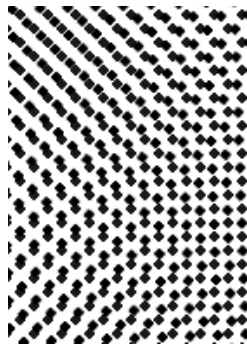


THE TITANIC CYCLIST

A CLOSET DRAMA IN ONE SCENE

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PREAMBLE.

This is a closet drama in one scene. The action, an interview conducted by two small figures with big smiles on their faces—their questions are addressed to a very large figure mounted on a bicycle sized to fit that big body. Let this massive figure be named, The Titanic Cyclist. So, the work as outlined, is a set of inquiries mounted toward The Titanic Cyclist and that cyclist's replies. This structure of proposition is doubled within the play because The Titanic Cyclist is also a set of questions cohered within a figure—a gestural and heaving embodiment—and a marker, a big wonky allegory for what *could* goes on and go wrong in the bigness of the world. What The Titanic Cyclist *is*—what they symbolically trace out in a dumbshow of personification and gesture—the foundational subjects that bear and build this athlete are these:

What is macho?

What is brute?

What is muscle?

What is foolish?

What is not soft?

What is show-of-force?

What is dumb violence?

What refuses what is meek?

What is in-charge and what is the engine of what is?

THE CHARACTERS AND THE SCENE.

The Titanic Cyclist

The Bicycle

Two Smilers, or Those Who Inquire, or Those Happy Two

THE TITANIC CYCLIST

The Titanic Cyclist is a huge body and voice. Sixteen feet tall when measured from the underside of the bare feet up to the crown of that heaviest head. The limbs, trunk, and meats that make them are material incongruity animated: the fleshy big body of The Titanic Cyclist is composed of heavy-duty PVC that is very much a rubbery polyvinyl thing, but also a thing that can sweat, make piss, bleed, and breathe full-heaving-gulps as it goes faster and harder.

Each of these resinous limbs and sections, (whether it be the arm, bicep, mighty thigh, or trunk) exists like so many big heavy-skinned balloons, bulbous, and fixed to each other by taut joints—like the knotty airtight terminus of fun party balloons. So, these limbs are buoyant, inflated—they float—and even when stationary, waver all independent in small soft moves when kneaded along by passing breezes. This way the figure of The Titanic Cyclist is never still—the contours are chronically adrift even when stopped—like the vaulted chubby walls of a bouncy castle, but just shaped in huge humanoid form.

The head has some details. There is hair on top. The bleach-blonde scalp holds rosy burns from the cosmetic paste that lightens hair like that. This floppy mop is dry and full with static, the strands broken by some brute treatment performed in repetition making the hair this way more and more all the time—each strand so brittle and sapless that it rustles when moved. The other thing about the head is the voice that comes out from the mouth at the bottom of it. Whenever it is let out, the heavy, yawning, aching bassy sound is proportional to the rest of the sixteen-foot physique. The lungs housed inside that great trunk reverberate like massive shuddering yard-bags, pushing the shaped air of the uttering up all the way through the rest of the bodily piping, which then comes out as a loud booming and seems to reach all over the place.

The Titanic Cyclist does not go nude. On top, The Titanic Cyclist wears mirrored single-lens sunglasses with a rainbow iridium coating. Never without these frames, The Titanic Cyclist may as well carry a single outsized eye—which suits the character in its cyclopean intensity—the singularity of the mega-gaze, the indifference of this cropped out vision makes The Titanic Cyclist only-any-good for racing that is both its sole goal and medium—a push for velocity, for whatever is ever-forward. Meanwhile, below, the prodigious body is wrapped in spandex cycling bibs, sublimation-printed in

sunny yellow and orange colour blocking. These textiles are made for stretching; they dilate around the bigness of all the cartoonish muscling of limbs and torso (never mind the little bit of gut dumping out over the bib's lip). The underside is padded with a microfiber foam chamois, and so supports the spectacle of the rounded ass while mitigating genital damage during the vigorous efforts of speed.

THE BICYCLE

The Titanic Cyclist mounts and rides a 1992 Lotus Type 108 bicycle and no other. Anything but the dilated stretch of this carbon monocoque frame would be taken as a material slight by The Titanic Cyclist—worse, as an insult to the speed that makes up both the way and why of The Titanic Cyclist's doing.ⁱ



Figure 1: *...the way and why of its doing.*

TWO SMILERS, OR THOSE WHO INQUIRE, OR THOSE HAPPY TWO

Smilers are stand-ins for all those low forces and figures who concede to dumb power and are happy about it. For those bystanders—they are those who *know* The Titanic Cyclist—what he *is*—and say *yes and please*. There are Two Smilers, they are standing figures, nude; both much smaller than The Titanic Cyclist. They steadily urinate down their own legs, weakly.ⁱⁱ They are Smilers because they constantly grin so wide and with such force as to distort the delivery of their speech—they smile to a point of pain.ⁱⁱⁱ Along with the smiles, are the sounds these Two Smilers have with them—wherever they stand, they are accompanied by faint localized music, somehow floating only near them, merging with the rich funk of piss.^{iv} Then there are their eyes, always cast both sunward and (inevitably) towards The Titanic Cyclist. The entire character of this pair's presence is one of strange attendance, of a sickly bowing under the brute posturing of that huge cyclist. Both their grins and unbroken eye-casting tell of some dynamite druggy deference, a total attentiveness towards the cyclist and the things meant by that very huge body. So, serving, they go on foot when they go.

THE SCENE

Curtain opens. Against a blue-bird sky, Two Smilers are stock-still with heads and eyes bent upwards from stiff necks. They stand atop a mellow and sloping stretch of lawn with their soft music keeping them slow company. This green-grassed hill begins from upstage right with the bottom terminating downstage in the extreme. Set further back at upstage-center is some wire fencing marking out the corner section of an enclosed tennis court. The lawns are a very vivid almost false-green—flawless and smelling heavy with summer—all is lit with big bulbs so as to make like a hot sun-shining over the action.

From stage-right enters The Titanic Cyclist. Mounted in a tight speed-tuck with torso in a fold overtop the Type 108 and pushing the pedals in rapid cadence to make the crank-arms, pedals, and feet like a single big and glittering disk—a rotating kaleidoscope of locomotion—of spinning and power rendered as shape.^v The Titanic Cyclist, with this heavy speed, traverses across the stage and comes to a stop in front of Two Smilers with a slight skid of the rear tire. One massive leg flexes in small twists and pulls away from the clipped pedal, the foot comes to rest, heavy on the lawn. The Titanic Cyclist's other foot remains attached to the Type 108, the knee bends and the bottom of the torso is slung over the crossbar, genitals all bunched and silly, hands go easy on the grips of those slung-forward bars. So, in this position at center stage, though leaning towards upstage center, Two Smilers face and stare expectantly upwards at The Titanic Cyclist in this state of partial dismount. The actions of the scene begin from here and are as follows...

ACT 1: OR, THE QUERIES ON THE LAWN.

Sixteen-foot tall, The Titanic Cyclist leans heavy over the Type 108 in that semi-dismount, and is tall overtop Two Smilers, the extension of their wide expressions already at the extreme, revealing spit-glossed teeth and rubbery pinkish gums.

SMILER 1

Why do you pedal so hard and how do you name it when you do so?

THE TITANIC CYCLIST

When I pedal it is hammering. The hammering is both medium and the object made—hammering upon pedals through the extension and heaving-upward of these big boned legs is pressed violence applied to making this body go forward and fast. I hammer because I hammer, to beat—to go—to know unlimited movements, to keep force out-of-control.

SMILER 2

If to pedal is to hammer, and hammering is to beat with some violence, then as you beat you win and lead always. Why are you the leader?

THE TITANIC CYCLIST

I am the leader because of my size and my moves—because of all of the muscles—because I push with the hammering always and on all days.

SMILER 1

What are your shapes? What shapes do you make of yourself as you go? Where does your body bend to make all the curves for the hammering on the Type 108 that you do?

THE TITANIC CYCLIST

There are a number of places that make crooked, so my big body will be buckled the correct way for the hard pedals. Main bend is at the hips, straight forward and down, down like when a body bows, and as I do this the spill of my gut slides over the top rim of the bibs, lurching down like that, the gut making for the ground I hammer across as I hammer across it. Then the double kinks at mid arm on both arms, both sides. Head down at the end of the neck at the end of the bent torso—but looking forward with the crown of it sunwards, so that the eyes from behind the glasses are dead-eyed on all that is forward. Altogether, all these contortions layered with each other concomitantly as a choreography for the big racing shape that is called the full-tuck—it's the curve for always-speeding.

SMILER 2

What do you eat to do this grind and how do you eat it as you keep grinding?

THE TITANIC CYCLIST

I look always to eat without stopping—without making-still at a place for eating. So, for lack of a static feed-station I paste the feed itself over the top edge of my handle—of the bars of the Type 108. The bars of the Type 108 are spread over with other bars—energy bars—The Powerbars. When I unwrap and heat them in my hands I make like a power-dough and daub it on top of the bars where I can reach it with my mouth without unfolding from the full-tuck.

SMILER 1 AND SMILER 2, TOGETHER

When one is behind you there is a rot. What is this offending air?

THE TITANIC CYCLIST

Those are the winds of my body—my big body winds. Whatever is outside me, to the rear of myself is subject to this kind of hot leave-taking, decays, to the rots of that air as I hammer forwards.

SMILER 1

Do you ever cease the pedaling to stop for relief—a pause to calm those winds?

THE TITANIC CYCLIST

I toot and shit bitterly, in pasty flows—and no—I stop not for those or for those to the rear of me, for those who I already beat and left behind bæek.

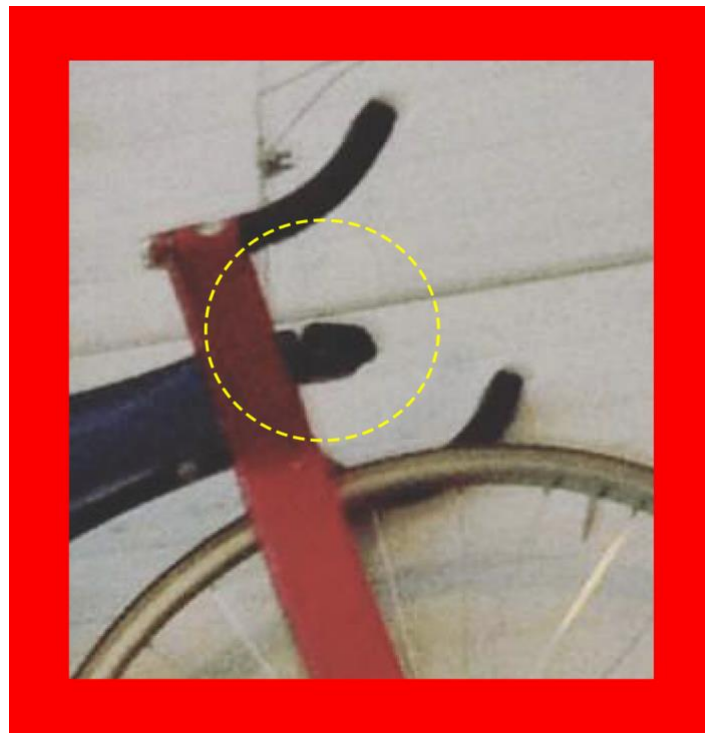


Figure 2: ...I paste the feed itself over the top edge of my handle...

The huge head of the The Titanic Cyclist turns to one and then to the other Smiler, thereby delivering a meaningful stare through the rainbow glasses. What is meant by the look is undeterminable, the look is full power, an uncut brandishing of force that is as bold as it is vapid. Under the weight of this gigantic dumb stare the puffy sections below the Smiler's eyes go rounded and rubescent. They begin to cry, wailing through their wide smiles still unbroken. They piss further and more down their legs in misery, their bowels evacuate in a sort of embarrassed salute to The Titanic Cyclist. With all that going on, The Titanic Cyclist lifts the big leg that had the foot on the ground and presses on the pedal with it. So re-mounted, The Titanic Cyclist turns the Type 108 in a half moon swinging and rolls away from Two Smilers, leaving them to their little pools of muck.

[*Curtain.*]

END-NOTES

ⁱ The 1992 Lotus Type 108 or the LotusSport Pursuit Bicycle. The bicycles competitive debut at the 1992 Olympics set a new record for the 4000m Pursuit event. Its carbon composite monocoque frame was honed for advanced aerodynamic performance via a series of wind tunnel tests—and so was rendered from the heaving breathe of some other colossal lung.

ⁱⁱ “Not until he was on the steps with the landlord, who greeted him deferentially, did he notice the two men...he laughed. ‘Who are you?’ he asked, glancing from one to the other. ‘Your assistants,’ they answered.” Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, Trans Mark Harman (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), 16.

ⁱⁱⁱ “The asocial character of bliss: it is the abrupt loss of sociality...there follows no recurrence to the subject...*everything* is lost, integrally.” Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 39.

^{iv} Huey Lewis and the News, “I Want A New Drug,” recorded 1983, track 3 on *Sports*, Chrysalis Records, cassette tape.

^v Giacomo Balla, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash*, 1912, oil on canvas, 35.4” x 43.2”, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.