

# What a Line (Drawing) Might Reveal: Hamid Naficy's Caricatures

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*For Hamid, July 2018*

An invitation to a Naficy game, a family tradition, a kind of reverse *e'awase* (a Japanese form in which one person writes an essay on a painting and the other produces a new transformed version of the painting): in this case 17 caricatures produced over the years by Hamid Naficy. The invitation's instruction was: *Comment!* Seventeen is a traditional Iranian number, the number of neighborhoods in a town, each with its own character. They are often rivals in ritual displays and processions. Not unlike academics in debates and performances.

There are rules of the game. Hamid's self-imposed rules for the caricatures are: simple pencil or pen and paper, no erasing, focus on the face while an academic is addressing an audience. His own self reflections about the drawings tend toward the Freudian, attributing the attachment to the face as mother love, attachment to the breast, late weaning.

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My self-imposed rules of the game: (i) start with pure first-impressions and free associations; (ii) channel the character talking to the audience, and so write in the first person; (iii) re-order the caricatures, from the alphabetical order (by first name) in which they were supplied, into a chronological order, mainly to underscore the dates of production and their contexts, but also to see if artistic gestures or narrative features might grow over time into signatures of style. The first person address can also give the character, in a final separate short paragraph, a chance to comment on the caricature. Thus, three or four turns of the line: free association, narrative “content,” historical context, character commenting on the caricature.

What does the line reveal that the natural eye does not see? The line in the commentary is the boundary between artist and subject’s point of view. It is a line that needs crossing.

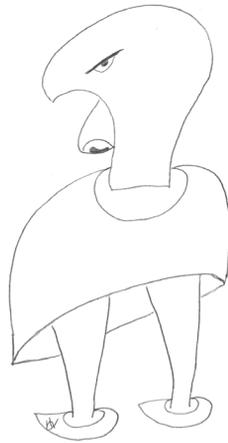
### **Homa Katuzian, 1985**

First impressions: sharp beaked angry bird, wattle a-wagging, standing firm in Persian slippers, legs apart, under fitted Safavid robe with flared bell-shaped skirt, back to the audience, looking over his shoulder askance.

HK: What! You really think Reza Shah’s 1921 coup was engineered by the British? And the Anglo-Persian agreement of 1919 was meant to turn Iran into a British protectorate? Not so. Of course Iran fell into the pit of the oil curse of all petroleum rentier economies: all revenue channeled through the state; perfect opening for corruption and repression — build up the secret police, stifle dissent. No difference today. A cancre eats the soul, as Sadegh Hedayat famously put it — you saw my books about him? I also edited Mohammad Mosaddiq’s memoirs: what a waste, all that effort towards restoring a constitutional republic and get some sovereignty over the oil, only to have Ayatullah Kashani and his goons ally with the royalists to bring the young shah back. Oh well, I fit better in Sa’idi’s slippers, do you like them, elegant and pointed like his poems. Yeah, so it’s 1985, you’d think we’d have gotten over all this Islamic craziness, but no, the Iran-

Iraq disaster of a war continues with the Battle of the Marshes (Badr) and second war of the cities; the re-election of mid-level mullah Hojat ul-Islam Ali Khamenei as President (they only let three members of the IRP run, disqualifying Mehdi Bazargan who was protesting suppression of basic civil liberties and calling for an end to the war), the Iran-Contra affair (Israel ships weapons to Iran which gets Hezbollah to release U.S. hostages in Lebanon, and the proceeds of the weapons sales illegally aids the Contras in Nicaragua, all at the direction of President Reagan). What a mess!

And you wonder why I'm looking over my shoulder askance?! Make fun, if you like, of my turning my back on the present in favor of a more cultivated past, but I do not have a wattle! — it's a goatee.



Homa Katouzian  
3/8/85

“Homa Katouzian,” 8 March 1985, drawn in a lecture at UCLA.

### A. Julian Greimas, 1986

First impressions: stunned eyes, behind square spectacles, one eye



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strong and round, one eye squished elliptically and clouded, set above a very long, long, long nose and wonderfully thick upturned long-horn walrus mustache. A seal of a man.

AJG: Taip, oui, d'accord! You see, one eye is tracking what I call the semantic universe while the other is tracking the discourse universe; ja, it's a bit complicated both neurally and structurally. You see the neural system has to transpose actual language into a meta-language. You know, there is this chiasmus between the right and left eye or rather the nerves largely go to the opposite brain hemisphere. They were first mapped out by Santiago Ramon y Cajal in 1898. So, I'm not really cross-eyed, nor is my right eye squinting or wandering, but it does have to do with Aristotle's much too static 2x2 logic squares, which I've tried to turn into a dynamic generative and transformational square. They call it the Greisemer or semiotic square. Like two eyes, you have phonemic and morphemic binary oppositions to make meaning, but each binary creates a mediating third, and so on, and so there can be a directionality to the transformations. And in any case, in a square that represents binaries as opposite corners, there are diagonal, as well as vertical and horizontal, contrasts between the corners: a big X in a box. Because, you see, to capture how we actually communicate, you have to combine three levels. There is the *subject* defined by his or her quest for *objects*; second, the quest follows a *narrative schema*, sort of the way Vlad Propp analyzed folktales as having characters on the vertical axis and plot sequences along the horizontal axis, or nouns and verbs, if you like. Call these elements of narrative "actants." So, the subject has a *mandate*, an *action* and an *evaluation* — a narrative. But different subjects deploy these narrative forms with different cognitive styles or grammatical competence. And they, in turn, are modified by their passions into distinctive performances. Taip, yeah, a bit complicated, surface levels and deep levels, transformations and such, all very nice, geometrically speaking, or maybe a kind of cat's cradle, you know.

Anyway, this caricature of me makes fun of my big nose, but the curved Nietzschean walrus mustache I wish I could grow; mine is bushy but just droops around my mouth, less flamboyant, more like a seal.



“The Semiotic Aura’ J. Greimas talking on Meaning” 24 April 1986, UCLA; Talk balloon: “Semiotics is the ideology of curiosity.”

### **Kaja Silverman, 1987**

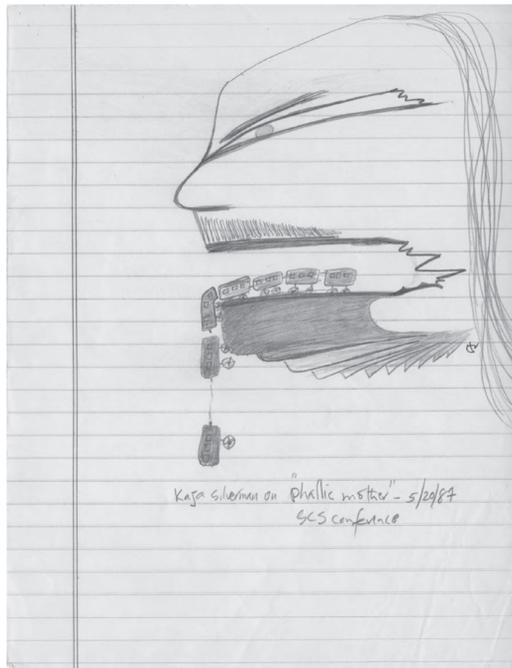
First impressions: Kwakiutl mask, speedy she-wolf, raptor or raven, angry, and chewing up Freud’s toy train, drooling out the last car. The striking top of the head is what attracts the eye first. The curvature of the nose with its line arching back under the eye is like a bullet train, or airplane cockpit window; and the nose is a 1950s idea of an aerodynamic automobile or airplane nose. The eye shape is like a Kwakiutl raven mask. Then there is the severe razor-straight mustache above the lip. This Freudian condensation of anger’s speed, determination, and pointedness is so dominating, it almost takes effort to scan down and see the mouth ingesting or masticating the train. Or is the train a tongue? The tongue is for talking, working through. In analytic sessions, one deconstructs rebus images, entrained, and needing decoupling, interpretation and transference to make sense to the dreamer, the analyst, and the feminist. It is a tongue like that of Kali’s hanging

out, bloody and destructive, ingestive, and indigestive. For Freud, the train is a metaphor for free association (say what comes to mind as if sitting in a train and describing the things that come into view); for inner work (my moods change like the landscapes seen by a traveler from a train); for mirroring (seeing my reflection in the glass of the door or window); for analytic sessions of timed enclosures (*huis clos*, no exit); and for modern anxieties (staying on track, acceleration of time, always running to catch up, fear of missing the train or *Reiseleber*, neurasthenia or railway shock causing railway spine, railway brain). Hamid's caption is blunt: "phallic mother," making one think of tunnels and penetration, vagina dentata, and maternal incorporation, not letting go of the penis, not allowing separation. Hamid's own self analysis speculates about over-identification with, over long weaning from, his mother's face/breast.

KS: Now look, a bit of correction here: my work has changed over time, and I do get tired sometimes of this insistent reduction to narrow terms of the feminist opposition to the repetitive term patriarchy, and so want to turn in the future to the analysis of paintings, like those of Gerhard Richter. But you are right: at this moment, now in 1987, the book I'm working on, *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988), attempts to find within psychoanalysis ways to show how the psyche can be resistant or antipathetic to patriarchy. Against Lacan, I want to find a non-phallic access to the symbolic order, showing how desire and identification are structured in relation to the mother rather than only the father, just as Hamid muses about himself. My next book (*Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 1992) is going to be about alternative forms of masculinity based on identification with the feminine, which is not to say that Hamid, father of two, with his grand beard is not fully masculine. But look, already in my first book, *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983), I used the example, from Proust, of Swann and Odette to show how we invest our libido in a variety of associational fields that we attach to a love object. Odette is not Swann's type, but he is attracted because he hears a piece of music he loves when she is present. Then he connects her to a Botticelli painting, and so on. Our identity is constructed

through a series of misrecognitions of ourselves beginning with the mirror stage, and then many other displacements which light up other objects of incorporation than ourselves, and integrate them as parts of ourselves. A parent, the father or mother, is not a fixed entity but a heterogeneous host of memories, any one of which can be the starting point for displacement, and construction of self.

No comment on my caricature: it's true I have gotten more severe and monotonic in my public readings as I've aged, so I kind of like the energy in the portrait and it is certainly very astute in identifying a number of the misrecognitions that have given form to my identity, my writings over time, and the ways in which others see me. My work tries out several of those closed door (*huis clos*) train carriages (or analytic sessions) to work out how gender dynamics might work to explode the train's phallicism. Maybe Jacques (Derrida)'s deconstruction of phallic logocentrism could help here.



“Kaja Silverman on ‘Phallic Mother’” 20 May 1987, Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference

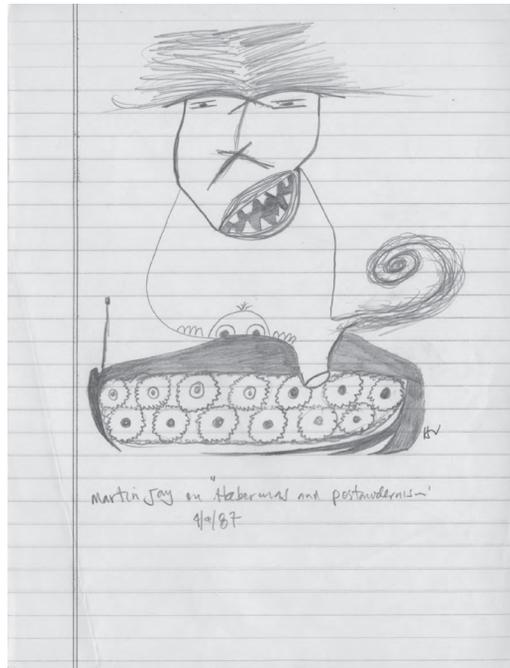
**Martin Jay, 1987** (“Habermas and postmodernism”)

First Impressions: man in Russian or Hassidic fur cap, with twisted shark’s teeth, crossed nostrils and beady eyes, severed hind leg astride a tank with aerial up, and a squirrel tail. A wide-eyed circle super-flat manga character peers over the tank from the crook of the man’s arm. Hamid’s caption reads, “Habermas and postmodernism.” Is the manga figure Habermas — that is, a figure of his communicative rationality as the condition of possibility for his ideal public sphere — looking in wonder at the real world’s performative contradictions? Or is the main caricature Habermas, and Martin Jay is the little manga man, the blank commentator, observing, but keeping himself out of the way? So now the head is topped by Habermas’ unruly shock of hair, and the twisted mouth is Habermas’ distinctive hare-lip which, despite corrective surgery, slurs his speech, but does not interfere with his incisors or incisiveness. He preoccupies, overwhelming Martin Jay’s own figure, lecturing on “Habermas and postmodernism” in 1987.

MJ: So, why can’t Jürgen Habermas understand the theorists of the postmodern? It’s really frustrating, because they are actually politically on the same side (eventually he and Jacques Derrida will become good friends), but Habermas today, in 1987, sees the shadows of resurgent Heideggerianism and nihilistic Nietzscheanism in recent French enthusiasms. French intellectuals, after all, have taken the longest time to recognize the totalitarian evils of Stalin, and they seem, according to Habermas, to underestimate the dangers of a reunified Germany and its nationalist resurgence. The shadows of war remain long, there are still amputees, damaged veterans, damaged physically but also psychically and morally. The task of building and rebuilding robust deliberative democracies requires, as Derrida says, constant vigilance, no one more vigilant and outspoken than Habermas, hugging the tank with severed limb. After all, from early on, Habermas analyzed the fall of spectacle politics, the theater state of the French monarchy, and the emergence of an open society of deliberation, newspapers, and debate, in turn threatened by the colonization of the public sphere by owners of the media. Things have not gotten simpler or transparent, and Habermas’

own efforts to define a social theory of pure communicative rationality seems beset by the way the world works in reality. No wonder he appears in the cartoon as a little bubble of purity dismayed by the sharks, cossacks, and crossed swords, waving their tails like flags of virtue. As the rabbis say, if I am only for myself, who and what am I? So too we need to foster plural lifeworlds and not allow their subversion by the formal rationalities that bureaucrats and totalitarian regimes use against us arbitrarily or at the whim of the market.

Aggh! No, I can't see any likeness between the cartoon and myself, unless I'm supposed to be the little round-eyed guy, and Jürgen's the one with all the hair – maybe the ambiguity is supposed to be a sign of the postmodern? But it sure is a striking visual, more dramatic than I'll ever be.



“Martin Jay on ‘Habermas and Postmodernism,’” 9 April 1987, UCLA.

## Jean-François Lyotard, 1987

First impressions: Sharp nose and searching eyes in a trim bird-like head seems right, but how do we parse the surrealist figuration of a pen — sharpened and protruding from an electric razor, pencil sharpener, or anus, resting atop an oversized buttoned-up shoe, or is it a judge's gavel decorated with some academic trimming? Either way, shoe or gavel, the foundations on which we balance our discursive rationalizations are at odds with our apperceptions, thanks to visual and libidinal forces. *Discourse* [and] *Figure* (1971) interrupt each other (the tropes in language often redirect awry the speaker's thoughts), as does the wiring and the anus extruding pen, or the libidinal inscriptions, below the neck (*The Libidinal Economy*, 1974). The synaptic electricity seems to have caused the neural wiring to explode and go haywire all over the penguin-like tuxedo. Justice (the gavel) or *Just Gaming* (1975, translated 1985) is a problem of interpretation of competing events, unresolvable because of *The Differend* (1983/1988), that is, the non-commensurable differences across language games. Such perhaps is the libidinal economy and the computerized information system that constitutes the conditions of postmodern knowledge. Minitel, the early French computerized information system, was the object in mind during the writing of *The Postmodern Condition* (1979/1984) — a false lead, but a productive one — raising the same questions that Habermas raises: about the conditions of legitimation of knowledge, expertise, and governance; and about the challenges of the mercantilization of knowledge, judged by performativity, metrics of excellence and instrumentality. Still, as in the caricature, the role of the avant-garde or postmodern art is that of pushing the boundaries of modernism, that only later will become recuperated as modernism.

JFL: Ok, now for the caricature to actually function in a postmodern way, it needs to be a little more like Barnett Newman's work. It needs to index that something profound and sublime is going on, without having to specify what that something is. And it needs to show an injustice, a result of a differend, a structural immemorial, that cannot be memorialized (encrypted, pushed away), but keeps irritating,

keeping the critical senses alive. So, actually, I kind of like the caricature. The pen is irritating, beyond the body, and beyond the capacities of the electronic media which soon will be called the digital media. All of us in the 1970s and 1980s expected information theory to be transformative, often in uncontrollable and dangerous ways. In the new millennium, business managers will fetishize “disruption,” digital tools for disaggregating jobs into tasks, and further mercantilizing everything. Life was easier in the days of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, or rather it was imagined to be a simpler matter of revolutionary politics; the revolution didn’t happen in Algeria, and it didn’t happen in 1968 France. Good luck, now.



“Lyotard,” 15 October 1987, UCLA.

### **Jacques Derrida, 1987**

First Impressions: almond eyes, Spock ears, hair on fire, large mouth, thick-necked and chubby, with narrow tie and jacket. The eyes, drawn with dark, elongated upper eyelids/brows, are like statues of the Bud-

dha or Mahavira before they are installed or enlivened, that is, with empty sockets, waiting for the awakening (democracy to come, justice to come). Derrida is portrayed as a youthful Algerian Jewish exile, aspirant to French culture, insider-outsider, deconstructor of the Western philosophical tradition, using his Talmudic-semiotic skills as well as his French-German-and-English skills to show how languages, tropes and reason undo themselves, carry meanings other than those intended by their authors, doing work in their very framing beyond the frames.

JD: So, let's "deconstruct" this caricature. Given that for years I refused to allow any pictures of myself, and then, when I did allow a few, I posed in striking angles, always making sure my hair was waved just so, it's odd to try to interpret features in this drawing that seem like Levi-Strauss's challenge in interpreting the masks of the Northwest Coast Indians or First Nations as inversions of one another's masks and myths. So, for starters, there is no nose, no olfactory sensibility, no attunement to fragrance and odor, albeit its importance as a communicative channel. Instead there is suggested logorrhea ("should I ask H for a break after this, 15 minutes") and antenna-tuned aurality. The pointy ear perhaps is a reference, a pointer, to my recently translated *The Ear of the Other* (1986), the effort to explore, in the manner of George Herbert Mead, the construction of the self through engagements with the other, not unlike what Kaja Silverman said a bit earlier in this colloquium. The narrow, vestigial, tie refers to my efforts to eschew only masculinist imagery.

The caricaturist turns me into a chubby adolescent, ambitious to make his way (hair at attention), with Algerian (Oriental?) eyes vacant, unknowing as yet how to make my mark. But it is already 1987, the year of English translations of *The Truth in Painting*, and *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, and the giving of my lectures at Rice University on "Psyche: The Invention of the Other," which I had previously given at Cornell and Harvard. Sorry, it put the President of the University to sleep in the front row.



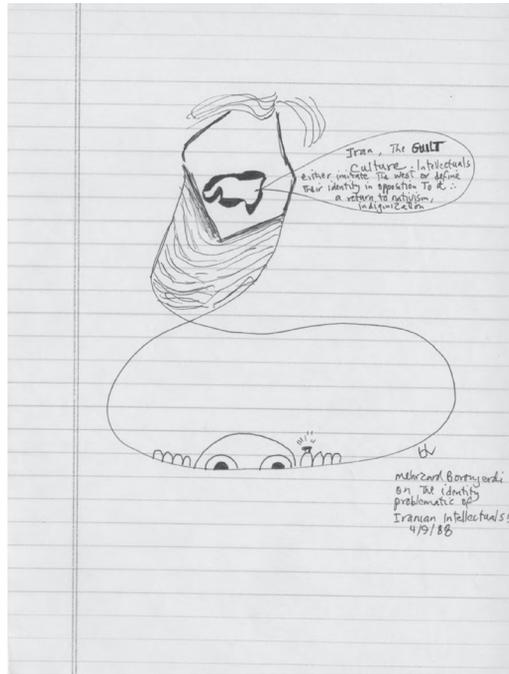
“Derrida, J.” 1987, UCLA; text on the image by Professor Teshome Gabriel address to me: “Should I ask [Peter] Haidu for a break of 15 minutes after this.”

### **Mehrzad Boroujerdi, 1988**

First Impressions: The manga man (wide eyes in circular face), this time with a burnt left index finger, is holding onto the inside of a bubble attached to the bottom of a floating bag of hot air, inside of which floats a blank white map of greater Iran from Baghdad to Samarkhand, outlined in the black of (Sunni?) rivals (Arabs, Turks and Turkomen, Baluchis). At the very top is a mop of hair flapping as if the bag were perhaps a face. There are two inscriptions. One, attached to the map, reads, “Iran, the guilt culture: intellectuals either imitate the West or define their identity in opposition; to define this a return to nativism, indigenization.” The other bubble near the manga man reads, “Mehrzad Boroujerdi on ‘The identity problematic of Iranian intellectuals.’”

MB: Yes, so I’m one of the many who fled Iran, got my fingers burnt as it were, and I do plan to write an account of the history of the past forty years through the story of my family. But first I will write up the book that

I'm talking about today in 1988, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (1996). But next I will do a more empirical study of 2,333 political figures that have staffed the Islamic Republic of Iran from 1979 to 2018. This will allow “me to abandon grandiose theorizing, in favor of laborious data collection and fact-based biographical sketches.”<sup>1</sup> So, in a way, the caricature is promissory, to fill in the bag with empirical data.



“Mehrzad Boroujerdi, On the identity problematic of Iranian intellectuals, 9 April 1988;”  
Talk balloon: “Iran, the guilt culture. Intellectuals either imitate the west of define their identity in opposition to it. Therefore, a return to nativism, indigenization.”

### Elias Khouri, 1989

First impressions: The otherwise placid caricature of the author of eleven novels, journal editor, public intellectual and academic (signified by three pairs of spectacles hanging from his jacket) has three disturbing

<sup>1</sup>Mehrzad Boroujerdi and Kouros Rahimkhani, *Postrevolutionary Iran: A Political Handbook* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2018). See the brief *Jadaliyya* interview with Boroujerdi, <http://jadaliyya.com/Details/37603>.

features: doubled eyeballs, a light bulb or hearing aid as his left ear, and a bloody hand attached to a shoulder dripping two drops of blood.



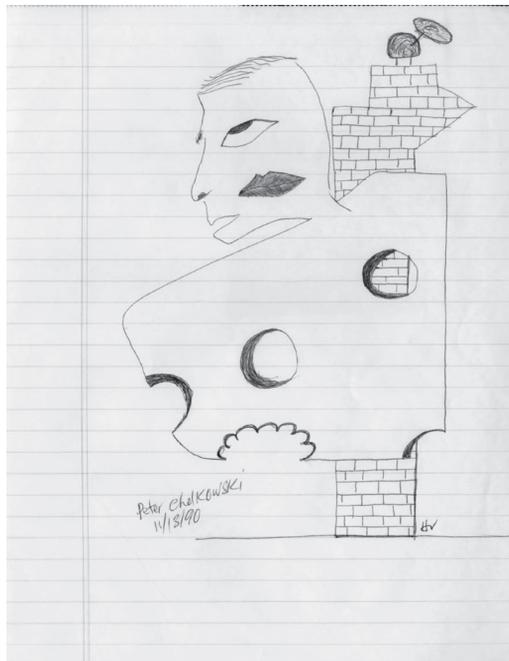
“Elias Khouri, Lebanese Novels and Memory,” 15 November 1989.

EK: There’s nothing particularly odd or surreal about the drawing. After all, although, I was born in a Greek Orthodox family, I’ve been involved with Palestinian issues in Lebanon since 1967 when, as a 19 year old, I travelled to Jordan, lived in a refugee camp, joined Fatah and the fedayeen, and experienced the expulsion of Palestinians after Black September in 1970. After finishing my Ph.D. in Paris, I returned to work in the Palestine Research Center in Beirut. During the Lebanese civil war in 1975 I was injured and temporarily lost my eyesight, so the double vision or reborn vision of the doubled eyeballs is quite apt. I wrote novels as a way of catalyzing change. But unlike one-eyed Palestinian writers, I was always concerned to treat the Palestinian experience as the mirror of Israeli experience, countering the stereotypes on both sides. So, again the doubled eyeballs are apt. Again, I use interior monologue and some dialect, rather than only standard Arabic, so yes, I depend on listening,

and the caricature's focus on a hyper-ear is correct. Nothing really need be said about the bloody hand in a situation where there is oppression on all sides including in Lebanese jails. But my effort is to gather together all the partial stories that make up the rhythms of life, democratically retelling stories over and over, each time capturing the lifeworld a little differently. In this, Jacques Derrida is correct: repetition generates difference, and in difference lies hope and the future.

### **Peter Chelkowski, 1990**

First impressions: clean cut, large, elongated eyes raised upwards, mouth with displaced lips (or a very large planted kiss by a female admirer); the head emerges from a Swiss cheese block, or drilled holes in an architectural element, with scalloped or squinch cutout at the bottom, set against a brick chimney from which two mushrooms emerge. One cannot help but wonder about the ghastly brick chimneys of World War II in Poland, which this man had nothing to do with. It is, like one of



“Peter Chelkowski,” 13 November 1990, UCLA.

his adopted homes, Iran, a place of pain and tragedy. Poland where he

was born, and Iran where he got a Ph.D. in Persian literature were both places that remained deep in his affections and self-identity. Perhaps the Swiss cheese is history drilled full of holes. Chelkowski became an expert on the *taziyeh* mourning rituals of Iran, particularly the *shabih* re-enactments of the Battle of Karbala, for which he delightedly played *impresario*, dramatically retelling the stories himself to classes, showing films and photographs, and helping host the *Taziyeh* conference at Trinity College, Connecticut. Always with good humor, he kept his eyes raised towards the good things in life.

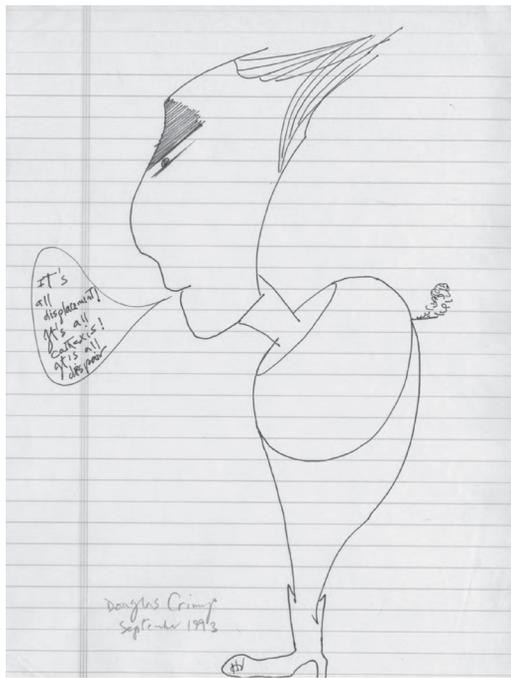
PC: What an honor and delight to be represented in this collection, Hamid! The caricature line drawing is itself a great Iranian tradition, used for satire, and good humor. You show here yet another of your exquisite skills, that would make your storied literary forebears in Isfahan and Tehran proud. Thank you, and congratulations.

**Douglas Crimp, 1993** (“it’s all displacement, cathexis, despair”)

First impressions: The elegant arc of the body strikes first, then resolves into a lighting fixture. The head emerges from the lighting fixture that tapers down into an arrow or shovel stuck into the ground. The little puff of smoke that comes out from the seam between the ball and socket of the lighting fixture provides a small balance to the bubble comment from the figure’s mouth: “it’s all displacement, cathexis, despair.” The triangle of the eyebrow and that of the sparse hair at the back of the head also geometrically balance one another. The elegant arc of the figure is Crimp the dance critic, not so much the queer theorist or art critic. He’s 49 in 1993, still very handsome but losing the hair along the sides that had framed his face as a younger man.

DC: The spotlight metaphor is very kind. I did earn my chops in New York setting up shows at the Guggenheim, and then the little show downtown in 1977 that made my name, “The Picture Show.” While that balloon is a little reductive, *October*, the journal I managed and co-edited with Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michaelson from 1977 to 1990 was indeed full of the language of psychoanalytic “displacement, cathexis, and despair.” “The Picture Show” was about what we

eventually called postmodern art—photographers like Cindy Sherman and photorealist painters like Robert Longo—who reworked popular culture images. I’ve written about that first decade of my life in New York in my hybrid memoir *Before Pictures* (Chicago University Press, 2016). It opens with the metaphor “Front Room, Back Room,” for having to walk through the front room of the restaurant-club Max’s Kansas City in the late 1960s to get to the back room where all the gay action was. I was always bending to different desires (you got that right, including presenting anally). There was deep ambiva-



“Douglas Crimp,” September 1993; talk balloon: “It’s all displacement! It’s all cathexis! It’s all despair,” Rice University.

lence negotiating the straight and academic art world with the queer world, and later negotiating the activist world of ACT UP during the AIDS emergency with my duties both at *October* and my day job as an academic. It eventually caused my divorce from *October*. I will collect my writings in ten years or so on the years of the 1980s in a volume I’ll call *Melancholia and Moralism - Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (MIT Press, 2004). I’m still very committed to the

pleasures of promiscuity of that brief gay liberation moment between Stonewall (1969) and AIDS (1981 on). I remain deeply disturbed both by American moralism around sexual matters, and by the increasing domination of the art world by the market. Yes, I'd like to think that the graceful arc of the caricature also captures something of my work with dancers and choreographers. But also, maybe my defense in public hearings of Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc," a site-specific sculpture for Federal Plaza, before the government removed it.

**Hayden White, 1993** (at Brazo's bookstore) "unheimlich"

First impressions: the genial open face and hair are well caught. Maybe the striped clown arm and gloved hand are a reference to White's *Metahistory* (1973) and likewise the bubble saying "unheimlich, oh my, unheimlich." It is clowning only in the serious sense of mucking about with settled convention. Similarly, the uncanny is a kind of unstable double vision of things that sometimes allows you to see and play with the mechanism behind the illusion.

HW: I don't know about the clowning metaphor, but true, I do not believe biography or history gets us to any direct truth. In the case of master historians of the nineteenth century, there was always an unstable and unsatisfactory effort to get argument, narrative plot, and ideological preference to sync together, which provoked successors to try to do better. And, so, history writing would cycle through more tragic, comic, and ironic forms reflecting the mood of the times. How did I slip into metahistory? The answer is the typical socialist realist 1930s scenario. Born to working class family in the south, moved to Detroit, the manufacturing center in the Depression to find work, where everything was more racialized than in my relatively integrated southern background, going to public schools where one was made aware of class differences, then to the city's college, DeKalb, where I became interested in medieval history. But I found most people who studied the Middle Ages believed in its ideologies, and I couldn't comfortably do that. So, through Max Weber, I discovered the role of ideology, the analysis of the construction of ideologies. He was a historian of the ancient world

who also did medieval history, and the question was how could beliefs sustain themselves for a thousand years. So, with socialist convictions, and ideology critique, I got into how historical construction is used to construct ideology. The discomfort and ambiguities that Douglas Crimp talked about is somewhat similar, in his case, across conventional and gay histories, or moralisms and freedom from those moralisms; in my case, market ideology and artistic critique.



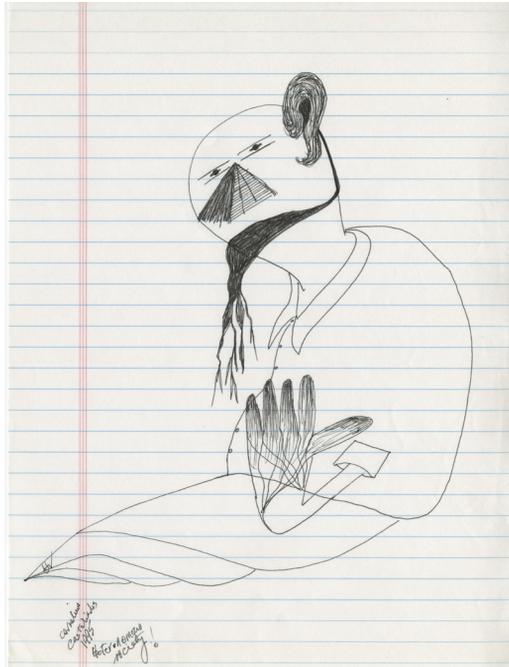
“Hayden White at Brazos Bookstore,” March 1993, Houston;  
Talk balloon: “Unheimlich! Oh my unheimlich!”

### **Cornelius Castoriadis, 1995** (“heteronomous society”)

First impressions: bald head with pronounced triangular shape below the nose are realistic; the worker’s ax attached to a blood flushed hand (stop!) reflects Castoriadis’ shifting alliances from Athenian Communist youth and Communist Party of Greece (against the Metaxas dictatorship), to Trotskyist, to libertarian socialist (around the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, along with Lyotard and Claude Lefort), and later Lacanian psychoanalysis. The outsized ear spurting a stream of blood across

mouth and tongue, dripping with blood, perhaps signifies his work as an economist for the OECD (the destructiveness of market capitalist ideologies) as well as his debunking of Soviet claims to be a socialist mode of production with a mode of distribution that had as yet failed to keep up. It was instead, he argued, a state capitalist formation. The caption “heteronomous society,” is the term he used in contradistinction to autonomy. Autonomous forms are self-organizing from Greek agora and democracy to the *autonomia* workers movement of Italy in the 1970s. Heteronomous forms are those that allow control to rest in the hands of others. So, the relation between revolution (ax), hand (stop!), tongue, and ear has to do with his sense of the (Lacan-derived) social imaginary: how a society names and institutes itself. History consists of revolutionary, discontinuous events, which are given meaning by being named, by taking ownership. Born in Constantinople, and part of the Greek-Turkish exchange, followed by exile to Paris in 1945, his work became part of the non-Marxist left, reflecting his life’s experiences.

CC: I died in 1997, so it’s hard to comment, but kudos to the artist.

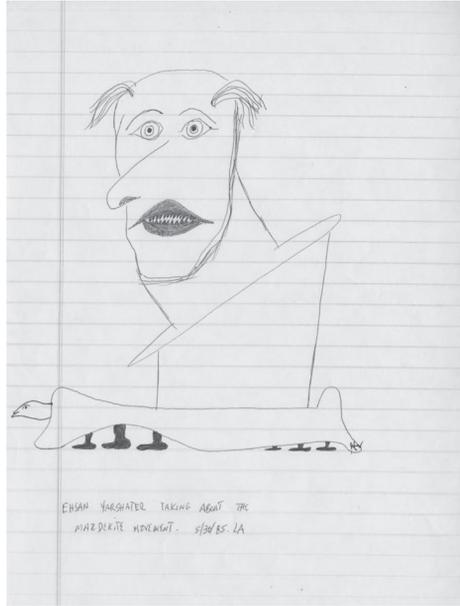


“Cornelius Castoriadis, Heteronomous society!” UCLA.

**Ehsan Yarshater, 1995** (Talking about the Mazdakite Movement)

First impressions: puppy-like eagerness to please with warm eyes, floppy ears, nuzzle prone nose and gregarious mouth, looking around from a magician's top hat, set next to a hexapede (six-footed) elongated turtle with head extended and shell or blanket ending in a heel and toe -like foot. Actually, the cartoon captures Yarshater's friendly face quite nicely, and no disrespect intended in the "puppy" label (I think of Emmanuel Levinas' dog, Bobby, the only living being who always greeted the concentration camp inmates with warmth and recognition). The floppy ears are really side tufts of hair, and he really is friendly and gregarious, and an unusually well trained and fine scholar of Iran, long time editor in Iran of *Bongaah-e Tarjomeh va Nashr-e Ketaab*, and then in New York, editor of the *Encyclopedia Iranica*, as well as of the volume in the *Cambridge History of Iran* on the Seleucids, Parthians and Sassanians. Trained by W.B. Henning in Old and Middle Iranian, a student of the northern Tati dialect as well as Jewish-Persian dialects, he was born in Hamadan of Baha'i (and I suspect Jewish) ancestry. His take on the Mazdakites — an egalitarian and proto-socialist reform movement of Zoroastrians in the sixth century C.E., that had early success, was suppressed by the Sassanians, and reappeared as an influence in resistance movements after the Arab conquest of Iran— was that as they became disruptive to the control of the elites they were suppressed including a bloody massacre in Ctesiphon, the capital. The friendly reptile at the bottom thus becomes legible as an "undercover" social movement with many feet (followers) over a long period of time (turtles live long lives), having a big foot (foothold) in the nationalism of Iran (Zoroastrian state religion), sticking their head out from time to time in favor of social justice, economic redistribution, and egalitarianism.

EY: Good, good, I like it. The good religion (*beh din*) of good words, good thoughts, good deeds is well grounded and survives today.



“Ehsan Yarshater talking about the Mazdakite Movement,” 30 May 1985, Los Angeles.

### **Paul Rabinow, 1995**

First impressions: It’s a triple faced Daruma doll (or *okiagari* “roly-poly”) with a stabilizing tail. One is a sun-shaped Paul, genial, smiling, with a tuft of wild professorial hair at the back of his head. This Paul is being nestled at the chest, facing a Plato’s cavern of darkness, with indirect rays of light only on the cavern floor. Above are two bespectacled faces in African or North African turban-cap, one face turned forward with small round mouth; the other in profile with jutting jaw, open mouth, and curved nose. The triplet theme is right for 1995, when he was writing *Making PCR*. So, threes have to do with the triplets of nucleotides, the automated PCR device which replicates or amplifies DNA, and the genetic code, composed of “letters” of triplets of nucleotides. Cetus Corporation, the biotech company that commercialized the automated system is described by Rabinow as doing three things: turning an idea (Cary Mullis gets the Nobel Prize for this) into an experimental system (the work horses of the invention in Rabinow’s evaluation) which in turn gets packaged into a sellable tool or kit (commercial

value that allows Roche Pharmaceuticals to buy out a large part of Cetus with the PCR patents). So, a third sense of the triplet in the caricature is Paul as DNA being incubated (experimental system), with up-top Paul as the idea, and turned to the side with open mouth for propagation (speech, marketing, exchange value, commerce) of the commercial kit. The roly-poly is a metaphor for the ups and downs of scientific experimentation commercialization: lots of failures, getting knocked down, and having to bounce back up. And the large bowl-like bottom, filled with squiggly worms, is both an incubator (of DNA, of ideas) and a government investment in research and development; the tail is the stabilizing tax revenues making it all possible.



“Paul Rabinow,” 1995, Rice University.

PR: Yes, that’s good. I’d only add two things that did not make it into the representation. First the quirk of fate that as an anthropologist I got access to Cetus Corporation through Tom White, its science-manager, because his wife had read *Writing Culture* and so had an inkling of what an ethnographic-anthropological project might be. And second, that the conditions of possibility for the whole roly-poly were established by the Chakrabarty supreme court decision and the Bayh-Dole

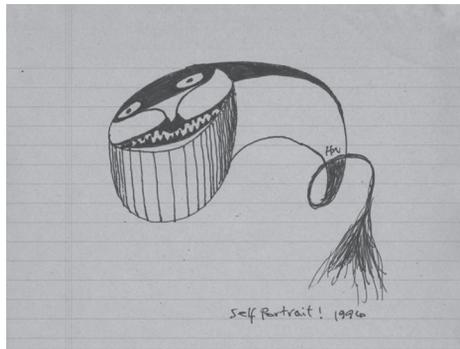
Act, both in 1980. These incentivized the biotech boom of the 1980s and 1990s, by allowing the patenting of inventions and commercialization arising from government sponsored research.

As to the caricature itself, no comment yet: I'll get to the visual arts in twenty years with my work on Gerhard Richter.

### **Hamid Naficy, Self Portrait, 1996**

First impressions: A very fine Kwakiutl mask face, with big cheeks or mustache, round eyes (reels), chattering teeth (sprockets), on the side of a police whistle (film canister), with the curved mouthpiece (film strip) unwinding to a small horse tail tip. Switching parallax point of view, one can also see the "horse tail" as a mustache; the handle of the whip forms a nose and eye (black pupil and white segments); the high forehead, curves back to the film canister brain. The brain contains a hard disk spinning, with random access enabled, digital film archives.

HN: No comment because of confusion about whose breath is blowing through the sound system.



“[Hamid Naficy] Self Portrait!,” 1996, Rice University.

### **Tom Gunning, 1999** (“industrialization of simulacrum”)

First impressions: bust of a large eyed, droopy mustachioed, round shouldered, fellow with flowing hair parted center left (stage right). The bust is held up by accordion-like lungs on a vertebrae-like stringed instrument neck, with tuning pegs. The contraption stands in a boat, or

begging bowl. It's a wonderful image for a master of the cinema of attractions (many entertainment forms from vaudeville, sonic and visual gimmicks) and of the cinema of allegories of vision and modernity (follow the use of the telephone as an actant in Fritz Lang's movies).

TG: I could use the occasion for another talk, but I'd rather just sit back and play upon Baudrillard's notions that in the movies or the television news, things are repeated without any original experience or event being required. Ever notice how footage from one war is substituted for another by a lazy or time-pressured newsroom. Also notice how the program music tells you what to feel or expect without necessarily having any relation to what you are seeing. As the channels of communication and sensation get pulled apart and remixed, new possibilities open up, new worlds, new kinds of experience. Digitalization makes it all easier, more liquid. The synthesizers and electronic orchestras are taking over the means of perception.

By the way, in the next few years I'll let my hair grow even longer.



"Tom Gunning," 1999; Talk bubble: "Industrialization of Simulacrum."

**Goli Emami, 2000** (My story begins)

First impressions: an intellectual middle-class woman's head par excellence, elegant squared glasses, short combed hair, stem like long neck set on an angle like a lamp, serene, placed on a buttoned-up tunic, part of a three-layered pedestal. The buttons could also be violin pegs, aligned with the xylophone carved into the bottom of the pedestal, i.e. not just a reading lamp, but a music system to read by. Captures a translator, journalist, publisher, serial library and bookstore owner, woman of strength and valor, convener and facilitator of a generation of young strong women in Tehran. Goli Emami (nee Golrokh Adib-Mohammadi), with her husband Karim, first founded Zamineh Publishing, which became Zamineh Bookstore, a gathering place. She became general manager for three years of Farzan Publishing House. She will later found Bayan Salis International Book Store, another gathering place with light butcher block shelves for local authors, and dark wooden ones for foreign authors. 1997 was when Khatami was re-elected for his second Presidential term; but in 2000 two prominent women activists, Mehrangiz Kar and Shahla Lahiji, were arrested after attending a conference in Berlin, celebrating the reformists' victory. And so it goes, back and forth, with, most recently, Emami telling us about a Women's Center meeting she attended on what to do if arrested and interrogated. Serene and persistent, these women of Iran who never give up.

GE: No, I am not associated with the commercial site "My story begins." But do stop by the bookstore. We will soon put up an art exhibit of caricatures drawn by the great historian of Iranian film, Hamid Naficy. Do come by and see.

