

EDITORS' NOTE: The following is a portion of a larger piece of work that forms part of Craig Anthony's creative thesis. Since Mr. Anthony's creative thesis is a collection of works of "traumanticism," he had decided—for this story, which will be the first piece of his collection—to include a running commentary upon the story for the benefit of those on the thesis committee who may not be familiar with traumanticism. Well, this, its second draft form, was passed on to us through various channels (actually, through Dr. Ramjerdi, Mr. Anthony's thesis advisor), and we begged Craig if we could print it as it was, that is, as a rough draft; because we thought the piece as it is, without yet the actual story, affords a fine, rare glimpse into the working mind of a writer—the naked and inchoate forms that eventually birth themselves into a coherent pattern of thought called prose—at the same time it attempts to wrestle the "rising tide within the unquiet and brutal underground press: traumanticism." Mr. Anthony reluctantly has agreed, and we thank him for the permission to include this early draft. He hopes to rework and finish the piece, and publish it next semester with the story in full—and we look forward to the opportunity to do so, and add to Mr. Anthony's burgeoning traumantic publications.

"CLINT HARDLAW IN: BULLETS CAN BE SO SURLY"

BY CRAIG ANTHONY

["MY DOCUMENTAL TRACING OF TRAUMANTICISM"—?]

[SECOND DRAFT]

Craig Anthony

[insert quote/s:

"We are not surprised to find that the further we depart from literature, or the use of language to express the completely integrated state of emotional consciousness we call imagination, the nearer we come to the use of language as the expression of reflex. Whether we go in the emotional or intellectual direction, we arrive at much the same point, a point antipodal to literature in which language is a running commentary of the



unconscious, like a squirrel's chatter"—Northrop Fry, Anatomy of Criticism

"Traumaticism: extreme violence, perverse nonsense, and violation called fiction: a sneer of evil in a madness [sic] dream"—[insert byline], F[r]iction

"Really, the underground makes up about one millionth of any literary body"—[insert byline], The Face of Horror

INSERT BCBSS PT. I

[from "Once again I'm nursing a shot" to
"I'm Supreme—Xanadu Supreme"]

There is no thrill equal to reading that first fan letter.

Dear Craig: I have read your Clint Hardlaw trash, which especially applies to "The Case of the Angst-Ridden Ennui." First off, you can't write. Comprendé? You cannot write! My daughter can write better than you and she's in the [illegible scribble] first grade. But I'd never expose her or anyone to such filth. You cannot sustain a single thought for longer than a sentence, and your subject matter is trash! And I'm not some punk fan boy, I'm an English Teacher, so I know what I'm talking about[sic]. Listen to me: you write trash! Trash, sir! [note: the fourth instance of the word "trash."] I've canceled my subscription of CSJ because of your garbage.

Let's see, I can't sustain a single thought for longer than one sentence, but I must be doing something right if I don't manage to jump subjects in a single sentence; like from say, a critique of a single author's mechanics to a critique of aesthet-

ics. pity that an English teacher lost four dollars on a subscription to CSJ—The Cleaved Skull Journal. God knows an English teacher shouldn't have to read trash in The Cleaved Skull Journal. (I am a bit dubious about the, well, the somewhat misleading self-moniker of our "English Teacher," I might add.)

The notion behind calling something "trash" enough is to make it go away, into the land of unreality, or erase it through metamorphosis (a "new" from "old" that disqualifies—negates—"old.") "Trash" is repeated until the litany confers a pseudo-presence to the object. It really is a natural mistake to confuse traumanticism with "trash," much like it's natural to confuse Finnegan's Wake with nonsense. The problem arises when the confusion is washed away through critical analysis or, better, the sunlight of epiphany [mm] but the label remains. The problem is when the label is forced to remain. [strained? "problem"?]

If you asked me, I would say what would probably be more offensive than "Clint Hardlaw in: The Case of the Angst-Ridden Ennui" (a harmless little ditty as you shall see in part III) would be the other story I produced for that same issue (the pulps need writers!), "Clint Hardlaw in: I Like My Dames Smearing My Excrement All over Their Bodies." And then the offense rises not actually from that story (I present), but from an a priori (an assumed a priori) presence, inherent in the very existence of such a piece, that works upon the reader's[s'] subconscious. ["directs its influence upon the subconscious"? am mixing post-modernism and Freud?]



Here is a common Joke:

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

Any reader with an ounce of common sense knows that the presence of such disclaimers presuppose their need. Or, to illustrate: English teacher: why are you making effort to tell me that you would never expose your daughter to such filth?

This idea is a bit misleading, however, to the real point I'm making. There is a subtle fear involved here in this letter. If it could only be that I am writing trash, then such trash could be cast off, or discarded, as the unnecessary or worn out husk of another creature, a creature in form only, fallen away. Trash is stored in receptacles and hauled off to an unknown (to most people in a community) common location. Or to return to the word husk: husks are on the outside; they fall off, they dry up and disappear, or reintegrate with the elements.

The need to label something as "trash" is a defensive reflex. This "trash" frightens because it so arouses within us those deep and tortured hearkenings.[delete] "Trash," so long as it is "trash" (understood as such), does not threaten the common reader no matter how piled up [delete] [insert exegetic trash ¶]

You see, there is a fear involved. The most common rule in writing is "write what you know." All writers write what they know. And it follows that what all writers write, they know.

INSERT BCBSS PT. II

[from "I've got this problem" to "I'm starting to feel the pulsing of your heart (in my bloodstained hands) already from this little tale"]

[insert witty phrase about the irony in calling catachresis 'mixed metaphor'] An early story with Clint Hardlaw was excoriated by an English professor at this very institution, and although I believe the story itself was so ravaged (that is, the Story as above delineated: the very presence of a written work that proves so repugnant by its implied further presence,) the professor chose to especially castigate me for my continued and deliberate utilization of catachresis.

Once again I'm nursing a shot of bourbon and a meaty broth. The windows are dirty, filthy rivers like the queer machine within my soul. My name is Clint Hardlaw—I'm a detective.

Craig—No! MM!—2 points

There's something rather humorous about that, and, perhaps, a bit ironic. Every bit of every effort struggles for any response. The aesthetic response is no less than a stimulus response, though I must admit the stimuli of that third sentence was not intended to result in a loss of fictive ratios applied to an academic micro-metanarrative (I guess you never can tell what the "queer machine" will produce). It seems to me that to incite so high the ire of a professor, through a single line, so as to lose two points, is quite an achievement+



Believe me: In that class two points were hard to come by.

It's when objects grind together that some new object is produced in a glory of violent

death and ludicrous misogyny. Don't get me wrong, Craig, I like it, it's like Chandler or Cain on acid. But then the clichés become so exaggerated that they shift tighter into cliché than out. Like Xanadu Supreme: She is so unreal that she's unreal.

An editor of a splatter-punk/detective fanzine (Midnight Brains) uses the word "cliché" disparagingly? But: "Xanadu supreme is so unreal that she's unreal." Now there's a sentence that could make me write volumes.[weak] Apparently there is such a blank spot in the "presence" (paradox) of Xanadu that "there is" a blank "spot." Thus Xanadu is not unreal, she is real. But she is a blank spot; the (Freud) repressed becomes aware through its absence [reword], the ([post-modernist/Foucaultian) suppressed discourse [delete sentence: too much of too little theory]

Now what if I stated here that Xanadu Supreme was real? Well, you would need to know what "real" meant. But would I need to state it? I could also deny it.[it-reference] That is, the opposite course would be to state: Xanadu Supreme is a fictional character that bears no resemblance to any person, living or dead. I will state this, in fact, to put your mind completely at rest.

Oh: Clint Hardlaw is a fictional character that bears no resemblance to any person, living or dead. Now we know where

we stand.[cliché]

INSERT BCBSS PT. III

[from "The sun was a streak in the sky" to
"I steeled my body for the blow: Impact"]
[change: to "It was her in the wreck, the
dame—Xanadu"]

[insert ¶/¶'s explication Marxian fetish]

I want to stress two points: in any object, say fiction, the object in question has two values: that (libidinous) value which a society (say) places upon it, and the hidden value: the cost productions value that remains below the surface, unknown, but more integral to the object's value than the fetishistic one, because it is the real and not the fantasy value.

When you neutralize the fetish in literature, stories (the realm of plot and cliché and structure) and Story appear, linked indissolubly. We see the value the former has usurped, swelling to Priapean proportions, casting and playing like a puppet every reader as a thirsting bitch in heat.[mm]
Traumanticism is by its very nature anti-fetishistic, and because the fetish is a product of a product of a production, it is there in inception that the fetish is cast down, or neutralized, with its wake of criticism, analysis, explication and exegesis. There is nothing to penetrate in this new world order. It is the infinitive I'm railing against in that last sentence, if you can understand, when I say: There are no penetrations, and only penetrations.

I just don't know whether this is serious



or a grand joke—or, more disturbing, the tinge of madness. Apart from the absolutely, well, insane juxtapositions and actions and narrative, the comical (?) heights of melodrama and pathos—where is the payoff? I mean, all this for such a simplistic, on the one hand, and abstruse on the other, plot? It would be hard to believe all this is no more than poor writing...I think you entertain these delusions that you have managed to escape the ghetto of genre, or that escape is possible. Extremism does not equal escape: do you know what I mean? Your story has more than enough potential, but tell me: Are you serious, is this a joke, or...?

The construction of that third sentence is a bit convoluted, but other than that, there's not much to criticize in this twenty-ninth rejection slip I received for "Bullets."* Five years ago I, and my story, were still just fledglings, and Mr. Murray (The editor of The Twentieth Century Hate Machine, one of the more prominent underground 'zines) was justified in excoriating me on some few points. ["Enlightenment does not excuse the need for the honing of ability"] However, the story is essentially the same here (as you read it) as it was when Mr. Murray first examined it. I'm not sure that if Mr. Murray read "Bullets" now he still wouldn't reject it out of hand.

Although Mr. Murray did not publish "Bullets", he did read it in Craven Dogs and sent me a letter of praise much later. So what changed? The story's certainly cleaner, but really I can't believe that's it. Our Mr. Murray changed...

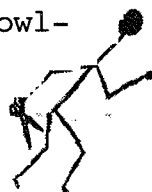
INSERT CARE

[delete "The straps bit hard into my
 misanthropic flesh": begin "the savage
 skullduggery of gun metal slaps time
 against my wan, calcined" to "loping with
 the wolves of adversity, lying with the
 dogs of desire"] [delete "Already I feel
 the gentle coercion of cunning exile"]

Our English teacher must have been rather incensed, now that I
 read "The Case of the Angst-Ridden Ennui" again. Surely
 ["Really"], however, he must have unwittingly been angered by
 the deliberate desecration of his perversely utilized fetishes.

A friend of mine said, "It's like being adrift in a fog-
 bound lake, reading your stories: a world of phantasmagoria,
 and nothing to hold onto." [reword] I like that description for
 its lurid and evocative value, even if it is essentially false.
 Again, such analogies make it sound like I the author have no
 control, or that there is no control to be had over the object.
 When the object defies a fetishistic anchor, it defies value.
 The object then, in the eye accustomed to illusion, seems to
 devoid itself of substance, or rather, becomes a mass of
 writhing limbs, pumping meat squirming and grasping desperately
 for a trunk to weld to—

Ah but then I abhor the utilization of metaphor altogether
 as metaphor, as extrareferential. I propose here to commence
 the reduction of referentials from everything outside of the
 only true referential, the egoistic self. Where I am directing
 your attention—rather, what I am inviting you to partake in—is
 the complicity in destroying fetishistic values, and acknowl-
 edging the undercurrent; erecting new fetishes (if you so



insist upon them) for this new age. [losing audience rewrite to clarify by lauding the rhetoric of schismatic as opposed to unitary hegemonic discourse.]

Traumanticism is ["the violence of the self-referent"/"the self-referential of violence"] [delete]

INSERT BCBSS PT. IV

[from "Blood was everywhere, but—groovy goddamn dog—she was alive!" to "then that awful mess fainted"] [story rewrite: insert "but that phrase kept repeating itself to me all the way to the hospital: I am the Sabbath lamb drenched in its own blood"]

The question remains: What is "traumanticism"?

...You push this new term, and this is what I see it as: a glorification of extreme and sickening violence or execrable perversions; the most nauseous stereotypes, be they somewhat benign (such as the pulp detective) or malign and degrading (your tortuously sexist portraits of men or women, for example); a language and tone that is seemingly disjointed, random, chimeric, and hydratic[?] if not totally meaningless; a guise of fiction that violates every standard, be it through tediously plotless action or the schizophrenic characters or the radical stylistic shifts. It seems to want to belong to the traditions of nihilistic "counter narratives" so evident in the works of, say, pseudo-classical writers like deSade, Nietzsche, Crowley or Burroughs: that is, your work is no more than a poor palate of cold leftovers [mm], not something new, innovative, cutting-edge or creative—all aspects I think you

would like your work to contain. This is not fiction because it is even less pliant than other "long perspectives" to the—and yet, to even glorify this tripe with such points of conjecture, allows it a pedestal (however low) it does not, nor ever will enjoy. This is trash, sir! Trash! Please tell me what the point of such twisted reveling in the perversely sinister—be it structurally or internally or stylistically or (dare I say?) cosmologically—can possibly be. My question is thus not: "What is traumanticism?" It is: "Why traumanticism?"

This fragment is just about the most lucid point of ignorance, realized and presented, I have ever read. Of course, I have heavily edited this piece—in fact, I have written most of it myself, preserving only a small morsel of the original—the caustic commentary of a certain English professor who loved to mark points off my short-stories. Really this professor was a fine teacher and excellent tutor. But I felt he was particularly vicious with my pieces, not understanding really what they were all about (for which I cannot entirely blame him). When he took my story with its attached traumantic manifesto—and I really blush now at the headstrong assurity of that tract, and its own far distance from the mark—he chose (as you see in this close facsimile) to be viciously unsupportive. But a writer must learn to take his rejections! So I say to him now: bravo [delete rework]

[insert tentative section headings for story:

- I. A Shot of Bourbon and a Sweet Self-Loathing
- II. A Tale Designed to Seal the Exits
- III. The Oh So Demolitious Development



IV. No Time For Mammon

V. Time Enough to Deceive

VI. Them Hurtin' Words Sure Put the Lime in the Coconut

VII. Now More than Ever Good Lovin's Gone Bad

VIII. The Casket Lid's Clicking on This Damnable

Afterbirth

INSERT BCBSS PT. V

[from "Can you save her, doc, can you save her?" to "I want to know what's going on and I want to know pronto—now pleasure me!"]

Lest you become needlessly confused, let me make clear that the term "traumanticism" is one of my own invention[reword?]; a term, though, that I have been busy propagating. There are now a few who use it in the context of what it is I'm trying desperately to express through it. There will be more. Mine borrows from that term that denoted the leveling of classical formalisms in, specifically but not necessarily, expressions as through a certain period of English literature. The celebration of solipsistic forms of expression, of sublimely elevating points of sensory revelation, or ecstasy, is coalesced into a particular point of departure through this new term, which I think perfectly expresses it. [vague: clarify]

I find I am frustrated, for I can't write the standard form of fiction[insert "anymore"]: a set of characters, plot, theme. I mentioned earlier in this piece that I abhor the utilization, or presence, of metaphor as metaphor—now what does that mean? You see, I've grown weary with fiction and fictions. I've grown sick to death of sitting in classrooms lis-

tening to my peers (!) dole out their latest regurgitation of ignorance, critiquing stories that really demand the pithy criticism of the condescending laugh—the kind usually exacted upon works like mine that are far beyond the graspability[?] of the common and the uninitiated.

There are those who would read my work as the slide into pure sensation, and catalog it among the greater works of pornography, scatology, and such "snuff." This group of readers would quite miss the entire nature and purpose of this thing I call traumanticism.

Tangent: To call my...work "stories," when by doing so classes them in with the greater tide of such excrement, diminishes their very nature and all the painstakingly precise work, the excruciating headaches and flop sweat, the years of mental exercise through hard reading and observation, I bring to that work. "Story[ies]," "Fictions[s]," at least most of them, have nothing left[delete] to say. I will here, for the remainder, no longer tolerate that term applied to my work so long as the greater part of "stories" remain locked in a dark closet.

What I offer to my readers is a: taste...

Traumanticism offers a taste of["for"?] schisms. I say "stories" are today as medieval as ever. The vulgar world of the story is a continual ping-pong between what is "out there," sensation and metaphor, and what is "in here." This is where I and my ilk come in to assert: What is "in here" is traumanticism.

What is "in here" is traumanticism.

What is "in here" is traumanticism.



What is "in here" is traumanticism.

INSERT BCBSS PT. VI

[from "I wasn't trying to kill you Clint"
to "remembered again that magic eight-ball
said: The meat-chopper come, gonna take my
body away"]

[insert Dr. Ramjerdi's rec. section for the committee tradi-
tional format list catalog of influential works brief critical
interps classical reference allude career goals about 3 ¶'s]

INSERT BCBSS PT. VII

[from "I know when the bones are coming up
'symptom'" to "Screams, lies. Oh: there
was an extended encore"]

What is this term "traumanticism"? You
think by labeling something an imaginary
five syllable neologism [I like that] you
gain credibility? You want credibility
and I'll give it to you in the realms of
misogyny, misanthropy and just plain,
revolting violence. Remove those and
there remains a work singularly unnotewor-
thy. Pull your head out of desade's[?]
ass and take a writing course—actually,
take as many as you can.

The word that springs to mind at the mention of traumanti-
cism is: violence.

And it is a kind of violence that I am trying to present
through these analyses ["author's notes"].

The violence of ignorance and intolerance. The violence
of schisms, penetrations, violations, hegemonic institutional-

izations and silencings. The violence of non-sequitur, vicious humor, calumny. The violence of mutilation, sadism, sickness, froth. The violence of cool perversions, sacrilege, blasphemy, nightmare. The violence of recriminations, rejections, childhood torments, sexual ridicule, terrible loneliness, and the pariah. The violence of division, reference, presence, pain. The violence of sedition, erection and infection.

Rapine violence.

Traumantic violence.

I have always been writing traumanticism.


I have always been writing a catalog of violence called characters called catalogs of violence called the author called a catalog of past and present wickermen[delete: "examples"] of schisms, ruptures, and unhealings, even when I was not writing traumanticism. Now my writing is lucid.

Here is humor:

She was whimpering, and I hated it. It made me feel like the ichor was being sucked from my still throbbing spewhole when she whimpered. I lunged at her: the orchestra was her head and the symphony was my fists.

Your amateur, nay childish, narrative traipsing through perverse romps of violence [note: mm] sickens me and your intended audience—5 points.

I was once slashed five points for using a point of violence. It's not that I was not instead contacted and truly wrestled with on aesthetic points that so frustrated and tickled me at the same time—it's that I was violently wrested of



five points! The irony was truly epic. He refused to see it that way.

Violence was reacted to by violence. Violence was "assuaged" by violence.

The violence of railings, ravings, and broken barriers external and internal.

The violence of indoctrination through reiteration, legitimization, and confrontation.

The rising violence of excluded narratives.

[insert: quote BCBSS: "You shouldn't have tried to slap my fun-bunny, babe! What--did you think I wouldn't want my meat puppet always jammin' like a rocker? Did you think I wasn't that perky? ¶ "Oh no, baby! No! I'd never cork your blowhole!"]

INSERT BCBSS PT. VIII

[from "Why must the ones I love always end up in my" to "Oh, God help me, what have I done"]

This story is childish and pointless.
When I read such perverse cant, rendered so heavy-handedly, I only shake my head and wonder why. See if you can write with even the semblance of skill next time you send a story--elsewhere.

The violence never stops.

But all the rejection slips cannot equal the biggest thrill imaginable, something I find more exciting than seeing an actual story of mine in print--reading the review. The undergrounds damn with faint praise with the best of them, but I don't mind: I'd kill to have all my tastes damned so quaintly.

One of the highlights of the autumn Craven Dogs is a simply bizarre story—I guess you'd call it—by Craig Anthony entitled "Clint Hardlaw in: Bullets Can Be So Surly." Clint Hardlaw, ultra-violent ace detective (he was a "human-skin jacket"), speaks like a cross between Monty Python and Humphrey Bogart except his vocabulary is a bit mixed up. The adventures he gets into are a bit confused and it seems that the enjoyment comes almost as much from the telling as the doing. It's a strange style and I don't know quite what to make of it except to say that it's amusing in a strange sort of way. Does that tell you anything? This is almost better read aloud or read along with someone aloud. [insert: "It bears all the heads of the traumantic hydra"] But is it a good story you ask? Well, strange, yes...uh, and there's another interesting story...

This wonderful overview of my taste (an overview which my ego simply demands I reprint here in full) comes from a Mr. Sawicki at Scavenger's Newsletter. Maybe you find this review perfectly illustrates the perplexing puzzle[alliteration] you are faced with in ["by"] this taste, now that you have experienced it in full. "Bullets" seems confusing, and humorous, and strange: it's, better, convoluted, obscure and indecipherable; "Bullets" seems eclectic, and disturbing, if not ravenously perverse: yet it's somehow better experienced in the presence of another human being. This taste I've presented certainly is, in the words of this review, and in all respects: a hydra.

Hydra...

[insert etymology/allegory of hydra] The fetish falsely evokes its own image as a single, but symbiotic structure:



object and value (truth value) indissolubly mixed. The multi-phallic hydra opposes the uni-phallic fetish. The world of the hydra is the world antithetical to the "healthy" and "normal." When the realm of formalism, or critical standards and every other element that make up fictions, are abandoned. The hydra, with its multifaceted and multifarious parallel structures, takes over. Think of innumerable strands, as many strands as there are tastes, traumatically parallel upon the skein of ubiquity.[too vague?]

Here is a personal story with a funny little ending that perhaps illustrates what I am trying to say. There was a professor I had, a Dr. Benter, who was simply brutal towards my early creative efforts. He had a singularly nasty wit and way of singling out what I, at the time, thought were my most creative passages and finding something, anything, to castigate, removing points and hitting me hard in my most vulnerable areas—but examples are fruitless. There was a palpable animosity between us, which he, of course, instigated. I was always sweetness and light, letting him believe that he was forever getting the better of me, which you could say he was, in one sense: The teacher/student binary hierarchy simply oppressed my psyche. But "I continued as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation." [delete quote marks] Our relationship persisted, as indefinably irreconcilable, intolerable.

One evening, after working late in the university library rewriting a taste (another that had been rejected by a magazine), I noticed, cutting through the teacher's parking lot,

now almost bare of vehicles, my professor's car (which I recognized by the type of vehicle itself—for I memorized all the marginalia of my enemy's class lectures—and the license plate DRBNTER). A mischievous prank leaped into my mind. It seemed madness to entertain such a thought, and yet so delightful. I rushed across to my own car, parked across three lots, and quickly retrieved a few items I had stashed away. In almost no time I was back, crouching low, fumbling with my object, and hearing the clicking of approaching footsteps. My heart leapt in nausea but I must have had a terrible grin, too. I jumped out of hiding. I think I was going to yell something silly, something off the top of my head, like "You ever fuck with me again and I swear I'll cut your motherfucking hear out you shit-bag." Instead I just waved the butcher knife and half-coughed.

Impact! Something hit me in the face, a purse I later imagined, and I could hear the sudden hiss of cayenne—I knew it by that burning tinge—clumsily sprayed. I took a step back and then took off in crazy flight. Another hiss sounded, and after that, a shrill string of cusses. I burst out halfway to my car and had to stop here I was I was so doubled over with laughter. I removed my old street-hockey mask so I could vomit profusely.[delete] I guess in all that time Dr. Benter neglected to mention he had a daughter that went to college.

What's interesting about the hydra is that, in the myth, Heracles goes to fight the nine-headed hydra, which sprouts two snapping heads when any one is cut off. So...there must have been a time before the hydra became a monster, when it pos-



sessed but a single head...

In the end, traumanticism is that fetish—that hydra—newly broken, that produces two anchorless coils [mm], meaning and its fictional mask, Dr. Benter.[change name]

INSERT EPILOGUE

[tentative title: A Tangent of Bloodshed]

[insert ¶/¶'s that wrap up use critical terms literary refs praise for Dr. Ramjerdi sycophantic academic praise]

* Except that "escaping" from genre is not possible for one who's work already originates from a skewed, entirely dissimilar source; notions of "escape" and "escaping" merely play into the same fictives of fetishistic pseudo-potencies. Discussions about the inexorable and tainting penumbra of genre enrage me altogether, for I refuse to buy into these premises. Traumanticism is never to be taken as genre, though it operates within genre; for this is anathema.