

BATTLE WITHOUT HONOR OR HUMANITY
VOLUME 1

**BATTLE WITHOUT
HONOR OR
HUMANITY**

VOLUME 1

DISCOMBOBULATE & NEUTRALIZE

D. HARLAN WILSON

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Battle without Honor or Humanity: Volume 1

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For Tomoyasu.

“Dobaded.”

—Kawamata Chiaki, *Death Sentences*

Invective

“I have no idea what the word ‘criterion’ is doing in the first sentence. Now then. What about the intentionality of the speaker, who masquerades as an insurgent Dionysian? This requires much more unpacking and expression. You are a fool, sir, in the best (i.e., Elizabethan) and worst (i.e., *cretin*) senses of the term. I saw you the other night at the burlesque show. You were on stage. You were doing a bad thing—very unclear in its context, and I never use the term ‘very’ with frivolous intent, especially in light of its utter superfluity in the English language. Something (e.g., the trajectory of your relaxed belligerence) is ‘very bad’ or simply ‘bad’—both usages denote badness. Please don’t point the crutch of ‘degrees of intensity’ at me; bad is bad, ‘very’ or otherwise. This brings me to a higher echelon of contention. Why is [**name of protagonist**]’s desire ‘nuclear’ and ‘embossed’? These usages, under the aegis of this itinerary, utterly flummox and escape me. In

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addition, you overlook the profound naïveté of [**name of secondary author**]'s analysis of digital reality, which is so obviously about a self-deluded, self-righteous *Pax Americana*. Furthermore, your articulation of a de facto 'messianic oubliette' is symptomatic of a larger problem, namely your unwillingness to engage with the material in any meaningful fashion. Remember when you emceed the Tony Awards? You pretended the ceremonies had nothing to do with music as you gesticulated and spat into the microphone like a dictator whose flock is running away from him even as he bleats. There's more. Careless blunders. Raging embellishments. And does the [**name of subsidiary character**] really exert a 'raw masculinity' and 'defend the ludicrous pomposity of [**bleep**] while looming on the sidelines as two teenagers awkwardly engage in coitus on the hood of a 1967 Chevy Camaro'? We all know that 1967 marks the hairy birth of the Camaro. This is not to undermine the matter at hand: your inviolate slag. Let me assure you that being an academic has its perks. Economy, for instance. By god, I make over two hundred thousand dollars a year to tell young people how much shit they pack between their ears for an hour or so per day; I spend the rest of my time staring out the window and looking at stock quotes while 'writers' whore themselves all over creation just to buy groceries and cigarettes. Bartlebys! But no. Bartleby didn't smoke. He had principles and carried a pocket knife. Well. Most 'writers' lack the discipline to get a Ph.D., let alone hold down a teaching job, or any job—even pumping gas and data entry is too much of a challenge—so who can blame them for their bald degradation? Please

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stay out of my way when I step over [*Nom du père*]. Did I mention your galactic capacity? That is because it does not exist. I confess I found the application of terms privileging debates about **[important subjects]** not particularly useful in thinking about a film, a dream, or reality. There is a lot more you could do with the **[title of citation]** raised in the 506th paragraph. Incidentally, if you cook and eat an animal with conjunctivitic eyes—any animal with conjunctivitic eyes—it is likely that you will contract a bona fide terminal disease. Hence: *look to the gaze*. So. I have orders to shoot you on the spot and I've been going on and on like a . . . like a . . . like a what? I don't know. Like somebody who goes on and on. Please stand still. Stand still. I can't aim when you're running back and forth like that. All right, I won't shoot you, but stop it. Thank you." Blam. "I missed. I apologize. I only had one bullet. Now I don't know what to do." Blam. "I missed again. How embarrassing! I had another bullet, but I didn't tell you. You can stand still. I only had two bullets. Really. I'm going to be in Big Trouble on your account. Mind you. Incidentally, your earlier discussion on Queequeg and the denaturalistis has massive potential for expansion and development. That's what I always tell my students, no matter what they do: *expand and develop*. They never listen. They do what they want." Blam. "Gotcha! No? Dammit. I guess there was a ghost cartridge in the chamber. Excuse me. I seem to be experiencing a pain in my head. Right here. A very deep and antagonistic pain. I require a narcotic. I'll be right back," said **[name of detractor]**.

[Name of detractor] stepped outside into the neighborhood, which looked eerie and gray and stolid, like a

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daguerreotype. He ambled into a cul-de-sac and screamed, “Does anybody have a narcotic! I need a narcotic! There’s a pain in my head!” He waited for a few minutes until somebody came out and walked into the cul-de-sac and offered him a pill.

“Just one?” said [**name of detractor**].

[**Name of neighbor**] shrugged.

“Do I know you?”

“I’m your neighbor,” said [**name of neighbor**]. “I live next door. Right there. The house I just came out of.”

[**Name of detractor**] repudiated the narcotic, thanked the neighbor and went back inside.

The sky swallowed a cloud.

[**Name of protagonist**] said, “Long ago I fell in love with a common woman. We indulged in the entire spectrum of human existence in the span of a fortnight. We spoke about everything. We enacted everything. It was a tragedy.”

Palsied, [**name of detractor**] replied, “I understand. Have you ever been hurled out of a commercial airliner? My father did that to me once. I wasn’t expecting it. I have been mocked before and I will be mocked again. But this business about the ‘entire spectrum of human existence’ is a red flag. ‘Life is nothing more than a sequence of painful separations.’ You said that. Those are your words. At any rate, it is my contention that those are your words. You had stormed the entresol of the P’Zhang Theatre. You had jumped onto the railing and were striding up and down it like a funambulist. ‘We are born,’ you exclaimed, ‘and the doctor takes us away from our mother. He tells somebody to give us a bath and then gives us back to our mother, and

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then we get taken away again, this time by our father, who wants to cuddle with us. There is a lot of back and forth at this point. Later, we are separated from our parents and sent to school. Just when we get used to school, we must go home to our parents. It's confusing. Later, we find a woman who we never want to leave; all day long we lay in bed and fuck like banshees. But we must go to work. And then we have kids together and the cycle begins again. Do you understand?' Something to that effect—that's what you said. On and on you went, soliloquizing with little, if any, original energy. Your thesis was plain enough: there's never enough time to grow roots. And yet you, sir, are an enemy of the root, as your behavior and your discourse, time and again, reify. This is not to say that I don't respect you. Here is my curriculum vitae." [Name of detractor] hands a c.v. to [name of protagonist]. "As you can plainly see, I have fallen into the proverbial fire pit on multiple occasions; I allowed the flames to consume my flesh, then crawled out of the pit and started again. One must always start again. It is the nature of life. New beginnings. [Name of God] would have it no other way." Click. "I swear this gun isn't working." Click. Click. "This piece of shit. It's broken." He moved the barrel from one temple to the other and pulled the trigger again. Click. "I'm going to set the weapon aside. It has ceased to retain a purpose, even as an object of intimidation, even as [name of the Phallus]. There. It's done. Do you have any cigars? No? Well. We must celebrate. It's not every day that one fails so excellently to live up to one's potential. If I may. There. Yes. Ahh. My boneless phalanges dangle into the void

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like fulminating counterparts. Are you aware that there is a hole in your [**brand name of jeans**]? Buy some new fucking [**brand name of jeans**]. If you think that I am spying on you, it is very likely that I am spying on you, even as I kneel before you.” [**Name of detractor**] kneels. [**Name of detractor**] realizes he is already kneeling. “My irreconcilable vigilance is doubtless the reason I have come down so hard on you this afternoon. Repairing your ‘text,’ so to speak, may ultimately be a simple matter of linguistic, and hence neurological, fine-tuning. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. The egg of the Word came before the chicken of the Brain. No. When you fall into an inverted lotus pose it frightens me; time and again I am reminded of the crabs. More to the point, I acknowledge your intuition, but do you really think you can get away with any kind of intelligent discussion of [**name of discussion subject**] in the absence of an invocation of Ronald Reagan? I don’t understand. I . . . Here, let me stand up now. I’m going to stand.” He stood. “There. I’m up.”

An oubliette of ultraviolence superseded a hardcore sex scene that both [**name of protagonist**] and [**name of detractor**] observed with a calm, detached awareness.

“Tell me something. Will you take a polygraph? No? Fuck you!” exclaimed [**name of detractor**].

Wind blew across the savannah.

“Like I said earlier,” continued [**name of detractor**], “You should retain no hard feelings for me. I didn’t say that? Well, I’m saying it now. I am not cruel or antagonistic by nature, but if you fuck me, I will fuck you back

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twice as hard. Apologies in advance. The fact is people need other people to tell them what they're doing wrong. Otherwise we are little more than antelopes wandering up and down the streets of Pangea, alone, ornery, drunk on cactus water and riddled by existential dread. Have you ever attended the Human Trafficking Convention? No? They teach you how to exploit human beings with flair and panache. I have been to every convention. I have attended all of the conventions, everywhere, on everything and everyone. I don't often pay attention to the panelists and the lecturers, even when I am serving on a panel or presenting a lecture, preferring instead to scrutinize the audience and take attendance. Let me tell you who attended my funeral. [**Litany of names**]. Do you hear that? Just to be sure. [**Litany of names.**]" In the distance, monkeys screeched, elephants trumpeted. "What can I say? The jungle follows me everywhere I go. As for the yawning chasm of your existence, well, I wish you all the very best. I am going to step in that [**name of hole**] over there now." He steps in the [**name of hole**]. From the bottom, he says, "I'm in the [**name of hole**] now! Don't forget about me! The worst thing somebody can do to you is forget about you! Are you still there! Is anybody there! I'm all by myself down here! Help! Help!"

[**Name of protagonist**] helped [**name of detractor**] out of [**name of hole**]. There was nothing left to say.

"Thank you very much," said [**name of detractor**]. "Let me add that I don't like it when handmaidens perform sexual rites on the stage of Forever. Spin it any way you please: I just don't like it, and I never will. You mention something to this

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effect in your sixty-third zeitgeist. Immediately thereafter you entertain the subject of gerontology. I do not understand the smell of elderly human beings. They all emit the same pong. They walk by me and the pong nearly knocks me off of my stilts. I think there is some kind of secret at work here to which I am less than privy. You reach a certain age and you become part of this club. The price: wear this perfume and traumatize a considerable percentile of the Human Stain. The younger percentile. The fact of the matter is that I am quite old and nobody has approached me about said club or said troublesome perfume. Speaking of which, why do you keep mentioning Humbert Humbert in a so-called 'slack-jawed manifesto' that has nothing at all to do with the wayward desires of a certain dirty old man? I could go on. And I will. There was a time when stiltwalkers existed under the thumb of a kind of anti-stiltwalking regime. 'Punish stiltwalkers,' was their mantra. Again I failed to experience any sort of involvement with the oppressed demographic, as if I had always-already been standing on my own two feet. I suppose you look at me and you see a man doing just that, standing here in absentia the fabled apparatuses." **[Name of detractor]** looked down and regarded himself sadly. "Indeed. There they are. The lack of the apparatuses."

"There they are. The lack of the apparatuses," echoed **[name of protagonist]**.

"Do you ever get the feeling that your molecules are dirty?" rejoined **[name of detractor]**. "I experience this feeling at least twice a day. My molecules feel like Biblical whores—the filth beneath the fingernails of Filth. Again, I convey these sentiments with the greatest of intentions.

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Viz., I intend to help you ‘improve.’ What’s that you say? What? What? What? What? What? What? What? What? Say again? I’m not entirely sure I heard what you said.”

“There they are. The lack of the apparatuses,” echoed **[name of protagonist]**.

There was nothing left to say.

Wind blew across the savannah.

The sky swallowed a cloud.

“Just one?” said **[name of detractor]**.

Blam.

Now then.

“I have no idea what the expression ‘syncopated’ is doing in the second to the last sentence. Nonetheless I hope these thoughts are of use to the author in revising his gestalt for publication since it does contain a lot of not-yet-fulfilled promise.”