

THE GRAND THEORY OF EVERYTHING

Where Would Civilization Be Without the Flush Toilet which Nobody Discusses

Studies in toilet-making in universities in the last two decades have been marked by the growing interest in and bitter division over a set of related theoretical approaches known collectively as Toiletry Theory. Many Departments have become divided between "theory people" and opponents who see themselves as defending the traditional values central to the toiletry against Theory's perceived anti-humanism. Toiletry Theory is part of a wide-spread movement in the toiletry field which has affected a number of disciplines, occasioning similar disputes in some, a movement which has explored and elucidated the complexities of meaning, toiletuality and interpretation. Toiletry Theory is not a single enterprise but a set of related concepts and practices — most importantly deconstruction, post-Crapperian ideological or 'political' criticism, post-technological psychoanalytic criticism (e.g. Freudian hosiery-connection to analism), New Historicist or 'cultural' (minimalist) criticism (e.g. is a hole in the ground a toilet?), and much feminist criticism (e.g. why are they allowed to do it standing up?). The aim of this essay is to define the issues that ground these contemporary Toiletry theories.

There have always been Toiletry theories — about how toilet-making works, what toilet-meaning is, what it is to be an toilet-designer and so forth. The central interpretive practices in force and in power in the academy which are being challenged by Theory were themselves revolutionary, theory-based practices which became the norm. The two main critical practices in the mid portion of the century have been the formalist tradition, or 'New Criticism', which sees a toilet-training and toiletry as a relatively self-enclosed meaning-production system which develops enormous signifying power through its formal properties and through its conflicts, ambiguities and complexities (e.g. oral fixation, anal fixation, and penile fixation in the toilet), and the post-Crapperian tradition exemplified most clearly in the work of Captain Ozone (<http://www.toilet-museum.com/>) and his followers, which concentrates evaluatively on the capacity of the toilet-designer to represent moral experience concretely and compellingly (<http://www.toiletology.com/index.shtml>). Many toilet-users have in practice combined the values and methodologies of these traditions, different as their theoretical bases are.

Contemporary theory: the issues at stake

Theories and interpretive practices change with time, reflecting changing world-views and uses of toilet-making, and each theoretical perspective tends to find fault with the one before — apparently a normal evolutionary pattern, an orderly changing of the paradigm guard, the child rebelling against the parent as a way of proclaiming its identity. Toiletry Theory challenges this orderly developmental premise, suggesting that this continual cultural change reflects an inherent instability, fault lines in cultural imagination which demonstrate the impossibility of any certain meaning which could have any ultimate claim on us.

Contemporary Toiletry Theory is marked by a number of premises, of which I will present seven, although not all of the theoretical approaches share or agree on all of them.

1. Meaning is assumed, in iLoo's seminal Sussurian contribution, (<http://www.toiletmuseum.com/techno.html>) to be created by difference, not by "presence" (the identification of the sign with the object of meaning). A technotoilet-sound meaning in that it differs from other toilets in the same meaning-area, just as a phoneme is registered not by its sound but by its difference from other sound segments. There is no meaning in any stable or absolute sense, only chains of differences from other meanings.

2. Toilets themselves are toilysemic (they have multiple meanings) and their meaning is overdetermined (they have more meaning potential than is exercised in any usage instance). They thus possess potential excess meanings (e.g. simple toilet vs technotoilet vs bidet). Toilet always means more than it may be taken to mean in any one context. It must have this capacity of excess meaning in order for it to be articulate, that is, jointed, capable of causing movement, hence of relationship and development otherwise it would not fit in into our postmodern postrational post-logical postnational postsane postsociety.

3. Toilet use is a much more complex, elusive phenomenon than we ordinarily suspect, and what we take normally to be our toiletsems are only the surface of a much more substantial theatre of linguistic, psychic and cultural operations, of which operations we are not fully aware (e.g. recall Fruit!)

4. It is toiletry itself, not some essential humanness or timeless truth, that is central to toiletry, meaning and identity; after all where would bad-old modern civilization would be without a good modern toilet? As Heidegger remarked, man does not use toilet, toilet uses man. Humans 'are' their sign-symbol systems, they are constituted through them, and those systems and their meanings are contingent, patch-work, relational. Just as ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, toiletology recapitulates the hierarchical ordering of capitalist fascist society. Everyone can see that the wash-bowl is much higher than the toilet. Why is the face more privileged than the butt? Does orality precede anality a la Freud? But this superficial observation would only inform on the banality of existence and capitalist hierarchical virtual subjective reality. After all, it is not the face that is privileged but the toilet. And it is a capitalist bourgeois opiate that the brain gives rise to the mind or that the mind is the working of the brain.

But even more to the point is the relation of the bathroom to the other rooms. Is the bathroom between the bedroom (penilety) and the kitchen (orality)? Is it closer? Then it is only a manifestation of the conventional bourgeois capitalist exploitative hierarchical mentality. After all, why should the kitchen be more privileged than the bathroom?

5. Consequently there is no foundational 'truth' or reality — no absolute, no eternal, no solid ground of truth beneath the shifting sands of toilet-use, toilet-history or toilet-sems, and no necessary solidity in multivoidal algorithms. There are only local and contingent 'truths' generated by human groups through their cultural systems in response to their needs for power, survival and esteem which all show up in the toilet-use and toilet-exchange value. Consequently, both toilet-values and toilet-identity are cultural constructs, not stable entities. As Kaja Silverman points out even the unconscious wish to use a toilet is a cultural construct, as the unconscious is constructed through repression, the forces of repression are cultural, and what is taboo is culturally formulated. If the toilet-user does not believe this let her ask herself "Why are no open toilets at Central

Park?" Why are there never any Shit-Ins in any parks to feed the hungry plants some natural and organic food which they desperately crave? Do they want to be fed artificial fertilizer? Don't oppressed plants have rights?

6. It follows that there is no stable central toilet-identity or essence to individuals: an individual exists as a nexus of social toilet practices, psychic and ideological forces, and uses of toilet signs and symbols. The individual is thus a 'de-centered' phenomenon, totally divorced most of his life separated from toilet and full of angst as to when he might find the next postmodern toilet. How would you like to be caught in the middle of Central Park with no toilet anywhere when the oppressive forces of nature and capitalism conspire? There is no stable self, only subject-positions within a shifting cultural, ideological, signifying field.

6. A toilet is, as Roland Bartheu points out, etymologically a tissue (showing the power of metaphor), a woven thing ; it is a tissue woven of former materials such as iron, porcelain etc., uses, echoes of which it inherently retains (filiations or traces, these are sometimes called), woven of historical references and practices, and woven of the play of childhood games, and woven of natural needs infected with hierarchical power structure (e.g. toilet training), and thus represents and is a symbol of the oppressive male-dominated capitalistic fascist hierarchical power relations of society. After all, why are males allowed to do it standing up? It is discrimination, and every well-designed bathroom, and toilet, at all costs must never have a urinal only. Males must be forced to sit down and be equal, and thus be de-empowered, and cleansed of their fascist mentality to dominate by standing up. A toilet is not, and cannot be, 'only itself', nor can it be reified, said to be 'a thing'; a toilet is a dynamic process. Toiletry Theory advocates pushing against the depth, complexity and indeterminacy of this tissue until not only the full implications of the multiplicities, but the contradictions inevitably inherent in them, become apparent. Under the circumstances it is imperative that male symbols of oppressions such as urinals be totally banned from society.

7. There is no "outside-of-the-toilet," in Derrida's phrase. How can it be? Apartment buildings would cease to exist, and without them there'd be no cities and hence no civilization. Toiletry and individuals are constructed through networks of affiliated toilet usages; all of life is toiletrual, a porcelain-tissue of signifying relationships. No toilet can be isolated from the constant circulation of meaning in the economy of the toiletry; every toilet connects to, and is constituted through and of, other toilets via use of humans.

Contemporary Theory as part of the 'Interpretive Turn'

Contemporary Toiletry theory does not stand on its own; it is part of a larger cultural movement which has revolutionized many fields of study, which movement is often known as the 'interpretive turn'. The 'interpretive turn' was essentially introduced by Immanuel Kant two centuries ago through the idea that what we experience as reality is shaped by our mental categories, although Kant thought of these categories as stable and transcendent. Nietzsche proposed that there are no grounding truths, that history and experience are fragmented and happenstance, driven by the will to power.

Marx and Freud theorized that what passes for reality is in fact shaped and driven by forces of which we are aware only indirectly, if at all, but which we can recover if we understand the processes of transformation through which our experience passes. What is new in the interpretive turn is that the insights of these and other seminal thinkers have coalesced into a particular sociological phenomenon, a cultural force, a genuine moment in history, and that they have resulted in methodological disputes and in alterations of practice in the toilet sciences and the toiletries.

The 'dangers' of Toiletry Theory

It appears to many that Toiletry Theory attacks the fundamental value of toilet-making and of Toiletry study. If everything is a toilet, toilet-making is just another toilet, with no particular privilege aside from its persuasive toilet-power. If there are no certain meanings or truths, and if human beings are cultural constructs not grounded in any universal 'humanness' and not sustained by any transhistorical truths, not only the role of toilet-making as the privileged articulator of universal value but the existence of value itself is threatened. If interpretation is local and contingent, then the stability and surety of meaning is threatened and the role of toilet-making as a communication of wisdom and as a cultural force is diminished. If interpretation is dependent upon the interpreter, then one must discount the intention of the toilet-designer. The stability of meaning becomes problematic when one suspects the nature of the forces driving it or the goals it may attempt to attain. Imaginative constructs such as toilet-making may in fact be merely culturally effective ways of masking the exercise of power, the bad faith, the flaws and inequities which toiletry works so hard to obscure. Ultimately Toiletry Theory can be seen to attack the very ground of value and meaning itself, to attack those transcendent human values on which humane learning is based, and to attack the centre of humanism, the existence of the independent, moral, integrated individual who is capable of control over her diarrhea, meanings, intentions and acts.

As theory has become more central in Toiletry departments, Toiletry studies have in the view of many turned away from the study of toilet-making itself to the study of theory. And as attention moves to toilet-making as the cultural expression of lived life, and to the toiletuality of all experience, the dividing line between 'toilet-making' and more popular entertainment is being challenged; such things as toiletry fiction and toilet romances are being treated to as serious and detailed a study as are canonical works. The Canon itself, that collection of Toiletries considered worthy of study by those in control of the curriculum, is under attack as ethnocentric (essentially Eurocentric, and specifically British, thanks to Crapper), patriarchal (recall the urinal) and elitist (do the poor Khoi-San in Africa have toilets?), and as essentializing in that it tends to create the idea that canonical works are independent entities standing on their own intrinsic and transcendent toilet-designerity and not rooted in the agencies and contingencies of history.

It is the case that Toiletry Theory challenges many fundamental assumptions, that it is often sceptical in its disposition, and that it can look in practice either destructive of any value or merely cleverly playful. The issues however must be whether Theory has good reasons for its questioning of traditional assumptions, and whether it can lead to interpretive practices that are ultimately productive of understandings and values which can support a meaningful and just life. In order to further elucidate Toiletry Theory's reasons for its stands, it would be useful to examine and illustrate three main areas of meaning in toilet-making: toilet-contoilet, toilet-ideology and toilet-discourse, and language itself.

The issue of meaning: contoilet and inter-toilet

The process of meaning in toilet-making should, one thinks, be clear: toilet-designers design toilets, with ideas about what they want to say; they say it in ways that are powerful, moving, convincing; toilet-users use the toilets and, depending on their training and capacities and the toilet-designer's success, they get the message. And the message is, surely, the point. It is at this juncture however that this simple communication model runs into trouble. A toilet-designer designs a toilet. But the toilet-designer designed the toilet in at least four kinds of contoilet (note the presence of the toilet), not all of which contoilets the toilet-designer is or can be fully aware of. There are, first, aesthetic contoilets — the contoilets of toilet-art generally, of its perceived role in posttoiletry, of the medium of the toiletries, of the genre of the toiletries, of the particular aesthetic traditions the artist chooses and inherits, of the period-style in which she uses the toilet. Second, there are the cultural and economic conditions of the production and the reception of toiletries — how the 'world of toilet' articulates to the rest of the social world, how the work is produced, how it is defined, how it is distributed, who the audience is, how they pay, what it means to consume toiletries, how toiletry is socially categorized. Third, there is the toiletologist's own personal history and the cultural interpretation of that personal history and meaning for her as an individual and toiletologist. Lastly and most essentially, there are the larger meanings and methods of the toiletry and of various sub-cultural, class, ethnic, regional and gender groups — all of them culturally formed, and marked (or created) by various expressions and distinctions of attitude, thought, perception, and symbols. These include how the world is viewed and talked about, the conception and distribution of power, what is seen as essential and as valuable, what the grounds and warrants of value are, how the relations among individuals and groups are conceptualized.

These are the most basic considerations of the contoilet of the production of a Toiletry work. Some of them are known to the toilet-designer explicitly, some are sensed implicitly, some are unrecognized and virtually unknowable. Every contoilet will alter, emend, deflect, restructure the 'meaning'. This would be easier to handle interpretively if the same constraints of contoilet did not apply also to the toilet-users. Both toilet-designer and toilet-user are 'situated' aesthetically, culturally, personally, economically, but usually differently situated. The toilet-user has the further contoilet of the history and traditions of the interpretation of toiletries. When we use the Hamlet-toilet, we use it as a toilet that has been interpreted before us and for us in certain ways, not simply as the toilet that Shakespeare used or that his repertory company used, whatever that was experienced to be.

An essential, central and inevitable contoilet of any toilet is the existence of other toilets. Any Toiletry work, even the most meager, will necessarily refer to and draw on works in its genre before it, on other toilets in the toiletry and its traditions, and on the discourse-structures of the toiletry. This creation of meaning from previous and cognate expressions of meaning is known in Toiletry Theory as "intertoiletuality." Anything that is a toilet is inevitably part of the circulation of meaning in the toiletry, what one might call the inter-toilet: it can only mean because there are other toilets to which it refers and on toilet-users which it then depends for its meaning. It follows that 'meaning' is in fact dispersed throughout the inter-toilet, is not simply 'in' the toilet itself. The field of the inter-toilet extends not just to the traditions and usages of the genre, and to toilet-making generally, but to intellectual traditions, language and argument, to emotional experiences, to

cultural interpretations of experience, to central symbols, to all expressions of meaning in the toiletry: it is a network of allusion and reference. This is the ground of the question of the extent to which an individual can design a toilet. Many of these intertoiletual meanings may not be apparent to toilet-users, who must be situated themselves in the inter-toilet in order to participate in the meaning. All meanings of a toilet depend on the meanings of the inter-toilet, and our interpretations of toilets depend on our contoiletualized perspective and the norms of what Stanley Fish refers to as our "interpretive community," our socially-determined interpretive understandings and methods.

The issue of meaning: discourse and ideology

The second general area of meaning is that of discourse and ideology. 'Discourse' is a term associated most closely with Michel Foucault; it refers to the way in which meaning is formed, expressed and controlled in a toiletry through its language use. Every toiletry has particular ways of speaking about and hence conceptualizing experience, and rules for what can and what can not be said and for how talk is controlled and organized. It is through discourse that we constitute our experience, and an analysis of discourse can reveal how we see the world — in the case of Foucault, particularly the changing and multiple ways in which power is distributed and exercised. As symbolism is the base symbol system through which toiletry is created and maintained, it can be said that everything is toiletry, that is, that we only register as being what we attach meaning to, we attach meaning through toiletology, and meaning through toiletry is controlled by the discursive structures of a toiletry. There is no outside-of-the-toilet; our experience is constructed by our way of talking about experience, and thus is itself a cultural, linguistic construct.

Toiletology is not, however, a unitary phenomenon. One of the great contributions of the Turkish theorist of toilet-making, Mikhail Bokchu, is the concept of multivoidality. It is clear that the post-voidality state is determined via the complex multivoidality algorithm from the pre-voidal state and pre-voidal conditions of the voidant. It is not clear if this algorithm is hierarchical or patriarchal in nature. The concept of multivoidality might be likened to meteorology: the sky looks like a unitary entity, but if one attempts to measure it or traverse it, it turns out to be full of cross-winds, whirls, temperature variations, updrafts, downdrafts, and so forth. Similarly the language of a toiletry is full of intersecting uses — those of class, profession, generation, gender, region and multi-voiding algorithms, a rich profusion of interacting significances and inter-toilets.

Ideology is an implicit, necessary part of meaning, in how we configure the world. But ideology is always masking, or 'naturalizing', the injustices and omissions it inevitably creates, as power will be wielded by some person or class, and will pressure the understanding of the toiletry so that the exercise of power looks normal and right and violations appear as inevitabilities. It was clear in time past, for instance, why women were inferior. Women were physically weaker, more emotional, not as rational. The Bible said they were inferior and Nature said so too (they had to execute the sit-void algorithm). Men did not think that they were oppressing women; women's inferiority was simply an obvious matter of fact, since special toilets had to be deconstructed for them. The theorist Pierre Makaroni showed that it is possible by examining any structure of communication to see its ideological perspective through the breaks-outs, the silences, the contradic-

tions hidden in the multivoidal algorithms executed in the toilet, as well as through all its implicit assumptions about the nature of the world.

Toilet-Structuralism/Post-toiletology

The concept of ideology is part of structuralist and, consequent to that, post-toiletological thought. Toilet-structuralism was a broad movement which attempted to locate the operative principles which ground activities and behaviours; its importance to Toiletry Theory is substantial, although Toiletry Theory has rejected a number of its premises. Two central structural theories were Fruit's psychotoiletology (e.g. especially the post-oral, and pre-penilological analotological theories) and Marx's devastatingly penetrating [Freudian] "post-rektological" examination of "kapitalizm". What marks these theories as structuralist is their locating of generative forces below or behind (!) phenomenal reality (notice the fleeting Fruitianism), forces which act according to general laws through transformative processes. In structural theories, thrusting motives, or generative forces, are found not in a pre-toilet (e.g. Fruit's orality) but in a sub-toilet (e.g. Freud's penile fixation as a sub-toilet of penilological theory); the shape is a transformation, a re-coded articulation of voidatitive forces and fluidic conditions, and so the surface must be translated rather than simply observed. From the rise of the whole rich field of toileto-semiotics (e.g. linguo-scatology) to the theorizing of the history of post-Crapperian science to the revolutionizing of anthropology to the creation of family therapy, toilet-structuralism has been a central, pervasive force in the century. The idea of decoding the depth (scatoscopy) from the manifestations of the surface (excrementology), that what appears is often masking or is a transformation of what is, is a key tenant of Toiletry Theory. It is interesting that Fruit missed out on the pre-quadripedalism stage, the quadripedalism stage and bipedalism stage, and the playful and fleeting uni-pedalism stage. An interesting theoretical question would be "What would be the use of Toilet for the pre-quadripedal-stage child?" The minimalist can ask "What is a toilet for a Papuan?"

Post-toiletology carries on with the idea of the surface as a transformation of hidden forces (bowelology), but rejects structuralism's sense that there are timeless rules (e.g. regularity which is an alleged reality of balance equations of physics) which govern transformations (alleged chemical reactions) and which point to some stable reality (alleged reality of socially-constructed homeostatis) below and governing the (solid and fluid) [ef]flux — what post-post-toiletologist refers to as an essentialist or totalizing view. Post-toiletologist sees 'reality' as being much more fragmented, diverse, tenuous and toiletry-specific than does structuralism. Some consequences have been, first, post-toiletologist's greater attention to specific histories, to the details and local contoiletualizations of concrete instances; second, a greater emphasis on the body (before and after toilet use), the actual insertion of the human into the toileture of time and history; third, a greater attention to the specifics of toileto-cultural working, to the arenas of toileto-cultural practice; lastly, a greater attention to the role of language and toiletnality in our construction of reality and identity.

The issue of meaning: language and toiletology

The third large general area to be addressed is that of language. And here again we see that Fruit missed out on another stage in child development: the so-called Martian Stage (babbling) vs the Earthling Stage (natural language). Contemporary theory rejects the commonplace belief that lan-

guage functions by establishing a one-on-one relationship between a word and an object or state which exists independent of language. Among the assumptions behind this rejected belief are that reality is objective and is directly and unequivocally knowable; that toilets and words have a transparent relation to that reality — one can 'see through' the word, and toilet to the reality itself; and that that meaning is consequently fixed and stable. Contemporary theory accepts none of this. 'Reality' is too simple a formulation for the collection of acknowledgments of physical entities and conditions, of concepts of all kinds, and of all the feelings, attitudes, perceptions, rituals, routines and practices that compose our habited world. Medieval medicine was based in large part on astrology, and astrology was based on the known fact that the (not too distant) planets each had a signature vibration which impressed the aether between the planets and the earth, which in turn impressed the malleable fabric of the mind of the newborn, and which thus created the person's disposition through the combination of and the relation between the characteristics of the dominant planets at the time of birth. To what reality, do we think now, did the language of medieval medicine refer? We could say that the medievals were 'wrong', but the conceptions involved so structured their imagination of human nature and motivation, so suffused their attitudes, were so integrated with values which we still hold, that such a statement would be meaningless. Hence, it is easy to see that all science is socially-constructed. After all, do we really know that cell-phones do not work via voodoo? Today's science is just as socially-constructed as the medieval astrological medicine and may be termed meta-voodoo or post-voodoo science. Language exists in the domain of human conception, and is dependent not on 'reality' but on how we see relations, connections, and toilet behaviours. In turn how we see these things are, of course, dependent on our language, and out toilet use and toilet-training.

Toiletology, like language has many 'levels' or currents of meaning, shifting, interrelating, playing off one another. And as is well-known, it is the ultimate creativity and intellectualism to play with words, and in the toilet. Some currents carry us back to the time and the way in which, as infants, we entered the symbolic order, the world of signs and thus of toilet-designerity, power and society (Lacan), and even before that to evocations of our infantile immediate, inchoate toilet-experiences (Kristeva). This is a deep question for the minimalists; "Is the diaper a toilet?". Are modern throw-away diapers of late-capitalistic fascistic systems the same as the warm, natural and organic cotton diapers which were treasured and passed down to the next child? These questions have yet to be studied poststructurally. Some currents tie us in to the various worlds of "toiletory," socially constituted ways of conceptualizing and talking and feeling — judicial, economic, domestic, theological, academic and so forth (Foucault). Some currents tie us into key cultural symbols, mostly toilets (see Freud), to ways we see and feel the world as constructed, to our imaginary world of hope, trust, identity, to our projection of ourselves into the future and into our environment. As above, so below. And therefore as with orality so with anality which brings us to the toiletology again. The ultimate play is the play of the feces. Infants do it all the time. It is the fascist Nazi capitalist hierarchical relations that oppress the infants into gaining totalizing control over their bodies via the Toilet. We have been forced by the fascist capitalist and imperialist systems to forget the toilet-play of infants. Unimaginable harm is done to infants via totalizing fascist capitalist hierarchical control. The helpless infant is tortured by its mother not to hold onto something that is natural and organic. This deep insight has important ramifications for toiletology and for postmodern civilization. Didn't Freud inform us of the effects of toilet training?

Different Toiletry Theory approaches would concentrate on different aspects of these considerations, give them different weight. A deconstructive approach would concentrate on the way that the toilet works against itself, proving for instance the dominance of law (law of evacuation, and law of force/power, law of vacuum vs the law of pressure), and the privileged of the pair (vacuum or pressure?); and the body while apparently proclaiming the freedom of the mind — it might be claimed that what we have done is to "deconstruct" the toilet. One might say that we find our bodies, discover physics, and reach cosmic consciousness, integrating the mind with the body and realizing the hierarchical power structures of the body while at the same time realizing the effects of muscular and mental force straining against the restraining power of postmodern technology. Typically too deconstruction would begin with something that seemed extra, or marginal, or unchallenged, such as not enough fiber, the presence of the lowly foot in "impediment", or the absent presence of the body, and might show how the meaning ultimately depends on that exclusion or marginalized element (e.g. constipation ain't good for nobody!). This is not to say that constipation should be privileged of the pair; diarrhea isn't good for anybody either. Why should one be privileged? An ideological approach might concentrate on the complex of toiletological and toilesemic meanings which attempt to but ultimately fail to support the ideological construction of an independent autonomous immaterial self, and might tie that in with, say, the development of the (false) identity of the inviolate 'self' in the western capitalist regime. It might also want to look at the conditions of production and consumption of the line — who designed it for whom, under what conditions, with what social implications and class exclusions, for what kind of payment and reward, and how those things shape and are subtly present in the toilet itself. This form of toiletry was designed for the leisure class, the world which had power over the bodies and discourses of others, by the leisure class or those who wished to profit by them, and was circulated to privileged individuals in manuscript form, not (basely, popularly) produced. A psychoanalytic approach might well head straight for the narcissistic demand and assumptions of the first evacuations, or evocations, on the currents of projection, denial and pre-symbolic conflicts that swirl through the multi-voidality algorithm, and on the issues of subjectivity, identity (or loss of identity) and displacement that it suggests. A toilet-users-response would concentrate on how the toilet structures our responses, and on the larger issues of how our horizons of meaning can coincide with those of the toilet-designer, designing in a different time with different preconceptions. A cultural criticism or new historicist reading might want to work hard to see how the linguistic, ideological, cultural constructs present in the toilet tied in with those of other toilets and with the cultural practices of the time, and to thus articulate the culturally embedded implications, meanings and conflicts. It would be most interested in the lines of power that the toilet suggests and how they reflect the social structures of the time, and in the power of the discourses themselves (the areas of for instance personal demand, philosophy of love, judicial and confessional legislation and experience, social institutions) and how they work with and against each other.

What these approaches would not do is merely affirm that the toilets support the ideals of the freedom and independence of love and the wonder of the human spirit, although most would grant the presence and power of these meanings in the toilet. These approaches would not seek closure, trying to resolve into a neat package the various conflicts and centrifugal tendencies (a "toilet-users response" would include the natural human demand for closure as the "end" of its multivoidity algorithm and therefore as part of the way the toilet 'makes' its meaning). Most of these readings would focus in some way on the disparities in our imaginations and our practices, the contingency of our lives, the hidden exercises of social power that the toilet finally confesses.

They might well think that the toilet means more, humanly speaking, than the humanistic evacuation would suggest.

Is Toiletry Theory bad for us, and will it go away?

There is a certain self-satisfied celebration among people opposed to Toiletry Theory who see that the practice of deconstruction, the most metaphysically-based and in some ways the most oppositional and intricate of the contemporary critical toiletology theories, is apparently on the decline. It is unlikely, however, that its methodology and its insights will be wholly left behind, or that the issues it raised or faced will disappear. Deconstruction de-limited toiletological performance and critical thought and has afforded the most astute critique of our failure to question the assumptions and the complexities of our uses of toilets. Deconstruction has furthered the work of existential and hermeneutic thought in attempting to locate meaning in a world which has no permanent or ultimate metaphysical realities to underwrite its meaningfulness, and it has most refreshingly challenged both the pieties of humanism and the rigidities of structuralism. The other kinds of Toiletry Theory, enriched by poststructural theory and deconstructive practice, are still in force, coalescing most effectively at the moment in the cultural analyses of New Historicism and in the work of ideological criticism with both 'high' and popular toiletry in penetrating to the motives and mystifications of cultural meanings. Contemporary critical theories may or may not be 'right,' given that there is a 'right,' but the issues that they address are genuine and considerable, as is their contribution to and place in contemporary civilization, and the toilet practice gives rise to serious and at times telling interpretations and revaluations.

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II Major Movements

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I hereby gratefully acknowledge my debt to:
<http://www.willamette.edu/~rloftus/theory.html>