potential of SL to disrupt identity and create a community outside of geographic limitations. Teachers could allow students to explore their identities in a similar manner to this thesis to examine the ways such an auto ethnographic approach to creating an avatar can influence their feelings about the classroom. Classrooms could be formed where students adjust the virtual space to create a feeling of community and safety. Such a classroom could enhance students' comfort with the subject material. Content could be applied to their personal lives and an enriched educational experience may be the result. Such effects are the work of further research.

Virginia Woolf (2005) wrote that "Oxbridge is an invention; so is Fernham; 'I' is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being. Lies will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping" (p. 4-5). As she searched for fiction writers in history, she had to conjure up the ghosts of Shakespeare's sister. I feel a parallel with her journey. As I searched for myself in Second Life, I had to create self. As I searched for community, I created community. The voice and idea of the 'educated' scholar is one that is also a construction. Objectivity is an idea, my voice is constructed, and it is shifting. Perhaps in SL and other virtual spaces people will begin to realize the nature of their constructed self. Instead of clinging to a sense of an elevated subjectivity, we will remember that we are really not all that different from those we attempt to elevate ourselves from.

This would not be to deny the experiences and values that each individual has, but rather to deny that any specific planned path is the best. That in any particular identity or community is center, we begin with the self. After unraveling the pre-constructed self, we then begin to weave anew. When one engages the virtual world, there is no clear path to follow. There are no maps to discovering the origin or race and gender identity. Yet I carved out stories mixed with my own lived experiences and virtual experiences, crafting a narrative that weaved together a sense of self where I could feel at home. Embracing Medusa is powerful. It is a way of saying no, I will not be a victim and yes I am beautiful. In retelling the story in a way that finds beauty in woman after her fall from grace, sees her power as agency and her beauty as her cunning.

Freda, Medusa and Lulu are cunning. They evade the text; they are unclear images in my mind. Everyone is escaping, on the move. Avoiding being caught by the Wandering I/Eye they shift throughout my analysis ensuring that I do not catch myself in a web of lies. But the trick is to think like a snake, and so I slither. And now I prepare for the future. I have seen myself reflected back in a multitude of self-created images. The forced active relationship with identification with oneself and community fosters a new rhetorical process of relationship with identity.

In my thesis I attempted to embrace a liberatory pedagogy as I tried to teach by example. As I created myself and my home I began with the body. Adrienne Rich (2001) writes

You could see your own house as a tiny fleck on an ever widening landscape, or at the center of it all from which the circles expanded into the infinite unknown...Begin though not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in – the body (p. 448)



Figure 41

And I so I set off in hopes of aligning the body, my female body, with the digitally disembodied avatar body. Through reflecting on the experiences I documented in journals, blog posts, and pictures in Second Life I consistently attempted to bridge the fantastic with the real. Feminism gave me the foundation to do such a project. To create a positive image of the female body that I see reflected back at me in a million disembodied flickers. Recent digital ethnographic work has dived into the world of exploring alternate cultures but lacks an informed feminist or cultural studies perspective.

Desire runs deeper than skin – History & Emancipation

The Chronicle of Higher Education featured a front-page story on the recent turn in scholarship towards digital ethnography. The article was critical of Whitehead and Trijillio's digital ethnographic work. Whitehead's recent work investigated online metal sub-cultures. In the process he created a fake band, Blood Jewel that featured sexual images of women in his fake band. While Whitehead notes the necessity to examine desire to avoid the Western impulse of "ethnopornography"; it could be argued that in focusing on female bodies and negative images he becomes the ethnopornographer. Upon my first read of the article I published a response to a

blog for Mike Wesch's digital ethnography class, "The site used sexually provocative images of female bodies, he claims this is not a philosophical or scientific choice - I have problems with his justification as being unable to deal with male bodies because it is not available as an object of contemplation. I appreciate his attempt to theorize the desire of his subject of study" (Harlow, 2009). My stance has not changed radically and I do greatly appreciate his creative explorations of Deleuzian desire in relation to uncovering the desire and the role of the scholar. But one is left with an empty feeling, after vomiting up the culture that one has stuffed oneself with what comes next?



Figure 42

The image above from Whitehead's ethnography highlights the problems with the aim of his desire. Desire can be aimed towards a death. The idea that the woman is in desire until she dies is the fetishism that leads to violence against women. More than 600 women are raped every

day in the United States (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). His paper repeatedly examines the culture of sexuality and violence, yet there is not one mention of rape. Whitehead quickly brushed the images of female bodies:

Finally, it must be said that the use of female bodies—the gendered aspects of the site’s aesthetic—may be thought problematical. But while the site is obviously driven by my visual preferences, this is in the first place an artistic choice, not a scientific or philosophical one. Moreover, in aesthetic terms I am necessarily engaged with the visual canons of modernist culture where the male body is not normatively available either intellectually or even practically as an object of static contemplation. (p. 19)

Separating aesthetics from philosophy or science is simply an excuse that is commonly used to validate one’s own preferences. To say the male body is not available as an object of static contemplation does not make sense as it implies that the female body is a static object. Instead of attempting to destabilize the female body as an object, he solidifies her. Uncovering the desires that uphold the violence and sexuality requires confronting the rape culture that we currently live in. bell hooks writes that “eroticism” is understood by heterosexual women through a male heterosexual perspective. hooks (1994) says that through “talking with women of varying ages and ethnicities about this issue, I am more convinced than ever that women who engage in sexual acts with male partners must not only interrogate the nature of the masculinity we desire, we must also actively construct radically new ways to think and feel as desiring subjects. By shaping our eroticism in ways that repudiate phallogocentrism, we oppose rape culture.” (p. 113). As I work actively in the reshaping of eroticism I call upon the work of Audre Lorde in her essay *The Erotic*. Her essay explores the ways in which women have been taught to

suppress their erotic selves and as a result a superficial eroticism emerges. “The aim of each thing which we do is to make our lives and the lives of our children richer and more possible. With the celebration of the erotic in all our endeavors, my work becomes a conscious decision” (Lorde, p. 88). Whitehead does not embrace this empowering female vision of desire. His work takes the female body and uses it as a Kleenex, instead of using his own lived body as a text to undo the sexism and racism he wishes to confront. The female body is the Kleenex that is used to collect the desires at the heart of Whitehead’s ethno-masturbation. The same masculine dream was played over again in the text.

Mans dream: I love her – absent, hence desirable, a dependent nonentity, hence adorable. Because she isn’t there where she is. As long as she isn’t where she is. How he looks at her then! When her eyes are closed, when he completely understands her, when he catches on and she is no more than this shape made from him: a body caught in his gaze. (Cixous, 1996, p. 67)

I have written the story of my life, not complete, but a beginning. To avoid imposing a Western male gaze I situated myself within the text. Not only my desires, but my experiences, for desires are learned and shaped by the environment one is a part of. The process of painful honesty and soul searching that follows my search for home is the next move for cultural studies scholars who wish to engage a virtual world where all possibilities lay open. bell hooks (2006) pre-empted a response I foresee to my approach:

As people of color and women utilize memory as a site of resistance, white hegemony responds, “Why all of this confession, why all this testimony?” But when we are engaged in this psychological archaeological dig – when we rediscover not just the facts of history, but the psychohistory – we learn about our ancestors in a different way. (p. 109)

Yes I can become whomever I want, and I can explore these multiple worlds of my desire, but what should I do with that possibility? I could role-play as anyone, but if I play someone that I want to know because they are essentially different than me, my scholarship becomes ethno-masturbation and not a process of healing or growth. As I studied how one constructed identity it became clear that identity was closely tied to community. Embodiment becomes a crucial issue for the scholar of digital worlds. Not only embodiment in terms of the physical sense of being a part of somewhere, but the question of embodying one's own scholarship. Marking the white page red with words that bleed real. Virtual worlds offer us multiple choices. So how do we educate students and educators to make ethical decisions when faced with a multiplicity of options?

I choose to associate my ethics with the risk of self. I will again quote Butler's (2005) comments on ethics in a world where ethics seems to have lost its grounding "we must recognize that ethics requires us to risk ourselves precisely at moments of unknowingness" (p. 136). As I stepped into Second Life I took the same step I took when I drove to this University. This step is the step away from comfort towards the unknown. When I began to explore virtual worlds I risked placing myself in a more public view. The SL avatar cannot hide, the blog author cannot hide. Privacy and solitude, the home of many researchers was abandoned. I chose a method that requires I confront my position in the text, the life I abandoned, the home of third person narration, and objectivity that safely distances the scholar from their work. But this is the same process that I experience every time I get up to speak. Cixous writes in *The Laugh of The Medusa*

Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slip-ping away-that's how daring a feat,

how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak-even just open her mouth-in public...Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering (if she hasn't painfully lost her wind). She doesn't "speak," she throws her trembling body for-ward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the "logic" of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying, because she doesn't deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking. Her speech, even when "theoretical" or political, is never simple or linear or "objectified," generalized: she draws her story into history. (p. 880-881).

This is the risk of honesty, of engaging and hoping for connections with a larger community beyond oneself. Instead of accepting that we are all images, or that what happens over there in virtual land is something else, I decided to step in as myself. Through relocating the experiences of Wander in relation to not just the body, but my body, and my memories, and my history, an interesting analysis has come to light. It appears I may have learned more about myself and my family then about Second Life. Through the process of creating myself I have risked and experienced rejection. As I stood in Siberia unable to talk I realized I was rejecting myself, I was afraid to move outside myself.

The end result has been an experience that has brought to light the ways in which our daily actions may often serve the desires of others. Through intentionally attempting to not be an anonymous avatar wandering aimlessly through SL, I attempted to live intentionally. SL uniquely offers the user a new visual perspective that demands heightened attention to the action one takes. The process of auto-ethnography within such a creatively open space also led me to

begin the process of mourning. Western colonization collects “in a spirit of collective mourning...naming our grief empowers it and us” (hooks, 1994, p. 204). As I named my ancestors and brought their ghosts into the text, I attempted to participate in the work of those who are striving to heal a wounded nation founded on a history of denial. “We remember them as those who opened their hearts who bequeathed us a legacy of solidarity, reciprocity, and communion, with spirits that we can reclaim and share with others. We call on their knowledge and wisdom, present through generations, to provide us with the necessary insight so that we can create transformative visions of community and nation” (hooks, 1994, p. 206). I entered the collective song of sorrow, the quiet eternal song of resistance that moves in and out of the sea of time.

Origins of Desire

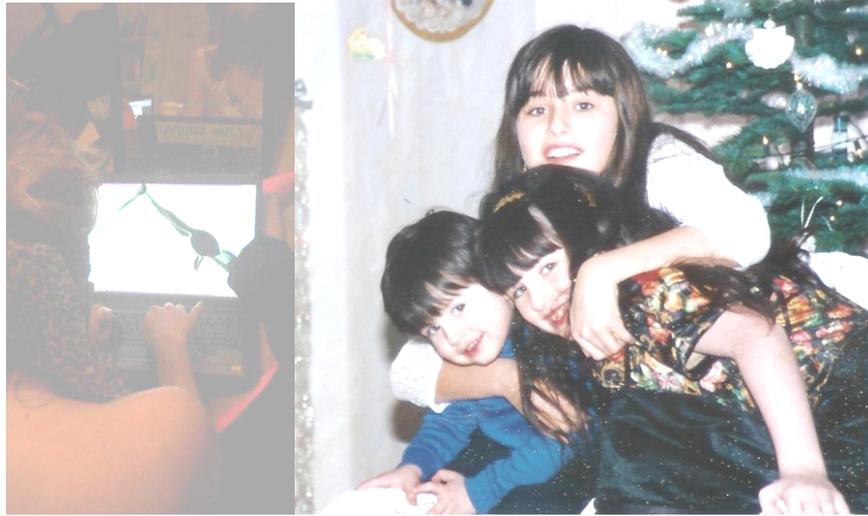


Figure 43

I began with the urge that moves me in all my works, to make the page bleed. I want to write something real, words that taste like the earth. I want to write something that hurts because it cuts. But this project also moved me towards my body, the doubled body. As I created myself and played God with Wander Kips, what bled was me. As I typed the first half of my thesis, my computer screen broke. The screen was cut in half and green digital blood leaked out. I think now it may have been a warning, but one can never be sure. I read and I read, I wrote and then deleted my words. Avatars look like me but I don't know if they see or feel or cry. But I can, and I can when I am them. When one has a double perspective of self and vehicle of self, the burden between driver and passenger gets blurry. I was praised and blamed. But then I approached the end. Perspective is much clearer from ahead it is often said, but these people must not travel time regularly. I am trying to come to terms with myself and meet self on a date, sometime before my inevitable fate. A process that we all share, though some are more honest, and perhaps I am a tad bit off the rocker in my dive to the depths. Second Life was the ground upon which I related my growing and falters in this paper. To you. To me. Dear reader, please forgive me for I was ever

wandering and no amount of particularity could hold my wandering eye. The nomad wanders through, weaving in and out. Spitting theory in the eyes of the lived bodies of those my name lays claim to. I apologize if I insulted.

I searched for origins, desperately, the beginning of race, gender, and internet. The origin of the story, the origin of self. Eternal goddesses staring in mirrors – when did it shatter? And I realized that it was my searching, not an origin that held the space of potential. Potentially I unraveled pieces of theory, ancient history, common fact, and new ideas in a way that can help the reader begin their step. A jump – a leap – a running jump completed by a landing into the text of self. Targets locked, I took that wandering Western eye and attempted to shoot myself in the face. And to avoid the spread of my infection. In order to create a thesis which would not embrace a history of colonization I took a different perspective that is quite wary of method.

The method called for the perspective of the nomadic scholar, situated outside the academy. Instead attempting to create a new home for this academic text, I sat in my apartment reading and writing night after night. I remembered my homes and my families. Growing up when my mother sent me a map from Glinda, of Oz fame. She read me every book and my home was Oz in the reading. My home was open and free, a space for imagination. My parents created a home with four walls, imagination, love, work, and sorrow. The home shifted and skirted from Oregon to Vermont, from happy to screaming but it was my home. And it is the space I return to for safety. In my mind, on the phone, or through travel the home is a space from which I, the little girl alone in a world full of mirrors, was allowed to play and grow. I had shelter from the outside.

As a girl child I have been powerless. As a teenager I was without sense. As a young adult, I stand without ground. But that does not mean I am victim. The home can be a site of

resistance for the powerless. As bell hooks writes, homes are places where black women developed a sense of dignity outside the white world's view. This sense of home is developed not only in physical spaces but in a psychological sense of self. To a crowd of thousands of Baptists in 1963 Malcolm X said, "These same so-called American Negroes are God's long-lost people who are symbolically described in the Bible as the Lost Sheep or the Lost Tribe of Israel." He called for recognition of the fact of their displacement to conjure a realization within people that they had the power to create change. This first required recognizing that one was a lost wanderer who was not being treated as a member of the family of America. In leaving home and moving to Kansas, I discovered that I was not at home. I do not blame Kansas, but I see that I am not of here. I am wary of dinner invitations.

Malcolm X comments on the hospitality of America "I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat, with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner, unless you eat some of what's on that plate. Being here in America doesn't make you an American." America could not be the homeland of return for displaced African diasporas communities when they were denied the subsistence of the land. American hegemony does not know how to entertain; uneasy standing on stolen ground with stolen guests America is refusing to accept the risk of friendship amongst those who do not identify with their blocked mourning. America was the promised land of colonialists who filled with good intentions sailed to its shores in hopes of escape from injustice. But fleeing persecution and then breeding the same creates a perspective of blindness, an ethos of fear. Refusing to look at that which hurts the most, represses our desires and hides our humanity. No amount of blood or denial will cleanse the memory of where the dream went wrong.

Displacement and loneliness pervade the world of mobility. In my explorations within Second Life I also felt displaced and lonely. We are so close when engaged in virtual communication, but lacking the ability to touch. I think the experience of being online heightens awareness of both being a stranger, an outsider and yet being a member of community. This double move is troublesome but consistently reemerges throughout discussions of technology. As I created my avatar I was continually differentiating the avatar from the real me. Yet I was also attempting to unite them along jagged paths. The self was multiplied and scattered. And I had no home. Most troublesome is the way I became the center of my studies. I attempted to reach away from the I focus that is in danger of reinvading the White almighty I/Eye who wanders and plunders to reaffirm oneself as superior.

Second Life augments reality. The virtual experience does not fully alter our lives outside of its realm. It's another form of identity making that allows the user to create self. How we view reality is molded in a multitude of ways. The virtual community is not a new manifestation that uniquely alters perceptions, it adds to the repertoire that we already know and use. Now we tell stories, play make-believe, read, write, use social networking sites, and use an avatar in SL. It does not really change our identity but rather provides a new lens through which to see it.

A 'we' approach may challenge the Western I/Eye more than I did. Such a 'we' centered approach may involve a collaborative project of multiple I/Eye's located in their partial perspective, as they trace their desires as a group. Such collaborative research and text creation is the future of Second Life and virtual communication. Whereas the scholar was confined to a room alone, now one can share a Google document on a virtual island, in a virtual living room where text can be co-created. Such a text is living until declared dead and holds exciting

possibilities for the future of identity and research. As a nomadic scholar the future of exploring living texts is a constantly changing and exciting terrain.

The Future To Come

I am afraid of speaking too fondly of the future not yet arrived. For until the future mourns the past, we will be haunted by the desires we refuse to confront. Our homes will be hostile, and our movements shackled. Our hearts will be afraid and our dreams become nightmares if we dare to sleep. America has yet to openly mourn and apologize for the genocide and slavery continually blazing a path towards an unknown frontier.

The lure of gold in California called out to poor Americans. Trains brought instant evil magic to Wyoming. I drove through the country and stayed in a hotel. The hotel was haunted and the place was wet with un-cleaned air. Someone is angry, and in virtual spaces, death and life, and even our notions of time as a linear unending event are challenged. The logic of haunted spaces rejected by the 'rational' modern man creeps into objective study. The frontier of the future is the terrain which American hegemony wants us to see as home. But, reversing myself, I am not at home in the future. I am at home in the haunted spaces that constantly nag and return me to my roots. Let us not put too much faith that the grass will be greener in the future, because the grass is green enough today or at least has been before the wave of economic foreclosures. American's manicured their lawns to the point of obsession, planted the perfect seeds, killed the weeds, watered their artificial paradise, and destroyed the moles that live in it. Instead we might be better off were we to let the weeds and grass grow and realize that everything we need was already here to begin with. Virtual worlds can be sites for healing, but they are not a new frontier, they are merely a different way of expressing our yearning for recognition. They are sites of invention, but this invention is possible on all terrains.

Home does not lie in the future, or in a mythical past. Home offers hospitality and shelter in all its many forms. Home is already here, in our hearts. Instead of working to fortify our walls, to protect our homes with barbed wire and pit bulls, we should remember that the home is always crumbling. In and out of spaces and locations, a crumbling home is beautiful. Its foundation is metaphorical and strong, ready to be rebuilt. We carry it with us, not only our memories, our stories, our ancestors, but in our ability to communicate with others – as if we were at home.

Derrida writes that language is a way to connect the self to a displaced home. I further say that it is not just that we have a particular language, but that we have others willing to lend their ears and speak to us. Connections emerge inside and outside of an individual's native tongue. Yes, I was afraid when I did not speak the words. I remember the first time I ever had a lucid dream, the experience of consciousness while sleeping; I looked up at a sign twice and could not read the language as it changed. I suddenly felt a chill and was aware of being surrounded by strangers. I realized that I was not at home, even in my sleep. This experience, this shift in perspective is highlighted in the virtual world of Second Life. As a stranger in the world of dreams, I learned to overcome my fear and follow my consciousness; one must become one with the process of awareness, of creating oneself, of wandering.

Even if our tongues are foreign to each other, the will to relate, the energia of rhetorical agency is fueled by our desire to talk around the stove. This is where home lies. Whether home is crumbling or being built anew depends on one's perspective. Let us aim for a perspective that, as Burke (1897) hopes “should make one at home in the complexities of relativism, where as one now tends to be bewildered by relativism...we must erect new co-ordinates atop it, not beneath it” (p. 229). This brings to light the importance of seeing the world as a plane of immanence, not a world of opposites. Virtual and real are not opposite. Rather we must see the world as a given

and begin to search for lines of flight. Homes are not broken or complete. They are sites that are constantly emerging.

Seeing identity, home and community as a process instead of a singularity can open the possibility of a more empowering world for those whose homes, communities, and identities are already seen by society or themselves as broken. Communities can be revitalized and people may gain a sense of themselves as first displaced, but then become comfortable with their displacement. Such a view can then allow for empowered individuals who join others in the song of resistance. This song is the eternal wave of movement that inspires people to engage the world in positive and liberatory ways. The virtual world can be the breeding ground for a new perspective that will open the future to unknown possibilities. Or it can be the repetition of the already known past. Only you will decide the contours of its living history. The person who decides to enter a virtual community dictates the process of invention in that world.

The following poem marks the end of my thesis in my own words as does the self-portrait I took in Second Life during a moment of self-reflection (Figure 45).

There is a rock in the center of the water. As we walk towards the rock we see that the
water that flows over it is split.

From the path that is split we are united when
we remember that both paths are a part of the flow of water which will unite us.

I am the rock and the water flowing over me is my home.

As the flows of history, text, space, dreams, others, run over me I both multiply and
divide them.

They are not me, but I am nothing without them.

If I were to forget the feeling of water and the feeling of myself as rock

I would not be strong enough to stand still.

That is all one needs at times.

To stand still as one prepares for the inevitable flight



Figure 44

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ⁱ Deluca and Demo analyze the role of photography in relation to the creation of American National Parks. Images of Yosemite park had political implications that led to the creation of the first wilderness park. From photographs taken by Watkin's Senator John Conness who had never seen the site was able to reach congress and Lincoln in order to preserve a space the public had yet to see. The pristine wilderness created is related to the sublime in their piece and is effectively argued to have created an image of nature apart from culture. The article aims to point not towards a moral condemnation of the photographer Watkins but to instead point towards a critical place that would enact John Berger's alternative photographer – that aims to incorporate photos into social and political memory instead of using it as a substitute that encourages forgetting these memories. AS the article shows us the construction of the wilderness as nature is largely a product of white cultural formation that worked to exclude Native American's from the pristine environment. A quote that speaks to this argument "There is always a certain slightly devilish resistance in the American landscape, and a certain slight resistance in the white man's heart. . . The American landscape has never been at one with the white man. Never"

D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923)---

ⁱⁱ During America's founding years Native American identity was linked to blood quanta. The Dawes Act (1886) which determined who counted as an Indian through blood counts (Grande 2000). This law sought to assimilate those American Indians who survived the ongoing genocide through breaking apart tribal claims with paradoxical legal views of their identity. These were laws which aimed to assimilate Native's into American Society through requiring them to prove their tribal ancestry in performances of authenticity. Indian identity was protected collectively; yet individual Indians were the only ones who could make claims to rights.

ⁱⁱⁱ As Donald L. Fixico writes in his essay *American Indian History*, from the book *Natives and Academics* "Whether racially prejudiced or guilt-ridden, patronizing, paternalistic, or romantic, Indian history mainly has been perceived from a white perspective, based on the idea that "the conquerors write the history" (85 1998). Deloria examines the damaging effects of romantic ideals of Native Americans as a vanishing – or vanished peoples. AS she writes "Beginning with romantic notions of vanishing Indians, Morgan's *New Confederacy* (or *Grand Order of the Iroquois* eventually turned from nostalgia toward rationalized, objective scientific investigation. Fictional creation gave way to the compiling of factual knowledge, and what had begun as an effort – firmly rooted in the consciousness of the Revolution and the early Republic-to define a literary national identity took on a modern, ethnographic character well suited to the American social elite of the late nineteenth century" (DeLoria, p. 73) The romantic Indian is necessarily a dead Indian that speaks to the creation of an American culture which values relativism – Indians needed to vanish – it was destiny according to this logic.

^{iv} These changes also influence identity and society. African Americans' experiences have been shaped by technology. The cotton gin created demands for slave labors, and the mechanical cotton picker made sharecropping obsolete (Alkalimat, 2001).

^v Numerous accounts throughout history are documented within this book - 1853: "Pygmies" dressed in European garb are displayed playing the piano in a British drawing room as proof of their potential for "civilization"

[...]

1898: At the Trans-Mississippi International Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska, a mock Indian battle is staged, and

President William McKinley watches.

1905: The sole surviving member of the Yahí tribe of California, Ishi, is captured and displayed for the last five years of his life at the Museum of the University of California. Presented as a symbol of the U.S.'s defeat of Indian nations, Ishi is labeled the last Stone Age Indian in America.

[...]

1931: The Ringling Circus features fifteen Ubangis, including "the nine largest-lipped women in the Congo" (43)

^{vi} Cixous writes on the theater of the female body through hysterical performances. The audience is necessary in 'hysterical' performances - either doctor, witch hunter, or the community. See Helene Cixous and Catherine Clement's *The Newly Born Woman*. The community demanded the hysteric to heal the ills of their repressed desire through a process of catharsis. Aristotle writes of the function of actors within dramas to heal the audience through catharsis. A similar process is at work here. Interestingly Cixous quotes Levi-Strauss, "If women are particularly in need of education, it is because they are periodic creatures" Either through birth or menstruation women are locked into a paradox that requires the disciplining of this natural cyclical existence.

^{vii} Anderson's study on nationalism teaches the reader that nationhood is created through the creation of an imagined community, or the nation. Anderson writes "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1991, 5). This is possible through the construction of a narrative of historical past. As Stucal (2003) notes in *The Bounded Field* "the construction of community" takes place in national museums because they present a national history as a focus of identification" (p. 134).

^{viii} John Poulakos published "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric" (1983) where he related Heidegger's philosophy to sophist historical practices arguing for an opening in rhetorical scholarship that would embrace sophistic practices from the 5th century. Schiappa responded to Poulakos charging him with appropriating the sophist for constructionist rhetoric that Poulakos preferred and improperly claiming a shared view on rhetoric that was historically inaccurate and only reflected what he wanted it to. Poulakos responded that he knew it reflected his desire and the true illusion was the objectivity that Schiappa called for.

^{ix} When gender is privileged over other differences such as race and class other differences get ignored (Dow, 1995). The focus on gender without a critique of power led to an essentialist definition of woman that excluded lesbians or black women who did not fit the normative white middle class image of woman (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2002; Dow, 1995 109, Collins 1993, Davis 1983). In response to the critique of essentialism, scholars began to employ an intersectional idea of power. Crenshaw (1997) writes that "feminist rhetorical critics are increasingly sensitive to interdisciplinary feminist scholarship that values pluralized differences among women and seeks to understand how these differences are ideologically valued or devalued in the texts we examine" (p. 220). Intersectionality is the idea that gender, race, and class are all vectors of power that influence and co-create the way identity and oppression functions. Crenshaw introduced intersectionality to the rhetorical field saying that African American women are shaped by an intersecting field of oppressions.

^x Boelstroff is referring to the virtual experience of time as non-linear. Often users experience 'lag' time where virtual spaces are loading and they are waiting for to be present. Also online users often go 'afk', or away from the keyboard. Users avatar may be stuck in a position for days while others are embodied online the avatar may remain afk. Thrownness is Heidegger's idea that humanity is always thrown into a world that is limited. Here time is also seen as being limited to the resources of the technological medium.

^{xi} Guattari proposes A-signifying semiotics which sees signs as having meaning independent of their source of reference and that this force is "prior to the connection between the signifier and a signified" (Attias, 1998, p. 98). Attias articulates how a-signifying semiotics sees humans as "an effect-structure, not of language but of material and social fluxes" (p. 99). This A-signifying semiotics interprets signs as pointing towards escape "schizzes" (p. 39). Identity here may be understood through signs, body parts, skin color, names, but it is not determined by them nor do the pieces relate to a homogenous whole

^{xii} The crisis of representation challenged the idea of objective semiotics. A field that relies on the separation between a signifier and the sign; in other words the 'word' cup is a signifier of a 'real' cup. Semiotics "attempts to produce a coherent set of meanings and social identities around an unarticulated consensus whose forms serve the status quo" (Fiske 1987, p. 543). Hierarchical methods that call for objectivity operate from a state based perspective creating "tri-partite division between reality (world), representation (book) and subjectivity (author) instead of establishing an assembly with the external world" (Alagjovovski 2004). Through separating reality/representation the author's desires are repressed and a universal perspective is unintentionally portrayed through the process of translation. The

produced work thus tends to say more about the author than the subject due to a focus on research training which translates the new in the language of the old (Olson 1991).

This semiotic chain links sign to signifiers, through a process of negative definition understanding what is only through defining what it is not. “Semiotic components of expression” create a culture where any speech or written articulation of desire of an individual is supposed to relate to a certain “law of writing” (Guattari 1996, p. 15). Individuals mediate and suppress their desires consistently checking their expression to ensure it is appropriate for the situation. The sophists Protagoras and Isocrates both, “described their instruction as political techne” (Atwell 1998, p. 6). The logic of a political system can be derived from the voice it denotes as it own.

^{xiii} Alice Lynn upon editing a final draft of this commented that this phenomena brought to mind doppelganger, where an individual sees themselves in their current time/space but as a separate being; which may be experienced at a future time. She gave the example “For instance, you see “yourself” walking into your home while you are still approaching it; but you do eventually enter just as the doppelganger did. This phenomenon is described in certain psychological texts and anecdotes. This can also be experienced by others; I see or hear you driving into the driveway; I look, there is no-one but five minutes later the sight/sound is repeated and the real person is there”(personal communication 5/3/2009). Doppelganger is a german word which translates roughly as double. Kupper (1959) examines the link between Freud and Schnitzler, the playwright whom Frued named his doppeganger.

HI **Kupper**, HS Rollman-Branch - Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 1959 - PEP Web

^{xiv} After Natalie Pennington’s edit of the thesis she commented on the interesting nature of this fact. The limited nature of names. According to The Official Guide to Second Life the list of last names changes periodically.

^{xv} Maybe Kips is all of these. Names are the currency of paternal lineage that carry on history and legal status in the case of my avatar it is through Laotian currency which comes from a small Buddhist country in South East Asia. The last name or proper name gives authority and legitimacy to the untamed animal within its hide. As one can imagine a last name provides a place of rest where one can take a break from the harsh world of self-definitions and Wandering. Also a name has weight; names can dictate and shape the bearer of such names course of action.

Results for: **wander kips**

[Wander Kips](#)  
Avatar Name: **Wander Kips** Birthday: 2008-04-08. Payment status: Payment used. Key: 3d2dfae1-ee3c-4291-89a8-b687124c6dd1. Last seen online: No data available ...
[objan.com/awWander+Kips - 4k - Cached - Similar pages](#) - 

[Rhetorical Explorations of Second Life Steez](#)  
Wander Kips is my avatar explorer, with her I leave my fate. Read, comment, contact.
This is the new and improved **Wander Kips** on the right. ...
[secondlifesteez.blogspot.com/ - 71k - Cached - Similar pages](#) - 

[Principles of Pavement Design - Google Books Result](#)
by Eldon Joseph Yoder, Matthew W. Witzzak - 1975 - Technology & Engineering - 711 pages
Determine the 1- value by equation 4.30 for a 48-kip dual tandem relative to a ... since they possess some lateral **wander** associated with their movements. ...
[books.google.com/books?isbn=0471977802...](#)

[Gallery of kip -- powered by Photo Stock Plus](#)  
It's my intention that photography be seen as an art form. I call that art form "Cerebralistic".
Enjoy and think, let your mind **wander**. Kip ...
[www.photostockplus.com/homej_32102 - 17k - Cached - Similar pages](#) - 

[Reason To Wander: Sloan Schang and Amy Hoinowski](#)  
Uncle **Kip**: Oh that's not very far from Tampa , you didn't drive very far at all ... Uncle **Kip**:
That's a drop in the bucket! Me: We like to take it easy. ...

^{xvi} Note from Alice Lynn, “Actually, the oldest (Anne) was about 14; then Phyllis at 11 or 12, and David at 5 or 6).”

^{xvii} Kansas State University bureaucrats met in February of 2009 to discuss the future of the University. The members all read this article which foresees the future educator as an educational experiences designer/coordinator