Wilson, Burroughs, Waits, The Black Rider

Examples of confusing/collapsing signifier into signified
    word “woman” cannot contain or fully express a woman’s mind or body
    signifier of skin color does not equal one signified, racial or other
    what is character as a signifier?
        is character a virtual human whose signified can be talked of psychologically?
        or is character a literary figment, a tool we use to talk about (and around) being human?
    does signifier/actor collapse into signified/character?
        Stanislavsky actually warns against this possible madness; magic if Hamlet, where does playing & reality of madness begin & end
    fundamentalist/fascist forms of reading often collapse differences between signifier/signified
        instead, the word is the law/the thing itself, not just one representation of a dynamically changing word
    in processing of reading this way, also an attempt to collapse social differences
    contemporary, post-structural insistence on difference can lead to overly simple versions of identity politics, but also guard against turning Other into Same
        much culture today trying to figure out stories that don’t pretend to mastery;
        cross-gender, cross-national, cross-identificatory, inter-historical identities
“We must find out what words are and how they function. They become images when written down, but images of words repeated in the mind and not of the image of the thing itself.”
    - W.S. Burroughs
Text adapted from story by Romantic August Apel
also a music-theatre piece looking back at Carl Maria von Weber’s opera *Der Freischütz*; does away w/ opera’s happy ending

WSB: “Confucius say: ‘He who hang happy ending on story about death, shall likewise take a hangman’s rope’” (51).

1) “Queering” of signs
Masculinity,
masculinity, masochism/heroism, debt
violence that secures traditional notions of maleness
guns, not pens
naming of animals/shooting of animals

Wilson’s landscapes which de-center the human
animals are figures, light itself as a character
is there a post-humanist ethics at work here?
Homosexuality/Queerness

“We’ll have a Gay Old Time”: what does signifier “gay” actually signify?

Peg Leg humping Wilhelm & fondling gun/penis

Jose Munoz’ notion of disidentification

“recycling . . . culture . . . remade . . . as a queer world”; (ix) a “process in which the artist reformulates” (x) the normative into the non-normative; a “survival [strategy] the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship” (4)

“As a practice, disidentification does not dispel . . . ideologically[ly] contradictory elements; rather, like a melancholic subject holding on to a lost object, a disidentifying subject works to hold on to this object and invest it with new life” (12).

Does notion of “queer” move away from a kind of minoritarian emphasis in gay/lesbian studies, end of discrimination & recovery of lost examples of such identities in history

Does queer pose a majoritarian perspective?

“Every person who comes to a queer self-understanding," writes [Michael] Warner, "knows that her stigmatization is connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body."

(http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/issue1/bryson/bryson.html)
Normative Heterosexuality

Sc. 3: Käthchen and Wilhelm

“That’s the way the top teeters,
That’s the way the bee buzzes . . .” (18-19)
a litany of cliches, this is how it works,
a natural order of words & images
Love, woman & man seem natural too
But then oddities: “stain stands,” “Dollar laughs”
also de-normalizing of logical cause & effect between
subjects & predicates

Sc. 5: Käthchen wandering through forest/home space
the domesticated wilderness, or the wild domestic?
urban & rural conflated in piece
couple in service of Nation/Citizenship
Prussian eagles frame family at end of
“Chase the Clouds Away”
K: “The Man in the forest, the Wife at home . . . I’ll
question it no further” (29).
Masculinity (not femininity) as debt in *Black Rider*

Hemingway’s masculine debt

- 1943, sells *For Whom the Bell Tolls* to Paramount for $100,000
- 1961, suicide w/ shotgun; makes a literal hole in himself

Burroughs, long-time morphine addict

- 1950, *Junk*
- 1951, accidentally (?) shoots wife, Joan Vollmer; William Tell
  possessed by the Ugly Spirit, writes his way out
  what is the “shadow” that falls “between the intent and act” (32)

How does Wilhelm’s sense of lack as an intellectual/a clerk/a paper-pusher play into a certain social stigma that leads . . . to a madness

addiction as a sense of lack; here also as addiction to family, to a Romantic ideal of love, to nation, etc.

Georg Schmid: “a good straight boy” . . . who ends scene in “strait-jacket”

Wilhelm, the male, does striptease, gets stripped here (not female) connections between Masculinity, Addiction, Madness
How avoid letting social stigmas acquire dominance?
   reading against the grain, untangling signifiers & signified
to some degree about making conscious such stigmas
   acquiring a distance on one’s own internalization of norms
not allowing society metaphorically to place a debt on
oneself
   to not internalize a sense of lack relative to a social
norm or ideal (a technique of advertising)

both associative & syntagmatic orderings of language are put into play
invites associative, as well as logical/syntagmatic, hearing?
   Saussure suggests that hearing is a relatively passive
psychophysical function
   “everything that goes from the ear of the listener to his associative
center is passive” (13)
   but what about that moment of translation at the “center”?

For Tuesday: please email me questions about course subject matter at
spectacle@netzero.net