

“What usually is called ‘creative individuality’ is nothing but the expression of a particular person’s basic, firmly grounded, and consistent line of social orientation.”

Valentin Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

I am a stalker. I am *the* stalker. I’m also a writer. I happen to be a writer who enjoys stalking. It’s difficult to explain to another person what it is about stalking I find so appealing. Some people like to play golf. I like to follow people around, hang their photos on my wall, and think about them obsessively.

We all have to do something. We have to use up our time in some way. We like to pretend that we can live forever, but the truth is slightly uglier than that. Truth is: we divert ourselves from the truth. And we do it any way we can.

I guess that’s why I stalk John Turturro.

Why him? I don’t know really. I haven’t followed his career from the beginning or anything. Nothing so dedicated, I’m afraid. No, in fact it was a small bit role that turned me on to him. (I then made it a point to watch all his films.) I don’t mean “turned on” like a pervert. I only mean turned on. Words are funny that way.

The role I’m talking about pissed me off immediately—the film shall remain nameless (I can’t afford any lawsuits). Who the fuck does he think he is, a Jewish man from Brooklyn portraying a purple-collar Hispanic bowler? Then I found out he *might be* Hispanic. But the movie was stupid anyway. No real plot. Completely implausible. All kinds of fantastic elements real storytellers don’t need. You can’t carelessly put anything you want into a story. I know. I’m a writer.

I need a story that follows the protagonist around—ready for that moment of introspection about the small things that resonate in all of our lives. Like a good cup of coffee. Or a really hot porno. Any opportunity to get at the language. To remind us of its subjectivity. That it might not mean anything at all. That’s what storytelling is, man.

John Turturro is a thoughtful man. And a fair actor. Okay, he’s a fucking brilliant actor. If it wasn’t for that one role. Does he really think he’s Jesus?

John Turturro should act what he knows. In another role he's a writer. I can go with that. Maybe he should play himself. Maybe he should be as goddamn dull as he can. Maybe he should walk around with a camera and spew out his innermost thoughts for us in interesting ways. Maybe he can make a film as boring as our lives.

When I say our lives, of course I'm being condescending. I have a great life. I stalk a minor celebrity. We should all stalk someone. It makes a great story and makes the stalkee feel important. Most feel bad for celebrity stalkees. Sure, George Harrison was nearly killed in his mansion. Maybe it was his time. And Brooke Shields had to get a restraining order to keep her stalker away. Poor Brooke.

Maybe part of the reason I stalk John Turturro is because I think he's sexy. I'll admit that has a lot to do with it. He would be good, I know it.

*My name's Johnny. I'm not a full breed or anything; technically I'm a mutt. But I'm still the dog of John Turturro—great American actor—and no amount of pedigree can change that. I eat the best dog foods, sleep in a house with upholstery and cushions, and enjoy all that a one-child, upper-class acting family has to offer.*

*John, that's what I call him, picked me up at a pound ten months back. Just finished shooting a movie, I think. I don't know if it was any good. Doesn't matter to me, as long as it pays the bills. I like to be walked. John does it sometimes—this real nice lady in black boots from down the street walks me most of the time—but he's real busy. Acting all that he does. I heard on the tube there's this great new flea medicine. Be careful giving this to sick, weak, or underweight dogs, the commercial said. That would be the day to be flea free, but I imagine there's a catch. Always is.*

*Like the time I ate my own excrement. What was the fad that time? Something about worms. Got sicker than I've ever been. John took me to a real nice vet though. I don't mind the vet like a lot of dogs I know. The other dogs say it's the upper-class hound in me, but I disagree. I mean a shot's a shot whether your owner makes millions or thousands. Right? Anyway, the vet didn't know what I'd eaten and I couldn't very well tell her. So she gave me some shot that made me sleepy. I'm generally sleepy anyway, but what do you do?*

*There's this dog down the street. Watches movies all day with his owner. A real know-it-all when it comes to film. That's what he calls it. Pretentious bastard. What's wrong with "movie"? So he comes up to me and when he finds out I'm John Turturro's dog his demeanor changes and all that. Now, he'll lick my ass if I so much as hint that it's chapped. It's the truth.*

*Now that he's nice to me all the time I've grown to like the dog. I've started to abuse the whole lick ass thing. I mean I enjoy it. I enjoy him. Can't help it. My mother would be so upset to hear this, but I get so excited when I see him—Frank's his name—that my heart feels like it's going to burst out of my chest.*

*The other day I let him lick my ass three times in 20 minutes and then told him I loved him. He told me that with all due respect to Mr. Tur-turro, he didn't love me and that he wasn't ready for anything serious. I asked him how he could lick my ass over and over if it meant nothing.*

*Frank just barked and walked off.*

Human reproduction is, perhaps, something we take for granted. It's perceived simplicity, regularity and reliability are sometimes mistaken for its extraordinary complexity.

Take these two people for example—let's call them Les and Beulah. They wake up one morning, like any other, both keenly unaware that hours later, after a relatively unproductive day at work, they will, in a literal moment of passion, create human life.

Sounds simple enough.

Enter the element of chance. Not just chance in terms of one sperm penetrating the egg and so on. We've all heard that over and over. At some point, we have to just allow for the fact that it happens—though it is fascinating in its own right. I mean you've got age, frequency of intercourse, life of the egg, effectiveness of the sperm, and mood. I threw in the last one, but I don't think I need argue its importance. Then you have nine months to get the thing out.

But let's get back to Les and Beulah. Les comes home, like I said, after a relatively unproductive day at work. Beulah had come home earlier (she works a half day on Mondays) and has dinner ready when Les walks through the door. You get the usual conversation.

"How was work?"

"Fine, you?"

They might hug or kiss, but usually not both, and then they eat. This is where life differs from movies. Les had a sub with peppers for lunch and it has affected his digestive system adversely. Beulah had onion rings and her breath is a bit off. The light in the dining room is dim, but only because the lightbulb went out a week ago and Les hasn't changed it as Beulah had asked. She won't change the lightbulb herself on principle. So they sit in their smells and eat pasta and garlic bread, chewing with their mouths open. In a movie, Les and Beulah would be called Bruce and Linda and they would have just worked out at the gym

together. Now, they'd be sitting down to a candle light dinner and Linda would be showing some cleavage. You don't have to read tea leaves to know they're going to do it all night. But back to Les and Beulah. It seems like nothing short of a miracle to picture these two in the sack together. But as it happens, Les has had an erection all day (co-worker brought the swimsuit issue to work) and he has decided to woo his wife to bed. In a strict matter of coincidence, Beulah had fallen asleep after lunch and dreamed about her high school flame, Bobby, her first experience, and how he used to kiss her all over. She's been buzzing with sexual energy all afternoon.

The question is: How do they get together? Does Les tiptoe to the other side of the table, in his wife-beater tank top, and kiss Beulah's earlobes? No. Instead, he woos her through the art of conversation.

"The football's on tonight."

"Not again, Les."

"You should give it a chance."

"You know I hate football."

"Do you want to do it instead?"

"I don't want to get to bed too late," Beulah says. "So don't watch the whole game and then expect it."

"How's halftime?"

"Let's do it now."

They each go to a separate bathroom. Les puts on deodorant, brushes his teeth, and combs his hair. Beulah washes her hands and brushes her teeth and uses the bathroom.

Two minutes later they meet. Les is naked. Beulah is half-naked. They embrace, sweat a bit then breathe deeply.

"Thank you," Les says.

"I need to go to the bathroom," Beulah says.

Les is done. To continue the story, we have to focus on Beulah's vagina. (To be fair here we should make mention of Les's penis. At ejaculation, Les's penis shoots millions of spermatozoa into Beulah's vagina.) The vagina is a copulatory organ where semen is deposited and coagulation takes place until spermatozoa are transported through the macromolecules of the cervical mucus. Following intercourse, seminal plasma is not, as many think, transported into the uterus—most of it is absorbed in the vaginal walls. But, as we all know, it only takes one sperm to make it to the zona pellucida of the egg and then to penetrate into the egg to create life—life that begins instantly. The spermatozoa survive for about two days so conception may happen while Beulah does the dishes and Les watches football or it might happen two days later while Beulah does the dishes and Les watches *Everybody Loves Raymond*.

But we know all this.

The interesting thing is that with each life created, so too is a kind of potential. In the end, this potential separates all of us. Every human being has floated at these crossroads. What is it that makes a person like Newton or Galileo or Mandela or Marco Polo? Or Joan of Arc, Virginia Woolf or the Brontë sisters? What makes one person want to tell jokes or act or write? What makes Les Les and Beulah Beulah? What, in the end, separates me from John Turturro?

Nothing should and yet something does.

John Turturro and I were conceived exactly the same way. It is what went before and what comes after that separates us. Nicholas and Katharine Turturro probably lived respectable lives. I can only guess. My parents lived respectable lives. Neither set of parents was in a position to guarantee any kind of social and economic success.

Yet, here we are in the year 2005 and I am the stalker and John Turturro, the stalkee. These words comprise my utterance. John has over 40 films to his utterance. Yet something else separates us—something besides biology which both unites and separates.

John Turturro is Jesus—not the purple-jumpsuit Hispanic bowler in an implausible film, but Jesus himself. He can be anybody and I can't. That's what separates us.

*So John's walking me the other day, right? And some jerk-off jumps out from behind a stairway and tries to tackle John. As man's best friend, I had to do something.*

*You can imagine the surprise I—I mean we—felt when this jerk-off appears out of nowhere. I used all my dogly wiles to try and frighten him away from John, but the man was persistent. A damned handsome man as far as humans go. Too handsome.*

*I couldn't help myself at that point—no dog in his/her right mind could. Beside the walks I don't get out much. So I grabbed on and did my thing. It's not quite the same, but you do what you can. The man didn't seem to mind—a sign indicative of his sensitivity no doubt—but John didn't notice and in a rage, he took the man down.*

*Well, when the police showed up, all eyes were on John. They took the man away—he didn't even look my way—and then the police asked John all kinds of questions. One policeman asked for his autograph.*

*It's not a matter of jealousy, but one of acknowledgement. I tried to help. My size limits what I can do. I've spent most of my life coming to terms with my size. A bit of gratitude—Thanks for trying Johnny, You were brave Johnny—would have only been right. So, on the way home we*

*run into Frank—the dog that licked my ass and never spoke to me again. He looks up at John and John reaches down to pat his head.*

*“Johnny,” he said. “You could stand to be more like little Frankie here.”*

*Of course I tried to bite Frank. I mean what choice did I have.*

*I spent the remainder of the day outside.*

I crossed the line. But I made the papers. (I'll make sure and include the clipping.) I know from stalking John Turturro that he walks his dog when he's visiting his parents (some woman does it otherwise). I knew this would be my chance.

So I tried to tackle him. But that dog, that little shit, started humping my leg. John's yelling expletives and dancing around like some ninja while his dog's humping my leg. I lost my balance, rolled into John who fell on top of me. Some cop car happens to be patrolling the neighborhood and before I knew it, I was in cuffs and they were congratulating John on his self-defense skills. All except one guy who was telling him he shouldn't try to be a hero.

I didn't go to jail, but they gave me a restraining order. I can't go within three miles of John at any time. Anyway, I guess I'm done. I'm not upset or anything. It was a great run. And I made the local papers. The article on me is bigger than the one on that lady who got pushed into a subway.

Besides, I got my own story out of it. I wanted to write something different. I don't know if I succeeded or if people will get it, but I had to try something. People's imaginations are so stale nowadays. And the writing reflects that. At least people can't question the plausibility of this story. Not only did I write it, but I *made* it happen. All of it.