

DEAD DOLL HUMILITY

by

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IN ANY SOCIETY BASED ON CLASS, HUMILIATION IS A  
POLITICAL REALITY. HUMILIATION IS ONE METHOD BY WHICH  
POLITICAL POWER IS TRANSFORMED INTO SOCIAL OR PERSONAL  
RELATIONSHIPS. THE PERSONAL INTERIORIZATION OF THE  
PRACTICE OF HUMILIATION IS CALLED \_HUMILITY\_.

CAPITOL IS AN ARTIST WHO MAKES DOLLS. MAKES, DAMAGES,  
TRANSFORMS, SMASHES. ONE OF HER DOLLS IS A WRITER  
DOLL. THE WRITER DOLL ISN'T VERY LARGE AND IS ALL  
HAIR, HORSE MANE HAIR, RAT FUR, DIRTY HUMAN HAIR,  
PUSSY.

ONE NIGHT CAPITOL GAVE THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO TO  
HER WRITER DOLL:

As a child in sixth grade in a North American school,  
won first prize in a poetry contest.

In late teens and early twenties, entered New York  
City poetry world. Prominent Black Mountain poets,  
mainly male, taught or attempted to teach her that a  
writer becomes a writer when and only when he finds his  
own voice.

CAPITOL DIDN'T MAKE ANY AVANT-GARDE POET DOLLS.

Since wanted to be a writer, tried hard to find her own  
voice. Couldn't. But still loved to write. Loved to  
play with language. Language was material like clay or

paint. Loved to play with verbal material, build up slums and mansions, demolish banks and half-rotten buildings, even buildings which she herself had constructed, into never-before-seen, even unseeable jewels.

To her, every word wasn't only material in itself, but also sent out like beacons, other words. Blue sent out heaven and The Virgin. Material is rich. I didn't create language, writer thought. Later she would think about ownership and copyright. I'm constantly being given language. Since this language-world is rich and always changing, flowing, when I write, I enter a world which has complex relations and is, perhaps, illimitable. This world both represents and is human history, public memories and private memories turned public, the records and actualizations of human intentions. This world is more than life and death, for here life and death conjoin. I can't make language, but in this world, I can play and be played.

So where is 'my voice'?

Wanted to be a writer.

Since couldn't find 'her voice', decided she'd first have to learn what a Black Mountain poet meant by 'his voice'. What did he do when he wrote?

A writer who had found his own voice presented a viewpoint. Created meaning. The writer took a certain amount of language, verbal material, forced that language to stop radiating in multiple, even unnumerable directions, to radiate in only one direction so there could be his meaning.

The writer's voice wasn't exactly this meaning. The writer's voice was a process, how he had forced the

language to obey him, his will. The writer's voice is the voice of the writer-as-God.

Writer thought, Don't want to be God; have never wanted to be God. All these male poets want to be the top poet, as if, since they can't be a dictator in the political realm, can be dictator of this world.

Want to play. Be left alone to play. Want to be a sailor who journeys at every edge and even into the unknown. See strange sights, see. If I can't keep on seeing wonders, I'm in prison. Claustrophobia's sister to my worst nightmare: lobotomy, the total loss of perceptual power, of seeing new. If had to force language to be uni-directional, I'd be helping my own prison to be constructed.

There are enough prisons outside, outside language.

Decided, no. Decided that to find her own voice would be negotiating against her joy. That's what the culture seemed to be trying to tell her to do.

Wanted only to write. Was writing. Would keep on writing without finding 'her own voice'. To hell with the Black Mountain poets even though they had taught her a lot.

Decided that since what she wanted to do was just to write, not to find her own voice, could and would write by using anyone's voice, anyone's text, whatever materials she wanted to use.

Had a dream while waking that was running with animals. Wild horses, leopards, red fox, kangaroos, mountain lions, wild dogs. Running over rolling hills. Was able to keep up with the animals and they accepted her.

Wildness was writing and writing was wildness.

Decision not to find this own voice but to use and be other, multiple, even innumerable, voices led to two other decisions.

There were two kinds of writing in her culture: good literature and schlock. Novels which won literary prizes were good literature; science fiction and horror novels, pornography were schlock. Good literature concerned important issues, had a high moral content, and, most important, was written according to well-established rules of taste, elegance, and conservatism. Schlock's content was sex horror violence and other aspects of human existence abhorrent to all but the lowest of the low, the socially and morally unacceptable. This trash was made as quickly as possible, either with no regard for the regulations of politeness or else with regard to the crudest, most vulgar techniques possible. Well-educated, intelligent, and concerned people read good literature. Perhaps because the masses were gaining political therefore economic and social control, not only of literary production, good literature was read by an elite diminishing in size and cultural strength.

Decided to use or to write both good literature and schlock. To mix them up in terms of content and formally, offended everyone.

Writing in which all kinds of writing mingled seemed, not immoral, but amoral, even to the masses. Played in every playground she found; no one can do that in a class or hierarchichal society.

(In literature classes in university, had learned that anyone can say or write anything about anything if

he or she does so cleverly enough. That cleverness, one of the formal rules of good literature, can be a method of social and political manipulation. Decided to use language stupidly.) In order to use and be other voices as stupidly as possible, decided to copy down simply other texts.

Copy them down while, maybe, mashing them up because wasn't going to stop playing in any playground. Because loved wildness.

Having fun with texts is having fun with everything and everyone. Since didn't have one point of view or centralized perspective, was free to find out how texts she used and was worked. In their contexts which were (parts of) culture.

Liked best of all mushing up texts.

Began constructing her first story by placing mashed-up texts by and about Henry Kissinger next to 'True Romance' texts. What was the true romance of America? Changed these 'True Romance' texts only by heightening the sexual crudity of their style. Into this mush, placed four pages out of Harold Robbins', one of her heroes', newest hottest bestsellers. Had first made Jacqueline Onassis the star of Robbins' text.

Twenty years later, a feminist publishing house republished the last third of the novel in which this mash occurred.

CAPITOL MADE A FEMINIST PUBLISHER DOLL EVEN THOUGH, BECAUSE SHE WASN'T STUPID, SHE KNEW THAT THE FEMINIST PUBLISHING HOUSE WAS ACTUALLY A LOT OF DOLLS. THE FEMINIST PUBLISHER DOLL WAS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN A ST.

LAURENT DRESS. CAPITOL, PERHAPS OUT OF PERVERSITY,  
REFRAINED FROM USING HER USUAL CHEWED UP CHEWING GUM,  
HALF-DRIED FLECKS OF NAIL POLISH, AND BITS OF HER OWN  
BODY THAT HAD SOMEHOW FALLEN AWAY.

Republished the text containing the Harold Robbins'  
mush next to a text she had written only seventeen  
years ago. In this second text, the only one had ever  
written without glopping up hacking into and rewriting  
other texts (appropriating), had tried to destroy  
literature or what she as a writer was supposed to  
write by making characters and a story that were so  
stupid as to be almost non-existent. Ostensibly, the  
second text was a porn book. The pornography was  
almost as stupid as the story. The female character  
had her own name.

Thought just after had finished writing this, here  
is a conventional novel. Perhaps, here is 'my voice'.  
Now I'll never again have to make up a bourgeois novel.

Didn't.

The feminist publisher informed her that this  
second text was her most important because here she had  
written a treatise on female sexuality.

Since didn't believe in arguing with people, wrote  
an introduction to both books in which stated that her  
only interest in writing was in copying down other  
people's texts. Didn't say liked messing them up  
because was trying to be polite. Like the English.  
Did say had no interest in sexuality or in any other  
content.

CAPITOL MADE A DOLL WHO WAS A JOURNALIST. CAPITOL

LOVED MAKING DOLLS WHO WERE JOURNALISTS. SOMETIMES SHE MADE THEM OUT OF THE NEWSPAPERS FOUND IN TRASHCANS ON THE STREETS. SHE KNEW THAT LOTS OF CATS INHABITED TRASH CANS. THE PAPERS SAID RATS CARRY DISEASES. SHE MADE THIS JOURNALIST OUT OF THE FINGERNAILS SHE OBTAINED BY HANGING AROUND THE TRASHCANS IN THE BACK LOTS OF LONDON HOSPITALS. HAD PENETRATED THESE BACK LOTS WITH THE HOPE OF MEETING MEAN OLDER MEN BIKERS. FOUND LOTS OF OTHER THINGS THERE. SINCE, TO MAKE THE JOURNALIST, SHE MOLDED THE FINGERNAILS TOGETHER WITH SUPER GLUE AND, BEING A SLOB, LOTS OF OTHER THINGS STUCK TO THIS SUPER GLUE, THE JOURNALIST DIDN'T LOOK ANYTHING LIKE A HUMAN BEING.

A journalist who worked on a trade publishing magazine, so the story went, no one could remember whose story, was informed by another woman in her office that there was a resemblance between a section of the writer's book and Harold Robbins' work. Most of the literati of the country in which the writer was currently living were upper-middle class and detested the writer and her writing.

CAPITOL THOUGHT ABOUT MAKING A DOLL OF THIS COUNTRY, BUT DECIDED NOT TO.

Journalist decided she had found a scoop. Phoned up the feminist publisher to enquire about plagiarism; perhaps feminist publisher said something wrong because then phoned up Harold Robbins' publisher.

"Surely all art is the result of one's having been in danger, of having gone through an experience all the

way to the end, where no one can go any further. The further one goes, the more private, the more personal, the more singular an experience becomes, and the thing one is making is finally, the necessary, irrepressible, and, as nearly as possible, definitive utterance of this singularity . . . . Therein lies the enormous aid the work of art brings to the life of the one who must make it . . . .

"So we are most definitely called upon to test and try ourselves against the utmost, but probably we are also bound to keep silence regarding this utmost, to beware of sharing it, of parting with it in communication so long as we have not entered the work of art: for the utmost represents nothing other than that singularity in us which no one would or even should understand, and which must enter into the work as such . . . ." Rilke to Cezanne.

CAPITOL MADE A PUBLISHER LOOK LIKE SAM PECKINPAH. THOUGH SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT SAM PECKINPAH LOOKED LIKE. HAD LOOKED LIKE? SHE TOOK A HOWDY DOODY DOLL AND AN ALFRED E. NEUMAN DOLL AND MASHED THEM TOGETHER, THEN MADE THIS CONGLOMERATE INTO AN AMERICAN OFFICER IN THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR. ACTUALLY SEWED, SHE HATED SEWING, OR WHEN SHE BECAME TIRED OF SEWING, GLUED TOGETHER WITH HER OWN TWO HANDS, JUST AS THE EARLY AMERICAN PATRIOT WIVES USED TO DO FOR THEIR PATRIOT HUSBANDS, A FROGGED AND BRAIDED CAVALRY JACKET, STAINED WITH THE BLOOD FROM SOME FORMER OWNERS. THEN FASHIONED A STOVEPIPE HAT OUT OF ONE SHE HAD STOLEN FROM A BUM IN AN ECSTASY OF ART. THE HAT WAS A BIT BIG. FOR THE PUBLISHER. INSIDE A GOLD HEART, THERE SHOULD BE A

PICTURE OF A WOMAN. SINCE CAPITOL DIDN'T HAVE A PICTURE OF A WOMAN, SHE PUT IN ONE OF HER MOTHER. SINCE SAM PECKINPAH OR HER PUBLISHER HAD SEEN TRAGEDY, AN ARROW HANGING OUT OF THE WHITE BREAST OF A SOLDIER NO OLDER THAN A CHILD, HORSES GONE MAD WALLEYED MOUTHS FROTHING AMID DUST THICKER THAN THE SMOKE OF GUNS. SHE MADE HIS FACE FULL OF FOLDS, AN EYEPATCH OVER ONE EYE.

Harold Robbins' publisher phoned up the man who ran the company who owned the feminist publishing company. From now on, known as 'The Boss'. The Boss told Harold Robbins' publisher that they have a plagiarist in their midst.

CAPITOL NO LONGER WANTED TO MAKE DOLLS. IN THE UNITED STATES, UPON SEEING THE WORK OF THE PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE, SENATOR JESSE HELMS PROPOSED AN AMENDMENT TO THE FISCAL YEAR 1990 INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES BILL FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROHIBITING "THE USE OF APPROPRIATED FUNDS FOR THE DISSEMINATION, PROMOTION, OR PRODUCTION OF OBSCENE OR INDECENT MATERIALS OR MATERIALS DENIGRATING A PARTICULAR RELIGION." THREE SPECIFIC CATEGORIES OF UNACCEPTABLE MATERIAL FOLLOWED: "(1) OBSCENE OR INDECENT MATERIALS, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO DEPICTIONS OF SADOMASOCHISM [ALWAYS GET THAT ONE IN FIRST], HOMO-EROTICISM, THE EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN, OR INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED IN SEX ACTS; OR (2) MATERIAL WHICH DENIGRATES THE OBJECTS OR BELIEFS OF THE ADHERENTS OF A PARTICULAR RELIGION OR NON-RELIGION; OR (3) MATERIAL WHICH DENIGRATES, DEBASES, OR REVILES A PERSON, GROUP, OR CLASS OF CITIZENS ON THE BASIS OF RACE, CREED, SEX, HANDICAP, AGE, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN."

IN HONOR OF JESSE HELMS, CAPITOL MADE, AS PILLOWS, A  
CROSS AND A VAGINA. SO THE POOR COULD HAVE SOMEWHERE  
TO SLEEP. SINCE SHE NO LONGER HAD TO MAKE DOLLS OR  
ART, BECAUSE ART IS DEAD IN THIS CULTURE, SHE SLOPPED  
THE PILLOWS TOGETHER WITH DEAD FLIES, WHITE FLOUR  
MOISTENED BY THE BLOOD SHE DREW OUT OF HER SMALLEST  
FINGER WITH A PIN, AND OTHER TYPES OF GARBAGE.

Disintegration.

Feminist publisher then informed writer that the  
Boss and Harold Robbins' publisher had decided, due to  
her plagiarism, to withdraw the book from publication  
and to have her sign an apology to Harold Robbins which  
they had written. This apology would then be published  
in two major publishing magazines.

Ordinarily impolite, told feminist publisher they  
could do what they wanted with their edition of her  
books but she wasn't going to apologize to anyone for  
anything, much less for twenty years of work.

Didn't have to think to herself because every  
square inch of her knew. For freedom. Writing must be  
for and must be freedom.

Feminist publisher replied that she knew writer  
was actually a nice sweet girl.

Asked if should tell her agent or try talking  
directly to Harold Robbins.

Feminist publisher replied she'd take care of  
everything. Writer shouldn't contact Harold Robbins  
because that would make everything worse.

Would, the feminist publisher asked, the writer  
please compose a statement for the Boss why the writer  
used other texts when she wrote so that the Boss  
wouldn't believe that she was a plagiarist.

CAPITOL MADE A DOLL WHO LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE HERSELF.  
IF YOU PRESSED A BUTTON ON ONE OF THE DOLL'S CUNT LIPS  
THE DOLL SAID, "I AM A GOOD GIRL AND DO EXACTLY AS I AM  
TOLD TO DO."

Wrote:

Nobody save buzzards. Lots of buzzards here. In  
the distance, lay flies and piles of shit. Herds  
of animals move against the skyline like black  
caravans in an unknown east. Sheeps and goats.  
Another place, a horse is lapping the water of a  
pool. Lavendar and grey trees behind this black  
water are leafless and spineless. As the day  
ends, the sun in the east flushes out pale  
lavendars and pinks, then turns blood red as it  
turns on itself, becoming a more definitive shape,  
the more definitive, the bloodier. Until it sits,  
totally unaware of the rest of the universe,  
waiting at the edge of a sky that doesn't yet know  
what colors it wants to be, a hawk waiting for the  
inevitable onset of human slaughter. The light is  
fleeing.

Instead, sent a letter to feminist publisher in  
which said that she composed her texts out of 'real'  
conversations, anything written down, other texts,  
somewhat in the ways the Cubists had worked. (Not  
quite true. But thought this statement  
understandable.) Cited, as example, her use of 'True  
Confessions' stories. Such stories whose content seemed  
purely and narrowly sexual, composed simply for  
purposes of sexual titillation and economic profit, if

deconstructed, viewed in terms of context and genre, became signs of political and social realities. So if the writer or critic (deconstructionist) didn't work with the actual language of these texts, the writer or critic wouldn't be able to uncover the political and social realities involved. For instance, both genre and the habitual nature of perception hide the violence of the content of many newspaper stories.

To uncover this violence is to run the risk of being accused of loving violence or all kinds of pornography. (As if the writer gives a damn about what anyone considers risks.)

Wrote, living art rather than dead art has some connection with passion. Deconstructions of newspaper stories become the living art in a culture that demands that any artistic representation of life be non-violent and non-sexual, misrepresent.

To copy down, to appropriate, to deconstruct other texts is to break down those perceptual habits the culture doesn't want to be broken.

Deconstruction demands not so much plagiarism as breaking into the copyright law.

In the Harold Robbins' text which had used, a rich white woman walks into a disco, picks up a black boy, has sex with him. In the Robbins' text, this scene is soft-core porn, has as its purpose mild sexual titillation and pleasure.

[When Robbins' book had been published years ago, the writer's mother had said that Robbins had used Jacqueline Onassis as the model for the rich white woman.] Wrote, had made apparent that bit of politics while amplifying the pulp quality of the style in order

to see what would happen when the underlying presuppositions or meanings of Robbins' writing became clear. Robbins as emblematic of a certain part of American culture. What happened was that the sterility of that part of American culture revealed itself. The real pornography. Cliches, especially sexual cliches, are always signs of power or political relationships.

BECAUSE SHE HAD JUST GOTTEN HER PERIOD, CAPITOL MADE A HUGE RED SATIN PILLOW CROSS THEN SMEARED HER BLOOD ALL OVER IT.

Her editor at the feminist publisher said that the Boss had found her explanation "literary." Later would be informed that this was a legal, not a literary, matter.

"HERE IT ALL STINKS," CAPITOL THOUGHT. "ART IS MAKING ACCORDING TO THE IMAGINATION. BUT HERE, BUYING AND SELLING ARE THE RULES; THE RULES OF COMMODITY HAVE DESTROYED THE IMAGINATION. HERE, THE ONLY ART ALLOWED IS MADE BY POST-CAPITALIST RULES; ART ISN'T MADE ACCORDING TO RULES." ANGER MAKES YOU WANT TO SUICIDE.

Journalist who broke the 'Harold Robbins story' had been phoning and leaving messages on writer's answering machine for days. Had stopped answering her phone. By chance picked it up; journalist asked her if anything to say.

"You mean about Harold Robbins?"

Silence.

"I've just given my publisher a statement.

Perhaps you could read that."

"Do you have anything to add to it?" As if she was a criminal.

A few days later writer's agent over the phone informed writer what was happening was simply horrible.

CAPITOL DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE ANY DOLLS.

How could the writer be plagiarizing Harold Robbins?

Writer didn't know.

Agent told writer if writer had phoned her immediately, agent could have straightened out everything because she was good friends with Harold Robbins' publisher. But now it was too late.

Writer asked agent if she could do anything.

Agent answered that she'd phone Harold Robbins' publisher and that the worst that could happen is that she'd have to pay a nominal quotation rights fee.

So a few days later was surprised when feminist publisher informed her that if she didn't sign the apology to Harold Robbins which they had written for her, feminist publishing company would go down a drain because Harold Robins or harold Robbins' publisher would slap a half-a-million [dollar? pound?] lawsuit on the feminist publishing house.

Decided she had to take notice of this stupid affair, though her whole life wanted to notice only writing and sex.

"WHAT IS IT" CAPITOL WROTE, "TO BE AN ARTIST? WHERE IS THE VALUE THAT WILL KEEP THIS LIFE IN HELL GOING?"

For one of the first times in her life, was deeply

scared. Was usually as wild as they come. Doing anything if it felt good. So when succumbed to fear, succumbed to reasonless, almost bottomless fear.

Panicked only because she might be forced to apologize, not to Harold Robbins, that didn't matter, but to anyone for her writing, for what seemed to be her life. Book had already been withdrawn from print. Wasn't that enough? Panicked, phoned her agent without waiting for her agent to phone her.

Agent asked writer if she knew how she stood legally.

Writer replied that as far as knew Harold Robbins had made no written charge. Feminist publisher sometime in beginning had told her they had spoken to a solicitor who had said neither she nor they "had a leg to stand on." Since didn't know with what she was being charged, she didn't know what that meant.

Agent replied, "Perhaps we should talk to a solicitor. Do you know a solicitor?"

Knew the name of a tax solicitor.

Since had no money, asked her American publisher what to do, if he knew a lawyer.

WOULD MAKE NO MORE DOLLS.

American publisher informed her couldn't ask anyone's advice until she knew the charges against her, saw them in writing.

Asked the feminist publisher to send the charges against her and whatever else was in writing to her.

Received two copies of the 'Harold Robbins' text she had written twenty years ago, one copy of the

apology she was supposed to sign, and a letter from Harold Robbins' publisher to the head of the feminist publishing company. Letter said they were not seeking damages beyond withdrawal of the book from publication [which had already taken place] and the apology.

Didn't know of what she was guilty.

Later would receive a copy of the letter sent to her feminist publisher from the solicitor whom the feminist publisher and then her agent had consulted. Letter stated: According to the various documents and texts which the feminist publisher had supplied, the writer should apologize to Mr. Harold Robbins. First, because in her text she has used a substantial number of Mr. Robbins' words. Second, because she did not use any texts other than Mr. Robbins' so there could be no literary theory or praxis responsible for her plagiarism. Third, because the contract between the writer and the feminist publisher states that the writer had not infringed upon any existing copyright.

When the writer wrote, not wrote back, to the solicitor that most of the novel in question had been appropriated from other texts, that most of these texts had been in the public domain, that the writers of texts not in the public domain were either writers of 'True Confessions' stories (anonymous) or writers who knew she had reworked their texts and felt honored, except for Mr. Robbins, that she had never misrepresented nor hidden her usages of other texts, her methods of composition, that there was already a body of literary criticism on her and others' methods of appropriation, and furthermore [this was to become the major point of contention], that she would not

sign the apology because she could not since there was no assurance that all possible litigation and harassment would end with the signature of guilt, guilt which anyway she didn't feel: the solicitor did not reply.

Not knowing of what she was guilty, feeling isolated, and pressured to finish her new novel, writer became paranoid. Would do anything to stop the pressure from the feminist publisher and simultaneously would never apologize for her work.

Considered her American publisher her father. Told her that the 'Harold Robbins affair' was a joke, she should take the phone off the hook, go to Paris for a few days.

Finish your book. That's what's important.

WOULD MAKE NO MORE DOLLS.

Paris is a beautiful city.

In Paris decided that it's stupid to live in fear. Didn't yet know what to do about isolation. All that matters is work and work must be created in and can't be created in isolation. (Remembered a conversation she had had with her feminist publisher. Still trying to explain, writer said, in order to deconstruct, the deconstructionist needs to use the actual other texts. Editor had said she understood. For instance, she was sure, Peter Carey in Oscar and Lucinda had used other people's writings in his dialogue, but he would never admit it. This writer did what every other writer did, but she is the only one who admits it. "It's not a matter of not being able to write," the writer replied.

It's a matter of a certain theory which is also a literary theory. Theory and belief." Then shut up because knew that when you have to explain and explain, nothing is understood. Language is dead.)

SINCE THERE WERE NO MORE DOLLS, CAPITOL STARTED WRITING LANGUAGE.

Decided that it's stupid living in fear of being forced to be guilty without knowing why you're guilty and, more important, it's stupid caring about what has nothing to do with art. It doesn't really matter whether or not you sign the fucking apology.

Over the phone asked the American publisher whether or not it mattered to her past work whether or not signed the apology.

Answered that the sole matter was her work.

Thought alike.

Wanted to ensure that there was no more sloppiness in her work or life, that from now on all her actions served only her writing. Upon returning to England, consulted a friend who consulted a solicitor who was his friend about her case. This solicitor advised that since she wasn't guilty of plagiarism and since the law was unclear, grey, about whether or not she had breached Harold Robbins' copyright, it could be a legal precedent, he couldn't advise whether or not she should sign the apology. But must not sign unless, upon signing, received full and final settlement.

Informed her agent that would sign if and only if received full and final settlement upon signing.

Over the phone, feminist publisher asked her who

had told her about full and final settlement.

A literary solicitor.

Could they, the feminist publishing house, have his name and his statement in writing?

"This is my decision," writer said. "That's all you need to know."

WROTE DOWN "PRAY FOR US THE DEAD," THE FIRST LINE IN THE FIRST POEM BY CHARLES OLSON SHE HAD EVER READ WHEN SHE WAS A TEENAGER. ALL THE DOLLS WERE DEAD. DEAD HAIR. WHEN SHE LOOKED UP THIS POEM, ITS FIRST LINE WAS, "WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE/ IS THE WILL TO CHANGE."

WENT TO A NEARBY CEMETERY AND WITH STICK DOWN IN SAND WROTE THE WORDS "PRAY FOR US THE DEAD." THOUGHT, WHO IS DEAD? THE DEAD TREES? WHO IS DEAD? WE LIVE IN SERVICE OF THE SPIRIT. MADE MASS WITH TREES DEAD AND DIRT AND UNDERNEATH HUMANS AS DEAD OR LIVING AS ANY STONE OR WOOD.

I WON'T BURY MY DEAD DOLLS, THOUGHT. I'LL STEP ON THEM AND MASH THEM UP.

For two weeks didn't hear from either her agent or feminist publisher. Could return to finishing her novel.

Thought that threats had died.

In two weeks received a letter from her agent which read something like:

On your express instructions that your publisher communicate to you through me, your publisher has informed me that they have communicated to Harold Robbins your decision that you will sign the apology which his publisher drew up only if you have his

assurance that there will be no further harassment or litigation. Because you have requested such assurance, predictably, Harold Robbins is now requiring damages to be paid.

Your publisher now intends to sign and publish the apology to Harold Robbins as soon as possible whether or not you sign it.

In view of what I have discovered about the nature of your various telephone communications to me, please contact me only in writing from now on.

Signature.

Understood that she had lost. Lost more than a struggle about the appropriation of four pages, about the definition of appropriation. Lost her belief that there can be art in this culture. Lost spirit. All humans have to die, but they don't have to fail. Fail in all that matters.

It turned out that the whole affair was nothing.

CAPITOL REALIZED THAT SHE HAD FORGOTTEN TO BURY THE WRITER DOLL. SINCE THE SMELL OF DEATH STUNK, RETURNED TO THE CEMETERY TO BURY HER. SHE KICKED OVER A ROCK AND THREW THE DOLL INTO THE HOLE WHICH THE ROCK HAD MADE. CHANTED, "YOU'RE NOT SELLING ENOUGH BOOKS IN CALIFORNIA. YOU'D BETTER GO THERE IMMEDIATELY. TRY TO GET INTO READING IN ANY BENEFIT YOU CAN SO FIVE MORE BOOKS WILL BE SOLD. YOU HAVE BAGS UNDER YOUR EYES."

CAPITOL THOUGHT, DEAD DOLL.

SINCE CAPITOL WAS A ROMANTIC, SHE BELIEVED DEATH IS PREFERABLE TO A DEAD LIFE, A LIFE NOT LIVED ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF THE SPIRIT.

SINCE SHE WAS THE ONE WHO HAD POWER IN THE DOLL-

HUMAN RELATIONSHIP, HER DOLLS WERE ROMANTICS TOO.

Toward the end of paranoia, had told her story to a friend who was secretary to a famous writer.

Informed her that famous writer's first lawyer used to work with Harold Robbins' present lawyer. First lawyer was friends with her American publisher.

Her American publisher asked the lawyer who was his friend to speak privately to Harold Robbins' lawyer.

Later the lawyer told the American publisher that Harold Robbins' lawyer advised to let the matter die quietly. This lawyer himself advised that under no circumstances should the writer sign anything.

It turned out that the whole affair was nothing.

Despite these lawyer's advice, Harold Robbins' publisher and the feminist publisher kept pressing the writer to sign the apology and eventually, as everything becomes nothing, she had to.

Knew that none of the above has anything to do with what matters, writing. Except for the failure of the spirit.

THEY'RE ALL DEAD, CAPITOL THOUGHT. THEIR DOLLS' FLESH IS NOW BECOMING PART OF THE DIRT.

CAPITOL THOUGHT, IS MATTER MOVING THROUGH FORMS DEAD OR ALIVE?

CAPITOL THOUGHT, THEY CAN'T KILL THE SPIRIT.