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REVOLT2DIE & GJYD @ MEME

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Riding among an exhausted busful of Negroes going on to graveyard shifts all over the city, she saw scratched on the back of a seat, shining for her in the brilliant smoky interior, the post horn with the legend DEATH. But unlike WASTE, somebody had troubled to write in, in pencil: Don't Ever Antagonize The Horn.

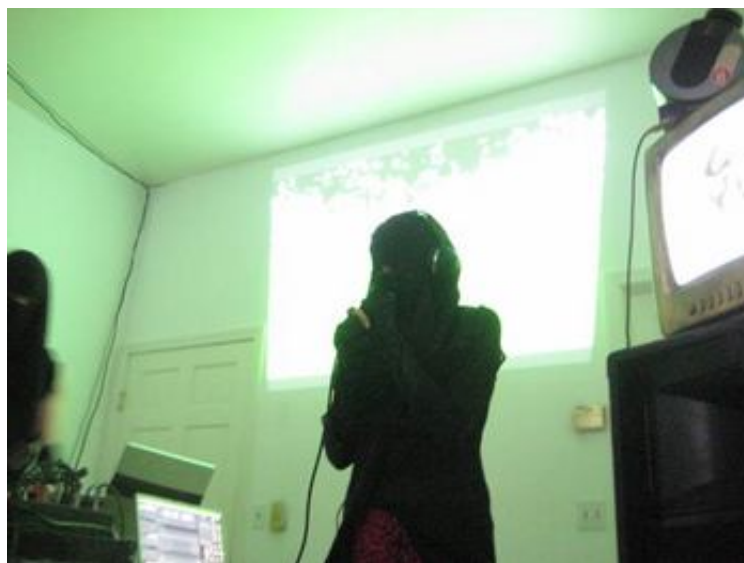
Somewhere near Fillmore she found the symbol tacked to the bulletin board of a laundromat, among other scraps of paper offering cheap ironing and baby sitters. *If you know what this means*, the note said, *you know where to find out more*. Around her the odor of chlorine bleach rose heavenward, like an incense. Machines chugged and slobbered fiercely. Except for Oedipa the place was deserted, and the fluorescent bulbs seemed to shriek whiteness, to which everything their light touched was dedicated. It was a Negro neighborhood. Was The Horn so dedicated? Would it Antagonize The Horn to ask? Who could she ask?

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

On my way home from watching GJYD



REVOLT2DIE's Declaration of Independence from MEME Gallery on Vimeo.



GJYD declares independence

perform at MEME Gallery, I was suddenly reminded of *The Crying Of Lot 49*, that quirky Pynchon tale of a woman who sees signs of the mysterious Trystero everywhere, sure that there are clues but uncertain how to interpret them. The meaning of symbols becomes unclear, muddled, and even if she knows that she is looking at something symbolic, that doesn't necessarily mean she can figure out what it is intended to convey.

GJYD may, or may not, stand for Golden Jasmine Yeti Dancers. It may have had that particular meaning on Friday, July 17, and now means something different as I write this. The relative meaning of symbols is variable to GJYD. At least it appears that way, but no one involved is going to give you any answers either way.

The exhibition "Revolt2Die" has been in a state of flux for the past two weeks, a mix of imagery and styles that seem both revolutionary and naïve. Much of the work is made of collage on cardboard, images of famous figures like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, disfigured by graffiti. These feel like the doodles of a high schooler in their history book, the odd set of devil horns or Hitler mustache on the face of a beloved patriot. Tacked to the wall with hot pink tape, one might be tempted to assume that these are the ventings of an artist who can finally do all the things that were forbidden when they were young and rebellious. Yet, there is something much more complex and interesting at work than the surface reading would suggest, but I'd be hard-pressed to pin it down.

For the performance, a number of video projections fill the space, showing imagery that has become iconographic for GJYD. **Yassy Goldie** looks down from a television, behind the text "I want to sox yu0". A pink yeti raves in a white circle, the stop-motion action jarring yet hysterical. The floor is painted in the angular GJYD logo, speakers and laptops ready. Underscoring the fact that this is a performance with all the related pop culture expectations, there is even an opening act: **Foz Bozzerstein and the Foozletown Poozlers**. These openers are funny, even a bit charming, but not particularly engaging as either musicians or performance artists. Then again, the headliner always wants to look good and outshine the opener, and there is probably a bit of misdirection going on. Like everything else about "Revolt2Die" there seems to be much more at work than the surface read will allow, and yet no clues as to how to understand the diverse symbolism. Everything operates as a sign for something else, layers and layers of potential meaning without any key for putting it all together. The sheer amount of work present, and the large number of people involved, indicate that there is some larger motivation, yet they provide almost no means to



One of the many collages in *Revolt2Die*

access it. I have hope that when GJYD begin their performance there will be some moment of clarity, a kind of Rosetta stone for this work.

When GJYD take the "stage", it is not with explosions and fanfare, almost nonchalant. At least, as nonchalant as a man in gold speedos and a gold crown, and two people in burkhas can be in a small and crowded room. I recognize one of the burkha covered performers as [PrincessDIE of the Miracle5](#). When I ask after the show who the other performer is, I once again face the notoriously confounding anti-logic of GJYD.

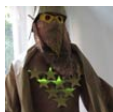
The show starts with a sort of manifesto (see video) and then launches into a kind of highly synthesized death metal, with the two burkha-wearing "Yeti Dancers" trading off lyrics. Behind and around them, a frenetic mess of images keeps pace with the music, a blast of YouTube imagery, pop culture, porn, and seemingly random collages of historical figures and nature shows. It is all so fast-paced and frantic that it is just a blur, a set of impressions left behind: there is a feeling of anger, or frustration perhaps, of wanting to communicate something that cannot be made clear, of finding a code that does not want to break.

"Revolt2Die & GJYD" is the kind of show that can drive you mad, a bottomless collection of clues and symbols whose meaning is inaccessible, yet they are collected in a way that seems as if meaning can be made from them. Ultimately I think GJYD revels in that quest, the search for meaning among disparate symbols, and that this work is built around the pleasure and frustration that arises from trying to understand the complexities of historical and pop references. As postmodern (and after?) culture deflates much of our understanding of history, how does one make any sense of the non-stop barrage of icons that we confront daily? Where does the revolution start if there are no kings to behead, no canon to destroy? If GJYD is not answering these questions, at least they are challenging our understanding of symbols and making declarations that are challenging, provocative and hot pink.

MEME

GJYD

Revolt2Die



[Click here for images from the GJYD "Declare Independence" performance at MEME on July 17th, 2009](#)

"Revolt2Die" was on view July 4 - 18, 2009 at MEME.

Video and collage images via the MEME website. Performance image by the author.

Matthew Nash is the publisher of Big RED & Shiny.