

# Mfs

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## WHAT'S THE USE?

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# Mfs

## THE STRATEGY OF DIGITAL MODERNISM: YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES'S

DAKOTA

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Young-hae Chang Heavy Industries is the name of the collaborative duo, Young-hae Chang and Marc Voge, responsible for some of the most innovative electronic literature online. Their work is programmed in Flash to produce a sophisticated, minimalist aesthetic. Sleek black text in Monaco font—capitalized and unornamented—flashes against a stark white background in speeding synchronization to jazz music. Individual words and phrases pulse out from center screen to take possession of the white space before they are replaced by more text. Young-hae Chang Heavy Industries (YHCHI) refuse to say much about their work—"we can't and won't help readers to 'locate' us"—and reveal in a guise of anonymity that they see as constitutive of the medium in which they work: "Distance, homelessness, anonymity, and insignificance are all part of the Internet literary voice, and we welcome them." But in interviews and artist statements, YHCHI repeat the claim that their acclaimed *Dakota* (2002) "is based on a close reading of Ezra Pound's *Cantos* part I and part II" ("Distance").<sup>1</sup> This pronouncement is both a declaration and an invitation: a declaration of alignment with a canonical work of literary modernism and an invitation to read *Dakota* through Pound's first and second cantos. This essay addresses both aspects of YHCHI's statement: I read it as

an assertion of literary lineage linking the digital work to a tradition laden with cultural capital in order to analyze how this connection serves *Dakota* and our reading of it. YHCHI's statement expresses a consciously crafted attempt to provide a specific framework through which to approach *Dakota*, a context whose academic and canonical connections are particularly intriguing because *Dakota* exists on the popular and accessible mass media technology of the moment—the Internet. As we will see, *Dakota* exploits this apparent contradiction to promote multiple levels of address and signification in order to defy categorization as high or low, modern or postmodern art. YHCHI demand a cultural repositioning of these critical concepts as literature enters the post-postmodern period and electronic literature, I argue, adopts a strategy of digital modernism.

*Dakota* is exemplary of what I call "digital modernism," a strategy that adapts literary modernism as a means for challenging the status quo of electronic literature and our assumptions about it. "Digital modernism" is an identifiable organizing principle for a subset of electronic literature that shares a common, conscious *modus operandi*: these works use central aspects of modernism to highlight their literariness, authorize their experiments, and situate electronic literature at the center of a contemporary digital culture that privileges images, navigation, and interactivity over narrative, reading, and textuality. YHCHI is exemplary of such efforts because their work pursues a minimalist aesthetic that presents a conscious resistance to the central characteristics and expectations of mainstream electronic literature. Works like *Dakota* resist the alignment of electronic literature with hypertext, evade reader-controlled interactivity, and favor the foregrounding text and typography, narrative complexity, and an aesthetic of difficulty. Young-hae Chang, of YHCHI, identifies her simple aesthetic style as an explicit act of defiance: "In my work there is no interactivity; no graphics or graphic design; no photos; no banners; no millions-of-colors; no playful fonts; no pyrotechnics. I have a special dislike for interactivity" ("*Dakota* Description"). It is not simply a "dislike for interactivity" that motivates YHCHI's electronic literature and their desire to connect *Dakota* to modernism. YHCHI see the current state of electronic literature as one in which literature is "not taken very seriously" ("Distance").<sup>2</sup> To rectify this fact, they align their digital literature with a work in a literary canon that is taken very seriously.<sup>3</sup> They appropriate a seminal work from the modernist canon as fodder for their rebellion against mainstream electronic literature; *The Cantos* serve to purchase cultural capital through association and help acquire serious reception for the digital work.<sup>4</sup>

YHCHI identify Pound as their modernist persona, adopting his practice of using personae—literally masks through which to speak

to a new age about and through its new literature. Attaching their work to a central figure—or the central figure, for, as T. S. Eliot claims, Pound "is more responsible for the XXth Century revolution in poetry than is any other individual" (xi)<sup>5</sup>—YHCHI induce critical reconsideration of both digital literature and of modernism. As we will see, *Dakota's* adaptation is both an ironic and an earnest attempt to "MAKE IT NEW" by rearticulating the past. Its text reads as both a simple story about a youthful road trip, complete with colloquial language and allusions to mass culture, but also as a faithful retelling of Pound's first two cantos, the first of which is itself an adaptation of book 11 of Homer's *Odyssey*. YHCHI pursue the modernist practice of renovating an ancient past as inspiration for modern literature, employed by Pound in the opening to his *Cantos*. The result is that *Dakota* not only rereads cantos I and II but repositions them in a contemporary, digital milieu and demands reassessment of "the XXth Century revolution in poetry" that Eliot identifies and whose impact is visible in contemporary electronic literature.

Like all of YHCHI's works, *Dakota* begins with a cinematic countdown that harkens back to the early days of film, the period of literary modernism and its sibling mass media.<sup>6</sup> When the numbers appear onscreen, they are synchronized to the blaring beat of Art Blakey's solo drums in *Dakota's* soundtrack, "Tobi Ilu." The selection of jazz furthers the connection to modernism, as jazz is the musical and historical counterpart of literary modernism,<sup>7</sup> and also to Pound himself who perceived an intimate connection between poetry and music.<sup>8</sup> The audio visual performance of numbers, text, and drums sets a slow, steady beat that establishes a solid rhythm for the narrative. The beginning of *Dakota* is relatively easy to read, but as the work continues (it runs nearly six minutes), Blakey's drums quicken and the narrative flashes at heightened speeds. *Dakota* does not allow its reader to control the work's pace: there is no button to stop, pause, or slow the text. Instead, as the cinematic countdown introduces, *Dakota's* flashing performance produces an experience closer to viewing film than reading literature. Even so, YHCHI's authorial claim asserts a connection between *Dakota* and high modernism rather than cinema or the more contemporary popular culture associated with digital media and online art. As Chang states, "My Web art tries to express the essence of the Internet: information. Strip away the interactivity, the graphics, the design, the photos, the banners, the colors, the fonts and the rest, and what's left? The text" ("Web Art"). Focusing on *Dakota's* text is hard to do because the flashing speed thwarts such efforts, but, as I will show, this difficulty further aligns the work with literary modernism's aesthetic practices and principles. Framed by YHCHI's authorial claim, *Dakota* promotes two seemingly



Figures 1-3  
Sequential screenshots from Young-hae Chang Heavy Industries's Flash animation *Dakota* (2002).

opposed reading strategies: it prompts the reader to sit back and passively consume streams of flashing text but also incites the critical reader to reread the work, transcribe the words, and compare its content to Pound's modernist epic.

*Dakota's* content calls for a reading strategy of careful and comparative close reading to connect it to Pound's *Cantos*, but its formal presentation challenges such attempts. This paradox is made even more intriguing because *Dakota's* narrative seems to have no immediate relation to the beginning of *The Cantos*; it is only through closer reading that intertextual connections emerge. Close reading as we know it, a practice of slow examination focused on the text and tensions its language produces, is something that *Dakota's* performance elides. Its text flashes so fast that it is often impossible to read, let alone close read. This is, I argue, part of YHCHI's digital modernism: the difficulty of following the authors' claim by close reading *Dakota's* close reading of cantos I and II is a strategic attempt to promote awareness of the distinctively different, digital nature of the work and the types of reading practices it necessitates. Katherine Hayles reminds us that digital textuality is not composed of durable, stable marks inscribed on the page but rather what she labels as constantly refreshed "flickering signifiers."<sup>9</sup> *Dakota* enacts this constitutive fact of digital information; it refuses to remain still onscreen, provoking an awareness of the effects its flickering or flashing has on the way we read. This ambition is evident in the typographical decision to substitute the zero sign for the letter "O." The aesthetic choice permeates YHCHI's oeuvre and visually highlights the digital nature of the text by showing its screen content to be thoroughly interwoven with the numerical base of binary code that penetrates and enables its flashing performance. This is one way in which *Dakota* calls attention to its digitalness even as it remediates print modernism.

Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin use the term "remediation" to describe the way that media coevolve in relation to one another or "refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media" (15);

YOUNG-HAE  
CHANG  
PRESENTS  
HEAVY INDUSTRIES

DAKOTA

Figures 4 and 5

Sequential screenshots from *Dakota*

I use "remediation" to describe an aesthetic strategy through which YHCHI refashion their work in relation to the poetics of another period, that is to say, modernism. YHCHI's remediation of modernism starts with their software selection. The authors build all of their digital works in the popular authoring tool Flash by Macromedia, a program for producing animations. Flash is marketed as "the industry's most advanced authoring environment for creating interactive websites, digital experiences and mobile content" (Adobe). YHCHI employ this software extolled for enabling "mobile content"—meaning that Flash makes it easy to adapt and interact with content across various media forms and technologies—to create an aesthetic of difficulty through an experience of visual illegibility. Although YHCHI's works are textual animations, they do not utilize the platform's trademark functions: seamless animations of moving, multimedia images and interactive effects. Instead they employ Flash to pursue a retro-aesthetic that focuses on text and typography through a performance of cinematic, textual montage. Flash is part of a family of animation software or 3D modeling programs that uses a timeline-and-scene cinematic paradigm. The authoring tool employs the metaphor and methodology of film to remediate this analog medium into the creation of web-based animations. Its interface depicts a timeline of cells that collectively comprise the "movie." But this act of backward-remediation only serves to facilitate the ease of its use, for Flash is technically noncinematic. The authorware distinguishes itself from bitmap-based programs like Director that create images through the composition of discrete, cell-like pixels because Flash is a vector-based tool. In other words, the comparison between film and Flash stops at its mediating metaphors: Flash uses the metaphor of film as an approachable interface for the creation of digital animations, but these movies are not based on the serial replacement of the photograph. YHCHI use this vector-based software against its will to highlight the role of

the nonexistent frame in their textual montages. In so doing, they use Flash in a fashioned act of resistance to counter enthusiasm for the latest and newest through a retro-aesthetic that resituates our readings of electronic literature in a literary tradition extending back to modernism and its mass media. Examining *Dakota* as both an adaptation and a remediation of Pound's first two cantos identifies the media-specific ways in which this digital work challenges traditional reading practices and, in particular, our assumptions about what it means to close read.

### Close Reading *Dakota* Close Reading Cantos I and II

Both Pound's *Cantos* and YHCHI's *Dakota* begin with a classic journey: Odysseus's visit to the Underworld during his journey back to Ithaca and a teenage cross-country road trip. The first line of Canto I begins midsentence and midaction as Odysseus's ship enters the Underworld. The reader joins the action through a conjunctive fragment in the first line: "And then went down to the ship, / Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and / We set up mast and sail on that swart ship," (*Cantos* 3). *Dakota* also begins midsentence and midaction, with the shock of obscenity in large, capitalized letters: "FUCKING". The black letters sit at the center before being swallowed up into the white screen. The action continues with words and phrases flashing consecutively, replacing the previous text and following the action of Pound's canto: "WALTIZED—OUT—TØ THE CAR—PUT THE KEY IN—THE IGNITION—READY TØ HIT THE RØAD."<sup>10</sup> The sun is out, the car is packed, and beers are in the trunk: "THE SUN—HIGH ABOVE—PØURING—DØWN ØN—ØUR HEADS." A group of friends head out "CRØSS CØUNTRY— . . . ." *Dakota*'s lucid, linear presentation follows the opening canto as Odysseus's ship pierces the boundaries of the Underworld: "Came we then to the bounds of deepest water / . . . / Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven / Swartest night stretched over wretched men there" (3). While Odysseus continues into the depths of the Underworld, *Dakota*'s characters enter an American Underworld haunted by ghosts. Signs for "BLACKFØT RESERVATION" and "BADLAND, SIOUX FALLS" flash quickly onscreen, and an oppressive tone creeps into the music. The characters have consumed too much alcohol and penetrated territory marked only by a "DEAD MØTEL" and an impenetrable darkness that "NØT A STARRY NIGHT—NØR A LØW FLYING JET-LINER—CØULD PIERCE." The earlier atmosphere of youthful frivolity dissolves as the text begins to flash faster, mirroring the act of reading signs from a moving car. The screen becomes a physical space to be read like South *Dakota*'s

stark landscape, and a parallel is invoked not only between *Dakota* and the first canto, but also between the readers of both texts who struggle to make textual fragments cohere. As *Dakota*'s youthful road trip enters the Badlands, the land lending its name to the work's title, the happy but hapless characters intrude into the realm of the Dead as the narrative continues to follow the plot of book 11 of the *Odyssey* on which Pound's first canto is based.

Whereas Pound's alterations to his source material are mostly formal—remaking the ancient epic into a decisively modern poem—YHCHI alter the content in such dramatic ways that the literary parallels are visible only to the reader willing to carefully compare the texts and tease out the intertextual allusions. In this digital remix,<sup>11</sup> the characters start drinking, pounding beers until the word "BEER" covers the screen and shakes for a few seconds while the screen flickers between white and black. Then, a visual reprieve: "(BURP.)" In the midst of the joys of drinking, smoking, talking about sex, and insulting each other's mothers, anxiety seeps in. The "WHØØPIN'—N'—HØLLERIN'" from the beginning of the road trip shifts to "FEELING—LIKE—HELL." "BEER" becomes "BEER—IN—ØNE—HAND—BØURBON—IN—THE—ØTHER." Violence erupts in recollections of an accident and a dead friend: a guy from the old gang was "SHØT—DEAD," and the narrator "DIDN'T—EVEN—GØ—TØ—HIS—FUNERAL." The narrative describing cruising under a "HØT SUN" transitions into tragedy with deepened drumbeats. All of this follows the canto, wherein Odysseus, while in the Underworld, encounters dead soldiers, friends from war: "Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads, / Battle spoil, bearing yet dreary arms, / These many crowded about me; with shouting" (4). The dead men are bloody reminders of the wars that shaped Western civilization. Similarly, *Dakota*'s narrator stands in a dark American landscape riddled with a bloody history of battles to "win" the West and "civilize" its native peoples. In the land of the Dead, Odysseus is visited by Eipenor, "our friend Eipenor, / Unburied, cast on the wide earth, / Limbs that we left in the house of Circe, / Unwept, unwrapped in sepulchre, since toils urged other" (4). *Dakota*'s narrator also encounters a forgotten ghost from his own past. The shade of Elie (hear "Eipenor") appears, "ALL BLØØDY" like the last time the narrator saw him. Elie speaks in a series of quick frames: "I—DIDN'T—EVEN—HAVE—THE—GUN—BUT—I—TØØK—THE—BULLET." Like Eipenor, who suffers "I'll fate" and begs of Odysseus, "O King, I bid remember me" (4), Elie also fears being forgotten: "NØBØDY—LIKE—ME—AND—ALREADY—FØRGØTTEN." He attests, "NØW—I'M—IN—HELL." Then, faithfully following Pound's (and Homer's) text wherein Eipenor's visit is followed by the appearance of Odysseus's mother—"And Anticlea came, whom I beat off" (4)—so

too, in *Dakota*, is the text describing abject Elie replaced onscreen by, "THEN—MY—MØM—SHØWED—UP—BUT—I—TØLD—HER—TØ—LAY—ØFF." *Dakota*'s plot carefully overlays book 11 of the *Odyssey* and Pound's revision of it, and the comparisons are extensive and ripe. However, *Dakota* does not easily divest itself of these connections. It is through careful close reading and rereading that the palimpsestic layers emerge.

Reading this way illuminates the decisive transformations in *Dakota*'s contemporary remaking of the modernist text. Consider, for example, the shift in the identity of Tiresias, the seer Odysseus travels to the Underworld to see. In *Dakota*'s adaptation Tiresias is reinvented into a twentieth-century cultural icon: Elvis. The name, displayed in oversized letters, throbs hypnotically at the center of the screen, occupying more screen time than any other word in *Dakota*. It is a sentence in and of itself. Just as Odysseus gives Tiresias a bloody elixir to drink to elicit his instructions on how to return to Ithaca, *Dakota*'s protagonist saves his last swig of beer for "ELVIS." Elvis appears "HØLDING—HIS—GUITAR," just as Tiresias holds his sceptre. He is still "The King," not yet the bloated figure of wasted youth whose humanness tarnished the icon. This is the young Elvis, "ELVIS—ØF—MEMPHIS," and the distinction is important to *Dakota*'s narrator who is himself conscious of "GETTING—ØLD—FAST" and obsessed with the being one of the "LØST—SØULS—ØF—LØST—YØUTH." The insistent figuration of the young Elvis, whose metamorphosis the reader (now in the role as seer) foresees, personifies the narrative's sense of wastefulness: a wasted landscape (full of "TUMBLE— / WEED TRASH"), occupied by wasted (drunken) characters, cursing their wasted futures ("SMASHED—BØTTL—AFTER—BØTTL—, —BRØWN—GLASS—ØN—ASPHALT. —THREW UP, —CURSED—FATE"). The sense of being wasted is furthered by the presentation of the text, which speeds by in a steady stream and wastes the reader's opportunity to catch all the words. *Dakota* depicts this wastefulness not as a symptom of that which has been completely destroyed, but rather, as in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (on which Pound's editorial contributions earned him the dedication *Il miglìor fabbro*), as the ashes from which new literature, phoenix-like, arises.

The transformation of Tiresias into Elvis and, indeed, the entire adaptation of the Homeric journey into an American road trip, is a playful and poignant adaptation that begs the question: is *Dakota* parody or pastiche?<sup>12</sup> *Dakota* presents itself as high art and mass media, remediation and retro-chic, and it revels in these convergences. The single words and phrases—written in simple, colloquial language—are digested easily, but they are also layered with allusions that ask to be deeply mined. The clichéd scenes of male bonding and

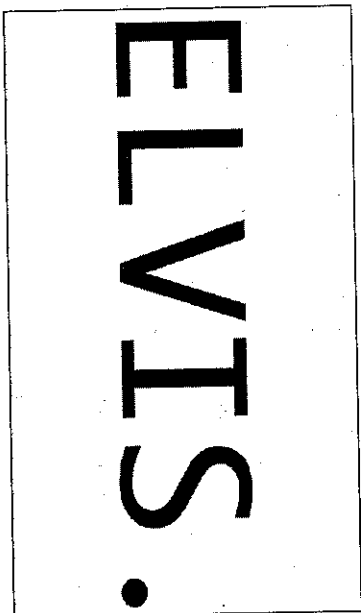


Figure 6  
Screenshot from *Dakota*.

Americana can be read as simple stereotypes or complex critiques of the globalization of consumer culture. *Dakota* provides for and provokes multiple forms of address, and YHCHI revel in the confusion their work presents: "some see it as poetry, others as pornography" (Email, May 7). Evidence of the challenge *Dakota* poses to traditional aesthetic categorization is apparent in the various types of venues and exhibitions that have displayed the work. Aside from its availability (for free) on YHCHI's website, *Dakota* has been exhibited as visual art at the Whitney Museum in New York, as part of film series at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, and as literature in the *Iowa Review Web* and *Poems that go.com*.<sup>13</sup> YHCHI position their art at the cusp of high and low culture where it straddles the boundaries between modernism and postmodernism just as it challenges generic distinctions between literature and film, prose and poetry. After all, *Dakota* is both prose and poetry. Its linear narrative is a flashing performance set to music that produces a poetic rhythm; its onscreen presentation of single words, phrases, and multiple lines of text create line breaks and enjambment while also presenting a linear narrative. *Dakota* can also be considered cinema by virtue of the fact that it is built in Flash. Yet, YHCHI resist such medium-based designations: "At first, we didn't realize we were creating an animation. But it seems that by certain new-media-art definition of things, when you use Flash you're doing animation" ("*Dakota* Description"). Expressing their distrust of easy categorizations, YHCHI are aligned with Pound, who viewed genre distinctions as "rubber-bag categories" that academics use to "limit their reference and interest" ("How" 16).<sup>14</sup> Part of YHCHI's strategy is to disturb the ability to limit *Dakota*—to unsettle the hinge

on which rests the door dividing literature from film, reading from viewing, modernism from contemporary, digital literature.

### Locating *Dakota*

After Elvis's appearance, *Dakota* quickly transitions from a linear narrative that follows Pound's first canto to something decisively different. The text shifts from Canto I to Canto II and moves towards an aesthetic more akin to postmodernism or, more appropriately, post-postmodernism than modernism. Blakey's drum solo is pierced by voices, applause, and other sounds of liveness.<sup>15</sup> The work turns toward self-reflexive performativity. The text reaches heightened speeds, and the story of a teenage road trip frays into fragmentation. The screen flashes "WHAT THE?" The audience begins to cheer, and its chant is folded into Blakey's drumming. Blakey is now playing not only on the narrator's car radio but also in a live studio, and this performance is captured in a media recording to which the reader listens and in a photograph that the narrator describes: Blakey "WØRE A / WHITE SHIRT—WITH / RØLLED UP / SLEEVES—AND A TIE / THRUUGH—ØUT." These quick, ekphrastic phrases flash while voices shout out in response to Blakey's jam session, seeming to propel his improvisation. Even in the midst of this mediated performance, ties to Pound's *Cantos* remain visible. Pound's second canto begins "Hang it all, Robert Browning, / There can be but the one 'Sordello'" (6). In *Dakota*'s second half, the address to Browning is supplanted by one to Blakey: "GØDDAMMITT, / ART BLAKEY" and continues, "IT MAKES / YØU THE /—ØNLY ART / BLAKEY."<sup>16</sup> And then, in this eruption of simulated liveness enabled by real-time media, the reflexive shift: the narrator and the reader both listen to Blakey's performance "NØT IN DETRØIT—ØR IN A / RECØRDING / STUDIO—IN NEW / JERSEY, BUT—RIGHT—HERE!" Speed complicates the last monosyllabic word: "HERE!" is followed by, "I—MEAN—HØNESTLY,—IN PALPAN—/ DØNGI!" Palpan-Dong is a street in Seoul, South Korea, the home of YHCHI. The sequence opens up *Dakota* to narrative interpretations not previously apparent: is the narrator located in Seoul and listening to Blakey while fantasizing about an American road trip?

Identifying the journey as a mental one of cultural "passing" might explain the references to clichéd Americana—besides Elvis and Marilyn Monroe, beer and the Badlands, the narrator and his buddies "ATE—SØME—HAM—AND—CHEESE—SANDWICHES"—but such a reading simply swaps one subject identity (American) with another (Korean) in a replacement that does not allow for the cumulative construction and complexity of *Dakota*'s layered aesthetic. Indeed,



although the text supplies support for locating the narrator in Seoul, the details are stereotypical Orientalist tropes that balance out the American ones: for example, "WHILE IN / THE STREET / BELOW" the narrator catches glimpses of "SØUSED / EXECUTIVES—FRØM / KANGNAM" and "GISEINGS—(KØREAN / GEISHAS)—WHØM THE / EXECUTIVES—PAY A LØT / TØ LAUGH—AT THEIR / EVERY—LAME / JØKE." An earlier narrative detail further complicates the conclusion that the narrator is watching Korean executives from a window by hinting at another way to locate the speaker. The following lines are dumped into a sentence as a narrative aside and are nearly eclipsed by the speed at which they appear: "LIKE AT A / BARBECUE—BACK IN—SIØUX FALLS,—WE DUMPED—ØUT —GARBAGE—AND BRØKE—BØTTLES." The text describes a time when the narrator was in South Dakota, a fact that complicates the identity, and particularly the racial identity, of the narrator: is he Native American, living on the "BLACKFØØT / RESERVATION" rather than just driving by it? *Dakota* refuses to divulge clear answers, leaving the narrator's identity and location ambiguous because "RIGHT—HERE!" where the narrator hears Blakey play, cannot be confined to either South Dakota or Seoul, for "HERE" also refers to the computer on which the Blakey and *Dakota* play.

In the age of computers, when discrete media forms such as music and photographs are subsumed into a digital format, "HERE" means that Blakey's recording and the digital work for which it provides the beat is actually happening "RIGHT—HERE!" on the reader's networked computer. *Dakota* performs in real-time through a series of interactions across programming and binary code, authoring software and hardware. Thus, wherever the reading machine is, that is where the work is happening and where Blakey's recording is playing. As the narrative nears its end, *Dakota* abandons any sense of a linear narrative and the lyrical voice presenting it. The individual speaker becomes multiple, "WE—BLARE—THE—TUNES—TØ—RØUSE—NØ—ØNE—BUT—ØURSELVES," and *Dakota* moves away from the modernist model of an individual, alienated consciousness to a post-post-modern or posthuman model in which identity is distributed across and informed by network technologies.<sup>17</sup> Its protagonist is neither American nor South Korean but constituted by both places and both cultures simultaneously through the networked computer. In *Dakota*'s digital present, "RIGHT—HERE!", identity is constructed through media technologies. This is true for the narrator and also for his gods. *Dakota* supplants Aphrodite, at the end of Pound's first canto, with the screen goddess "MARILYN," whose domain is not the heavens but celluloid: "YØU ØWNED / THE—SILVER / SCREEN—CLØTHED / ØR NAKED,—... ØR / STANDING / ØVER—AN AIR- / SHAFT / GRATE,—MAKING / LØVE—TØ THE / CAMERA—IN TECH- / NICØLØR-." The

theme of metamorphosis that concludes Pound's second canto is transformed from the biological mutation of men into porpoises into a transcoding through media technologies. "MARILYN" is constituted by the camera, just as Blakey plays through recorded "liveness" and is made visible because of an image captured in a photograph. Media also construct and enable the narrator's consciousness in constitutive ways. Regardless of whether the narrator actually drives across the Badlands or fantasizes about doing so from Seoul, the journey that *Dakota* describes is one that crosses cultural, ethnic, and geographic spaces in a manner that is indicative of and enabled by the technology through which *Dakota* operates. YHCHI adapt the Homeric quest to depict a hero trained as a web surfer rather than warrior, whose contemporary consciousness is shaped by global, transnational economics and digital technology.

This technocultural, mediatized moment also affects *Dakota*'s reader and the reading practice used to approach the Flash animation. With the climax of the final drum roll, *Dakota* twists into a reflexive loop to address the reader for the first time and include her in the digitally-induced location of "RIGHT—HERE!" In an imagistic style of which Pound would be proud, *Dakota* concludes with words flashing faster than ever before, pushing towards illegibility. The reader's engagement with the text is brought into question: "BLACK—SAUCE—THAT—CAN'T—BE—NAMED—NØR—IDENTIFIED—WHEN—TASTED—JUST—MIXED—INTØ—THE—NØØDLES—WITH—DISPØSABLE—CHØP—STICKS—THEN—WØLFED—DØWN—WITH—YØUR—HEAD—TILTED—TØ—THE—LEFT—IF—YØUR—A—RIGHTY" (emphasis added). As the reader struggles to absorb the text being hurled at her, she is implicated in the act of consuming the work. She is figured as literally eating a foreign substance speedily without identifying the food she ingests. The scene of consumption depicts the reader ingesting streams of noodles just as she absorbs flashing text streaming through the bandwidth of her computer. Interspersed in this final sputter of speeding text, the screen flickers with a gray background; the detail is a quick reference to the loading sequence at the beginning of *Dakota*. Critic John Zuern reads the return of the gray screens as an intertextual reference that, appropriately for *Dakota*, conveys multiple levels of meaning: it loops back to the opening moments of *Dakota* and to its proclaimed source material but also serves as an "invocation by the reader's browser and its entry into the data-stream." The barely noticeable, flashing gray screens situate *Dakota* in relation to its primary source material and its subject matter: Pound's first cantos, and, moreover, the networked computer and its user/reader. Whereas the opening undulation of flashing gray served to veil the material fact that the Flash work needed

time to load, the gray screens at the end are purely aesthetic. Their purpose is not only intertextual but also metaphoric: rather than load the work, they load the reader into the work. *Dakota* identifies the reader as participating in the convergence of "HERE"-ness and real-time-ness that is not only part of the narrative content but also part of its network processing. While *Dakota*'s narrator "wolfed down" images of Elvis and Marilyn Monroe, the reader "WOLFED—DOWN" the flashing text. All of this happens "RIGHT—HERE!" where Blakey plays on "YØUR" computer, before which the reader sits far back in her chair struggling to absorb *Dakota*'s large font flashing onscreen. In its final flashing moments, *Dakota* reminds the reader that digital literature is a performance happening across codes and platforms in the moment of interaction and that she is part of this process. Mark B. Hansen argues digital art depends on the reader's body for emergence because the digital "'image' has itself become a process and, as such, has become irreducibly bound up with the activity of the body" (10). As *Dakota* shows, the digital image plays out on the reader's body in a symbiotic performance. *Dakota* flashes onscreen and over the reader's eyes, consuming the reader's unblinking attention as the reader consumes the work.

The final lines of *Dakota*'s text address not only the reader but the kind of reading experience she has practiced for 5:56 minutes: is this active or passive reading? Is it reading or viewing? With its last screens, *Dakota*, which its authors ally with high modernism, is now depicted as fast food that the reader consumes. This begs the question: should *Dakota* be aligned with lean, mean modernism or mass culture's fast food? To answer this question, we return to YHCHII's claim—that *Dakota* is based on a close reading of Pound's first two cantos—ready to recognize it as a framing device and a strategy of digital modernism.

### Reading Against the Grain of YHCHII's Claim

For a reader who does not transcribe the text or choose to compare it to Pound's cantos I and II, *Dakota*'s blaring manifesto visual style, jazz soundtrack, and narrative ethos might invoke a very different literary lineage than the one claimed by its authors. In particular, its narrative about a youthful road trip across the United States resonates with Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957). *Dakota* recounts such Kerouacian subject matter as male friendship, drunken hallucinations, and sexual exploits. The work presents the tone of beatness that John Clellon Holmes describes in his manifesto "This is the Beat Generation": "A man is beat whenever he goes for broke

and wagers the sum of his resources on a single number."<sup>18</sup> *Dakota*'s protagonist wagers his resources on a road trip that will take him away from his own demons, but this effort leaves the narrator and his buddies "FEELING—LIKE—HELL,—SØRRY / FOR—ØURSELVES." The beat of this beaten tone is laid down by Blakey's drums, a recording whose date, 1962, is contemporaneous with the period of the Beats and Hard Bop rather than Pound and modernist jazz. In the second half of the work, when the soundtrack registers the sounds of a live audience, the music unleashes further connections to the characteristically oral and improvised performativity of Beat poetry.

The road trip narratives of *Dakota* and *On the Road* share a tone of hypermasculinity and its failure. The shocking profanity that opens *Dakota* and is sprinkled throughout its text expresses dissatisfaction with the constraints of gendered stereotypes and their expectations. For example, when the narrator fantasizes about Marilyn Monroe, the text registers an overt showmanship of sexual desire, one that expresses a forced and performative masculinity: the screen flashes "NØRMA—JEAN,—EXCUSE MY / FRENCH—WHAT A / PIECE / ØF ASS." Instead of sexual potency, however, the narrator recalls that he "FAILED TO SHØØT—A BIG WAD." Similarly, Elie laments not only his premature death and being forgotten, but that he "NEVER / EVEN—GØT / LAID—JUST—A—HAND—JØB—BUT—A—GØØD—ØNE." The presentation of Elie's lament distinguishes his admission that he never got laid from his claim about the value of his single sexual experience. The first part, "NEVER / EVEN—GØT / LAID," presents enjambment on screen, denoting connection between the words that is supported by the fact that the first screen is replaced by the second at a leisurely speed and in a shared beat. In contrast, the text that follows sputters out single words at a time at heightened speeds. The animation of textual ejaculation undercuts the hyperness of the language, revealing it to be hype. Throughout *Dakota* flashing text is used to complicate moments of macho bravado through montage-like layers. For example, "I CRIED" rests on screen, emotive despair presented as a visual sigh that settles onscreen for a momentary reprieve. Consecutive screens confuse this initial sense of self-expression and release. "I CRIED" is followed by "TØ THE GUYS" and then, faster, "TØ GET SMASHED." The speeding, textual montage of these phrases generates a variety of meanings: is the narrator crying or yelling, expressing vulnerability or evading it through drunkenness? Is this a moment of male bonding and connection or its refusal? Later, another important narrative moment from the protagonist's memory is similarly obscured and opened to interpretations. "GANG" is followed by "BANG," and the juxtaposition provokes disturbing and unanswered questions about the violent event: does it describe



an onomatopoeic shooting or a group rape? These instances depict the doubleness that is constitutive of the definition of "Beat," the energetic beat that propels the poetry and the voice of discontent that the beat-down tone registers. Additionally, the layering of words onscreen depicts a layering of possible meanings produced through a layering of literary influences, from modernism through the Beats and beyond.

Rather than aligning their work with Sal Paradise's bohemian wanderings, however, YHCHI assert a connection to Odysseus's journey back to Ithaca through Pound's recasting of the classical epic into modernist poetry. YHCHI use *The Cantos* similarly to how Pound uses Homer's *Odyssey*: to lay claim to an ancient cultural past as scaffolding to support a contemporary literary moment and recuperate the relevance of literature in it. For YHCHI, this past is not located in the literature of ancient Greece or the songs of medieval Provençal troubadours but in the writings of the first electric age, the modernist period. As Stephen Kern shows in *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*, this was a period during which emerged contemporary concepts of time, space, speed, and technological mediation. Kern traces a shift in cultural consciousness prompted by new technologies of communication and speed that emerged along with new artistic methods of representing these changes. Media theorist Friedrich Kittler also identifies the modernist period as a moment of decisive shift in his media-based paradigm of history, wherein the "discourse network" of the 1800s shifted from a model of "continuous connection" to the 1900s mode of the discontinuous and discrete (389).<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Lev Manovich locates this period as the origin of digital media and art, due, in particular, to innovations in cinema and montage. YHCHI return to a past that, although not ancient, is the origin of their aesthetic and technological present. In so doing, they follow Pound, who writes, "A return to origins invigorates" ("Tradition" 92).

The purpose of YHCHI's return to a modernist origin is to invigorate the current state of electronic literature. They articulate a connection with literary modernism in spite of, and indeed because of, *Dakota*'s more obvious connections to Kerouac and postmodernism. YHCHI's authorial claim encourages readers not only to approach *Dakota* in relation to Pound's adaptation of classical antiquity but also to examine the reasons this pursuit is relevant in both modernism and digital modernism. Carroll Terrell offers an explanation for the reason Pound's modernist epic opens with the particular scene from Homer's ancient text, and the interpretation elucidates YHCHI's similar selection of *The Cantos* as its source of inspiration. Terrell identifies the reference to Ithaca in Pound's first canto as a counter-balance to Troy, the city that Odysseus helped to destroy: "The epic

'nostos' ['return journey'] of *The Cantos* is thus polarized between the destruction and the rediscovery of civilization and sovereignty" (2). Pound employs this epic situation of historical tension as a metaphor parallel to his own cultural moment, recuperating it as a means of producing such influential, lasting literature as Homer's *Odyssey*.<sup>20</sup> A similar moment motivates YHCHI and is expressed in their balanced relationship to Pound and Kerouac. *Dakota* is poised at a balance of "destruction" and "rediscovery" in relation to its literary past and present. Instead of the cataclysmic end of print that many prophesied electronic literature would induce, *Dakota* exposes how digital literature can follow modernism to rediscover a canonical past through contemporary media and reclaim an investment in the power and potential of literature.

### Close Reading

*Dakota* is supposedly based on a close reading, but close reading is something that the work strives to subvert.<sup>21</sup> *Dakota* uses speed to produce difficulty through illegibility, and in this pursuit, it follows its source material; for, *The Cantos* are also famously resistant to interpretation. Donald Dave writes, "Pound seems to have had before him, as one main objective, the baffling and defeating of commentators and exegetes" (229). Pound's famous line from Canto CXVI, "I cannot make it cohere," has become a tagline of sorts for the experience of reading *The Cantos* (and other works of high modernist literature), and it is a mantra that YHCHI take up. Just as Pound claims that "the work of art which is most 'worth-while' is the work which would need a hundred words of any other kind of art to explain it" (*Gaudier-Brzeska* 84), so too do YHCHI state, "We present our work the way we do to make it indeed more difficult" (Email, May 2). As is particularly and painfully obvious to *Dakota*'s dry-eyed and unblinking reader, speed is used as a technical tool to enhance the work's difficulty. The use of difficulty as an aesthetic strategy bonds *Dakota* to modernism and the kind of reading practices its literature fostered. John Guillory explains that the canonization of modernism by the New Critics depended on the difficulty of these texts, so that "difficulty itself was positively valued in New Critical practice, that it was a form of cultural capital" (168). Leonard Diepeveen identifies difficulty as "a litmus test" not only for the work but also for the reader, a test through which "one could predict both a given reader's response to modernism by his or her reaction to difficulty, and a writer's place in the canon by the difficulty of his or her work" (xi). The difficulty of these modernist texts promoted the professionalization of readers

who could produce explications of these texts through the structured methodology of close reading.<sup>22</sup> The New Critical method has rightly been critiqued for its insular focus on the text as an isolated object and the conservative politics endemic to such a perspective. In arguing that YHCHI promote close reading, I am not claiming that this international, multi-ethnic partnership created by an American and a South Korean, whose work exists at the margins of traditional literary culture and often explicitly engages with issues of contemporary politics and race, should be read in the vein of New Criticism as it developed in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>23</sup> Yet, I am arguing that YHCHI's claim that *Dakota* is based on a close reading focuses attention on their text and its intertextuality (to Pound's cantos I and II) rather than on other possible elements of the work such as its Flash design, programming code, music, or other media-based effects. That is why, to reproduce a quote used earlier in this essay, Young-hae Chang articulates her artistic mission as an attempt to illuminate the role of text in digital art: "Strip away the interactivity, the graphics, the design, the photos, the banners, the colors, the fonts and the rest, and what's left? The text" ("Web Art"). However, *Dakota*'s text cannot be "strip[ped] away" from its design, font, animation, and music; it is a multimodal performance and because it is programmed in Flash, its source code remains inaccessible to the reader (its narrative text cannot be easily cut and pasted into a Word document). Additionally, the work depends on the physical (hardware) and data-based (software and code) entities that make it run; its literary aesthetic is determined by the configurations of the reader's computer and her Internet connection. This means that the close reading practices of the modernist New Critics must be fundamentally renovated in order to approach digital works like *Dakota*.

YHCHI's *Dakota* both promotes and complicates the practice of close reading that has been passed down from modernism through postmodernism and poststructuralism, and it does so in order to focus critical attention on this central literary activity as it evolves into the digital realm. Such works insist on the importance of the text but also demand attention to the medium-specific materiality of the performance. Digital literature demands a close reading practice that incorporates not only the external cultural and historical influences affecting the text (for example the politics, historical perspective, or embodiedness of the reader and/or author), but also the media-specific aspects (for example the specificities of Flash as an authoring tool and the significance of the work's distribution online rather than on CD-Rom). YHCHI's statement that *Dakota* is "based on a close reading" demands that we read *Dakota* in relation to *The Cantos* and at the same time reflexively reassess our own close reading practices.

YHCHI's claim thus poses a challenge to investigate the relationship between the texts in question and presents an opportunity to consider the efficacy of applying the print-based standard of literary criticism, close reading, to electronic literature.

A subtle piece of support for this argument is provided in *Dakota*'s final seconds. As the text races toward its ending, it finally drops the name of its modernist persona in a collage of fragments that flash at nearly illegible speeds: "FUCK—YØU, — ELLMANN, — THAT'S/ RIGHT, — RICHARD—ELLMANN—NØRTØN, — NEW YØRK—1973, —ØN—PØUND." Pound is named in an affront on Richard Ellmann, the literary scholar and famous biographer of James Joyce, who, along with Robert O'Clair, edited the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* (1973), which contained Pound's cantos I and II. The identification of and attack on the editor of *Dakota*'s source material continues YHCHI's adaptation of Pound's Canto I. The first canto nears its end by invoking the medieval mediator who translated Homer into the text that Pound adapts: "Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus, / In officina Wechell, 1538, out of Homer" (5). YHCHI's invective against Ellmann also raises questions about the acts of excerpting, explaining, and close reading, all of which Ellmann does in his introduction and explanatory footnotes to cantos I and II in the *Norton*.<sup>24</sup> Ellmann's first footnote to Canto I asserts the following: "For Pound, Odysseus is the type of enterprising, imaginative man, and this voyage represents in some sense a symbol or analogy of the poet's own voyage into the darker aspects of his civilization or the buried places of the mind" (357). Ellmann's explanation of what Odysseus represents is precisely the type of reading practice that *Dakota*'s speeding text evades: clear equations and analogies between text and meaning, type or symbol and their representation. *Dakota*'s defamation of the modernist scholar is a final act of paradoxical doubleness that both invites and refutes close reading. *Dakota* demands to be read by such critics as Ellmann, readers who will pursue connections between the digital and modernist texts, but it also warns against readings that derive simple correspondences and explanations such as Ellmann's New Critical explanation of Canto I. This final detail and dig at Ellmann prompts readers who recognize his name (and thus possess a certain knowledge of literary criticism and a modernist cultural cache) to closely read the text and consider why Ellmann might represent an outmoded and flawed reading practice. Close reading *Dakota* illuminates how this central critical technique of literary study is being pushed by electronic literature to evolve, along with the literature it reads, in medium-specific ways.<sup>25</sup>

### "So that:"

The first canto concludes with the phrase "So that:" (5). The fragment does not lead into the second canto, which begins with a new narrator and narrative situation, but rather gestures to future additions and responses. The colon characterizes both the act of rupture and the promise of continuation, a challenge to which *Dakota* rises. The end of the second canto similarly concludes with "And . . ." (10; ellipses original). "And" is the first word of each preceding line in the last stanza; its repetition creates a cycle of repetition that concludes Canto II with the same conjunctive word followed by an ellipsis, a grammatical mark signifying potential amendment and continuation. Instead of a colon or ellipsis, *Dakota*'s last word is followed by a period, but that is not the end of its programming. The work is programmed to reload and replay; after the last words dissolve on the white screen, *Dakota* begins again. This programming detail follows the end of Pound's first two cantos by providing a promise of continuation, but it also identifies *Dakota* as a self-contained and separate file from the hyperlinked network on which it is housed. This assertion of autonomy aligns *Dakota* with the New Critical view of the poem as an autonomous object and with Adorno's characterization of modernist art.<sup>26</sup> Yet, as I have argued, its digital and web-based nature also challenges such claims. *Dakota*'s final programming detail instead presents an affiliation with Michael Fried's later version of Adorno's idea in which the artwork achieves autonomy by rejecting its "objecthood" and accepting a "self-imposed imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood" (153). *Dakota* defeats its status as a digital "object" by refusing interactivity and rejecting instrumentality down to its very last moments. In a final gesture of autonomy and alignment with a modernist aesthetic, *Dakota* reloads and begins again, looping back to remediate Pound's first two cantos and to "MAKE IT NEW" in new media.

### Notes

1. In addition to being selected for exhibition at such galleries as the Whitney and the Getty, *Dakota* has been exhibited in numerous online galleries. It was also won Honorable Mention at the 2000 SFMOMA Webby Prize for Excellence in Online Art.
2. Interestingly, the tagline for the first and primary publisher of electronic hypertexts, Eastgate Systems in Waltham, Massachusetts, is "serious hypertext."
3. *The Cantos* is one of the least read and least taught of modernist works, but this fact does not diminish its consideration as a central

modernist text of high cultural capital. Indeed, the authority it evinces without even being read might paradoxically support and testify to its canonical status. To see this argument at work as it is applied to Joyce's *Ulysses*, see Lawrence Rainey's "Consuming Investments: Joyce's *Ulysses*," chapter 2 in *Institutions of Modernism*.

4. Mark McGurl explains that "one of the strongest definitions one can advance of the so-called modernist novel . . . is rather simple, but also powerfully, that it is the novel is conceived of as 'art,' and thus as a bearer of cultural capital" (29).

5. Hugh Kenner, as the title of this classic work *The Pound Era* expresses, associates Pound with the modernist era. In *The Dance of the Intellect*, Marjorie Perloff identifies and traces a schism in modernist scholarship based on the identification of either Ezra Pound or Wallace Stevens as the central figure of literary modernism.

6. John Zuern notices a connection to Pound even before this cinematic countdown. While the work is loading, the screen flashes through a gray spectrum before becoming white, and Zuern reads this short sequence as a visual reference that "connects intertextually to Pound as Pound's own dawn-image connects to Homer and other classical writers" while also "contain[ing] another allusion—to the 'loading sequences' that introduce any number of Flash productions currently on the Internet."

7. Alfred Appel, Jr. argues for an interdisciplinary reading of modernism that reads the classic jazz of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Jack Teagarden, and Charlie Parker as part of the modernist movement (1).

8. The first of the three kinds of poetry Pound identifies is "melopoeia" "wherein words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning" ("How" 172). In "A Retrospect," Pound provides the following advice to poets: "behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music" (6). In "The Tradition" he explains his appreciation of Homer and the Provencal troubadours: "both in Greece and in Provence the poetry attained its highest rhythmic and metrical brilliance at times when the arts of verse and music were most closely knit together" (91). Pound worked as a music critic in London, and he supposedly envisioned *The Cantos* as following the musical structure of a fugue. See Murray R. Schafer's *Ezra Pound and Music*.

9. See chapter two, "Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers" in *How We Became Posthuman*.

10. It is impossible to transcribe *Dakota* into print. For the sake of differentiating between consecutively flashing screens and line-breaks contained on a single screen, I use the conventional backslash (/) to denote a line-break and thick dashes (—) to designate the flashing replacement of text between screens. Since there are no URLs or

lexia titles, there is no apparent way to denote screens or frames with the work other than to note that *Dakota* is located on YHCHI's website at [www.yhchang.com](http://www.yhchang.com).

11. Lev Manovich identifies digital art and the culture it reflects as operating through the metaphor and practice of "the remix." He sees that "electronic art from its very beginning was based on a new principle: *modification of an already existing signal*" (126), so that "authentic creation has been replaced by selection from a menu" (124); he thus identifies the DJ as the paradigmatic figure of the contemporary artist (135). The concept of remixing is certainly related to YHCHI's relationship to modernism, but, whereas Manovich reads (and celebrates) the remix as constitutive of the digital medium (and of its postmodern culture), I see YHCHI using their remixes or remediations to counter such media-based assumptions. This distinction typifies the greater difference between how Manovich and I read the relationship between modernism and digital art. Manovich focuses on the visual arts and cinema, rather than literature, to argue that avant-garde techniques of collage and montage have become the operating principles of digital computing. He writes, "One general effect of the digital revolution is that avant-garde aesthetic strategies came to be embedded in the commands and interface metaphors of computer software. In short, the avant-garde became *materialized* in a computer" (xxxix; emphasis added). Where Manovich sees modernism as "materialized" into new media, I examine the conscious adaptation of modernist techniques as formal practice and strategic alignment. Rather than a media-determined effect of digital art-making, I see literary modernism serving particular digital writers as a means for rebelling against such expectations and generalizations. See my dissertation, *Digital Modernism: Making it New in New Media*.
12. Fredric Jameson identifies pastiche—"the imitation of a peculiar or unique, 'idiosyncratic style' as 'blank parody'" (17) and the "cannibalization of all styles of the past" (18)—as a constitutive characteristic of postmodernism.
13. *Dakota* was shown at "The American Effect" (2003) exhibit at the Whitney Museum and "Video and Media Art by Contemporary Artists" (2004) at the Getty Museum.
14. Pound shows that the difference between prose and poetry is one of degree: "The language of prose is much less highly charged, that is perhaps the only availing distinction between prose and poetry" ("How" 26). He writes, "verse-writing can or could no longer be clearly understood without the study of prose-writing" (30).
15. For a discussion of the technologized mediation of "Iliveness," see Auslander.
16. A parallel between Art Blakey and Ezra Pound might also be pursued in light of the fact that both served as not only as innovators in their respective arts but also as mentor figures to younger artists. G. Pascal Zachary explains: "By the time of Blakey's death in 1990, a tour with

the peripatetic Messengers was viewed as a sort of pre-requisite for up-and-coming jazz musicians. A quick way to be taken seriously by critics, record producers and audiences was to pass through Blakey's free-form university." An anonymous reader for *Modern Fiction Studies* adds to this that Blakey's "free-form university" might resonate with Pound's "Ezuniversi."

17. See *How We Become Posthuman*, wherein N. Katherine Hayles shows how "a historically specific construction called the human is giving way to a different construction called the posthuman" (2), a conception of the human that "configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines" and "implies a distributed cognition located in disparate parts" (3).
18. Holmes explains that being "beat" expresses a connection to the wasted spirit of the Lost Generation, the flipside of modernism that the Beats consciously adapted in a similar way to YHCHI's own adaptation. Indeed, in that modernist form of literary assertion, the manifesto, the Beat poets solidify their connection to and difference from literary modernism. As Holmes writes, "unlike the Lost Generation, which was occupied with the loss of faith, the Beat Generation is becoming more and more occupied with the need for it."
19. Friedrich Kittler defines a "discourse network" as "the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and produce relevant data" (369). Kittler locates a decisive shift in discourse networks around this period, wherein the "continuous connection of writing and/or the individual was of such importance in 1800" (83) but was replaced by the discourse network of 1900 in which "discourse is produced by RANDOM GENERATORS" (206).
20. In *ABC of Reading*, Pound writes of the *Odyssey*: "The news in the *Odyssey* is still news. *Odysseus* is still 'very human'" (44).
21. Indeed, critical analysis of certain fast-moving passages is extremely challenging for a critic attempting to transcribe and interpret the content of the work. For their assistance, I want to thank Julia H. Lee and Yun Woo.
22. For more on the creation of the relationship between modernism and their relationship to professional readers, see Strychacz, Guillery, and Graf.
23. For examples of YHCHI's decidedly more political works, see "Operation Nukorea," "Cunilligus in North Korea," or "Samsung."
24. Ellmann actually shares editorial duties with Robert O'Clair, but YHCHI cast him as the editor-translator figure, a contemporary renovation of Divus. An anonymous reader for *Modern Fiction Studies* suggests an interesting interpretation of YHCHI's outburst against Ellmann, "FUCK—YØU,—ELLMANN": the line might be read as an allusion to Pound's anti-Semitism. Read in this manner, the line lashing out at Ellmann is an adaptation of Pound's own verbal attacks against Jews in his later cantos. This reading adds another layer to YHCHI's ad-

aptation and the depth of their knowledge about Pound, but it does not discount my reading of Ellmann as a subject of critique due to his New Critical approach to explaining *The Cantos*. The line from *Dakota*, when read in its entirety, specifically identifies Ellmann not only as an individual (or a Jewish individual), but as a critic writing "ØN—PØUND" in the "NØRTØN, —NEW YØRK—1973."

25. Close reading has recently become a vital topic in literary studies focused on electronic literature. The current issue of the online journal *Dichtung-Digital* (edited by Alice Bell and Astrid Ensslin) engages new approaches to close reading works of digital literature; Roberto Simanowski of Brown University hosted a conference in Fall 2007 dedicated to rethinking close reading of digital literature and art; and a recent collection of essays, *Close Reading New Media* (edited by Jan Van Looy and Jan Baetens) applies a New Critical approach, however, often at the expense of a learned history of New Historicism.

26. See *Aesthetic Theory*, especially the sections titled "Situation" and "Society."

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**SURFING THE LONG WAVES OF  
GLOBAL CAPITAL WITH CHANG  
RAE-LEE'S NATIVE SPEAKER:  
ETHNIC BRANDING AND THE  
HUMANIZATION OF CAPITAL**

**J. Paul Narkunas**

Chang-rae Lee's 1995 novel, *Native Speaker*, offers an interesting reflection on the status of the human as a form of capital. It also interrogates the trafficking of culture by market and state forces as a technique of social control in US geopolitics. Lee's main character, Henry Park, is an American of Korean descent who feels caught between two hybrid worlds: the world of global market desires and the world of political signification that controls the representation of ethnic minority populations in the US. He works for an information services company that "deal[s] in people" named Glimmer and Company: "I [Henry Park] asked what his company researched. 'The one thing worth researching,' he [Dennis Hoagland] casually replied. 'People.'" Lee foregrounds the company's ties to the military through the character of Dennis Hoagland, a "cultural dispatcher" who started the company in the seventies when "another influx of newcomers was arriving. [Hoagland] said he knew a growth industry when he saw one; and there were no other firms with ethnic coverage to speak of. The same reason the CIA had such shoddy intelligence in non-