

# 3808

a journal of freshman writing

The Critical Writing Program supports and develops young writers. Through our seminars, workshops, and publications, we encourage students to share their understanding of the world through writing.

We are proud to present in this volume a selection of work produced by our freshman writers. These essays were chosen by a student and faculty editorial board from an already select pool of essays nominated by the Critical Writing faculty.

The Critical Writing Program is part of the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing (CPCW) at the University of Pennsylvania.

For more information about our program or the journal, please visit [www.writing.upenn.edu/critical](http://www.writing.upenn.edu/critical).

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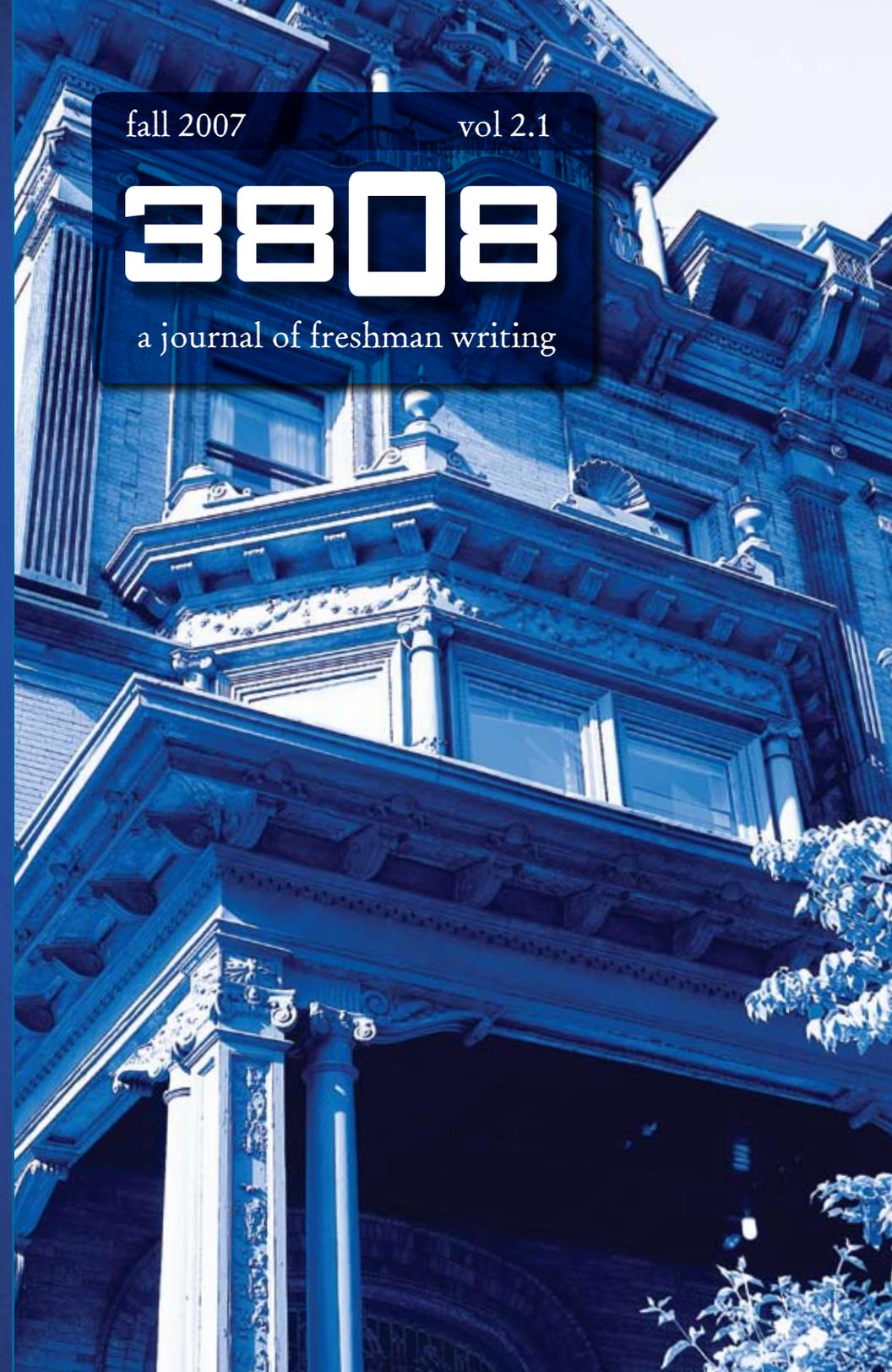


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vol 2.1

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# 3808

a journal of undergraduate writing

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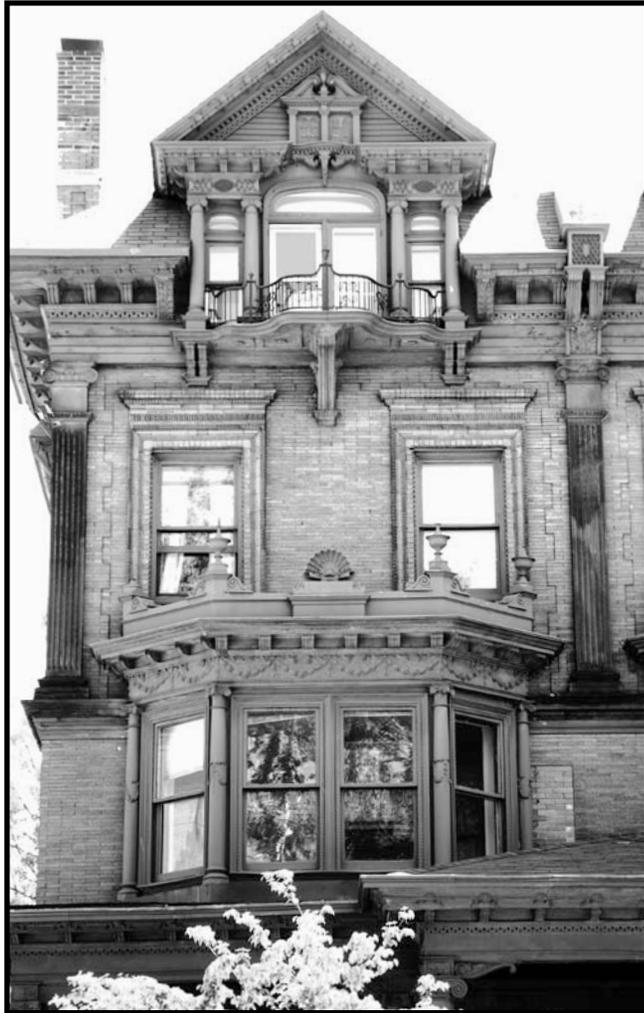
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## From the editors

This second volume of *3808: A Journal of Freshman Writing* offers another collection of outstanding writing by Penn freshman enrolled in Critical Writing Seminars.

Penn has always been committed to undergraduate writing. Founder Benjamin Franklin, insisting upon a practical education, made Penn arguably the first Ivy that required writing in its curriculum. That history, that presence of the pastness, as T. S. Eliot might say, is evidenced by the fact that writing has remained, throughout the years and in different forms, central to the Penn education and manifest in this volume. Students in our the critical writing seminars focus on some tried and true approaches to writing that extend back to Franklin, even as they venture into new terrain. Clarity, organization, purpose, word choice—all fundamental to good writing, and transferable to any sort of writing one might encounter, as a college student or beyond. With increasing attention in our program, and in everyday life, to digital communication, students are finding that rhetorical forms, borrowed from antiquity, work remarkably well in digital culture. Snarky blogs, for example, are built of straw men, and a successful website, like a successful academic essay, pivots upon its creator's grasp of how to subordinate and arrange ideas.

To be published in 3808, our student writers undergo a rigorous selection process. Their essays must first be nominated by their peers or by their professor. Only two essays can be nominated from any one class. The nominations are subsequently reviewed by faculty and student editorial boards, whose members are drawn from across the disciplines. The 38 finalists gathered in this volume represent the four undergraduate schools and a diversity of backgrounds, interests, and topics. They were chosen from nearly 200 outstanding submissions: the best of the best or, to borrow from Franklin, well worth the reading. We hope that you will enjoy reading the work of these talented young writers as much as their colleagues, instructors, and editors have, and have a strong suspicion this won't be the last time we'll be seeing some of them in print.



### About Our Title:

Penn created the Critical Writing Program in 2003 and, as part of the Center for Programs in Contemporary Writing, gave us splendid residence in an old Victorian at 3808 Walnut Street—from which this journal takes its name.

## Amy Chang

### My Hole Story

I first noticed the hole. It seemed extravagant, an unnecessary gap in the middle of a circular mound of dense bread. Mesmerized, I watched my new all-American friend separate the bread into two perfect halves and spread a thick white paste on top. Growing up in a Chinese family, I'd never seen anything like it before. My own lunch, rice balls wrapped in seaweed, seemed measly in comparison. Enviously glancing at my friend's meal, I knew that I had to recreate the bagel sandwich for myself, hole and all.

That afternoon, when my mother picked me up after the first day in elementary school, I excitedly unveiled my new mission. My mother, willing to do anything so her daughter would feel accepted as a "normal American," immediately proposed a grocery store trip. Locating the bagels in the freezer section was easy enough, but the mysterious white spread presented a problem. I only knew that it had sat, primly perched, on top of my friend's blueberry bagel. Fortunately, my mother was positive she knew its identity: mayonnaise. Back home, I eagerly squirted piles of mayonnaise on my precious frozen bagel. The bagel's porous surface slurped up the mayonnaise, leaving me disappointed and my invention a sappy mess. The next day, my plastic pink lunch box again contained rice balls.

I don't remember when I finally learned about cream cheese. But my bagel quest marked the beginning of the Twinkie period, a phase where I was desperate to prove that like the Twinkie, I was yellow on the outside but white on the inside. It was a time of shunning my mother's oblong rice balls stuffed with rou song, shredded dried pork fried until it looked—as my classmates kindly observed—like "number two." I soon wanted more than just an American lunch, though, and the bagel lost its luster. After revealing to fourth grade classmates that my family didn't believe in Jesus, their horrified exclamations of "You're going to Hell!" convinced me that to truly be

American, I had to be Christian. Merely appearing and acting like an American wasn't enough; I wanted to live like an American, too.

This time, there was no need to even tell my mother about the latest mission. She suggested a trip to church without knowing my new goal. Having heard about something called the "Es-Ay-Tee" from my middle school teachers, my mother was getting prematurely worried, but our devout Christian friends convinced her I'd improve my English with hard words such as "righteous" and "hypocrite." The idea of attending church became quite agreeable. At my first Bible study, I sat before a plate of doughnuts and doughnut holes. Sandy, the teacher, explained that without Jesus, our hearts were like the doughnut; we were missing the center, the essence. When we accepted Jesus, a cute little doughnut hole would fill the empty space. I wanted to swallow the doughnut just as eagerly as the bagel before it, but my mother wasn't as receptive to doughnuts as she was to bagels. I started experiencing clashes between Confucianism and Christianity, rice balls and doughnuts.

The ubiquitous hole appeared once more with my discovery of America's trademark cereal, Cheerios. I could bite the Cheerio in half, crumble it in my mouth, or wait for it to melt beneath my tongue, handful after handful. Cheerios had introduced my little sister into the world of finger foods, leaving behind Gerber's canned "Pears and Chicken." My own Cheerios infatuation coincided with a different kind of transition, one from the flat plains of Kansas to a busy college campus in Philadelphia. For the first time, I was not the only Chinese girl in class. I met people who had a similar background, people who didn't contort their faces in disgust at seaweed and rice. Immersed in Cheerios, the food of toddlers, I finally began to explore and reevaluate my preferences. I developed my own quirky traditions that melded the Chinese and American cultures. I discovered that I could eat Cheerios with chopsticks because I didn't have to be 100 percent American or 100 percent Chinese.

Now I have my bagel (toasted, with plain nonfat cream cheese, please) and eat my rice ball, too. I'm still a Twinkie, just one with dual-colored filling. Through my bagel obsession, doughnut fling, and Cheerios craze, I've developed an intimate relationship with the hole. It's been a cycle of discovery and effort. The cycle is still continuing, still fusing what was Chinese with what was American into my own Chinese-American story. My hole story.

*Instructor: Jane Kauer, Writing Seminar in Anthropology*

## Carrie Biemer

### How Real Is Reality TV?

Over the past decade, reality television has taken the media world by storm. From enduring the wilderness in CBS's *Survivor* to winning over Flavor Flav's heart in MTV's *Flavor of Love*, all of these shows claim to place "real" people in "real" situations. No scripts, no actors, no direction. But how real is reality television? Editors and producers cut, alter and rearrange hours of footage into compact half-hour segments, leaving a lot of room for deceiving editing tactics and misleading sequences. When VH1 aired its news special, *Reality TV Secrets Revealed: 2*, many truths surfaced regarding the validity of their own reality television show, *The Surreal Life*. This show, which places B-list celebrities in a mansion for ten days, undermines the foundation of reality television. Through editing devices, producers of *The Surreal Life* deceive and mislead viewers regarding the true reality of this program.

Many television programs use pixelation to blur out inappropriate or unwanted images. But instead of using this graphic editing technique as a method of censorship, VH1 uses it to make things seem more scandalous than when they occurred. Noted porn star Ron Jeremy fell victim to these tactics more than once. In one scene of *The Surreal Life*, cameras show Ron pulling away his towel, leaving viewers to observe a blurred-out image of his private area. In reality, Ron was wearing underwear the entire time. Producers chose to use pixelation to make the act seem more shocking and crude. In another incident, other cast members beg Ron to show them his genitalia due to its reputation. But when producers blurred out the entire region from Ron's waist to his kneecaps, they created a representation which was grossly exaggerated. The content from this season already proved to be racier than any of its predecessors. The producers, however, still wanted to create as much controversy as possible from their footage. Anything to keep people interested.

Another commonly used technique is scene splicing, utilized to create sequences that did not really happen. In the case of *The Surreal Life*, producers took a scene in which Ron Jeremy and Trishelle, of MTV's *The Real World*, have removed their clothing to bathe naked in the hot tub. Immediately after the camera shows the hot tub, it cuts to well-known TV evangelist Tammy Faye Messner relaxing by the poolside, making it seem as if Tammy has been present the entire time. It turns out that they inserted the scene of Tammy from a different day to create the desired progression as well as for entertainment's sake. The thought of putting Tammy in such a scandalous and voyeuristic environment made producers jump at the opportunity to create more drama. But all these techniques fabricate reality.

The editing techniques used in *The Surreal Life* make viewers question the validity of reality TV as a whole. This recent craze has prided itself on making entertainment out of everyday people and their lifestyles, only to be undermined by their own devices. When MTV's *The Real World* was first aired in 1992, it was the birth of modern-day reality television. But since its inception, it has transformed from airing real-life footage of seven strangers living in a house to using editing techniques to alter plotlines and stereotype cast members. Viewers can never be sure if they are viewing the truth. Creators want to get the most entertainment out of their material and gain the highest viewer approval ratings possible. But if they insist on making such gross alterations to the authenticity of their programs, then "reality" is not an appropriate title for this media genre.

*Instructor: Michael Lempert, Writing Seminar in Anthropology*

## Brian Flanagan

### The Tragedy of Superman

He possesses undeniable strength, flies with incredible speed, and saves the world on a daily basis, all while maintaining a winning smile. Born as the Kryptonian Kal-el, the Man of Steel would seem to be the answer to Friedrich Nietzsche's plea for the "Man of the future...[who] liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man." Yet as we all know, Superman never succeeds in ridding the world of evil or eliminating crime and fear. He fails because of his greatest weakness, not Kryptonite, but American morality. Friedrich Nietzsche claims that the modern Judeo-Christian world is governed by slave morality, an ethical construction of the common to bring down the great, and no nation practices slave morality in law or tradition more than the United States of America. Essentially, slave morality makes strong men like Superman feel guilty for exercising their inherent superiority, and it encourages the average person to criticize ambitious men like Lex Luthor for practicing their own moral ideals. This creates great conflict, as Superman must decide the ethical range in which he can punish criminals. American morality not only denies Superman personal happiness, but also prevents him from being the hero the world desperately needs, reducing him from god that he was born to be, Kal-el, to merely the man, Clark Kent.

First and foremost, this morality makes Superman struggle with his identity, and deny who he really is. Superman is an alien born on the planet Krypton, and is, in every sense of the phrase, not of this world. He possesses strength in both body and mind far beyond that of any other human, and is appropriately named Superman. Yet, Jonathan and Martha Kent, two on Krypton, found Kal-el as a baby, and transformed him into Clark Kent by teaching him their American morals, generosity, sensitivity, and humility. This common morality, specifically written in the United States Declaration of Independence, says, "All men are created equal." Naturally, this created conflict, as Superman blatantly was unequal. So, instead of celebrating his gifts, he was ashamed of

them; the Five for Fighting song, "Superman," goes so far as to say Superman desired to be normal. Assuming Superman's psyche, the lyrics say, "I can't stand to fly, I'm not that naïve," as if the Man of Steel does something wrong every time he exercises a power not possessed by everyone. In the movie *Superman II*, he even relinquishes his powers to fit in. Of course, Superman also creates the alter ego Clark Kent, a weak, clumsy, and cowardly man, to remedy the disparity between himself and the average person.

Other than destroying his psyche, American morality prevents Superman from effectively preventing crime, serving justice, and defending humanity. Because all people are equals, Superman must see the good in everyone, and therefore must restrain himself and practice mercy. He refuses to admit that certain people are dominated by evil, and therefore he cannot enforce proper punishment on his enemies. As a result, he constantly battles the same list of enemies and crimes again and again, he never punishes his villains enough for them to fear repeating the crime. Thus, he must constantly respond whenever they choose to commit an injustice, never securing peace for Metropolis or rest for himself. Further, he denies himself the pleasure that comes along with punishment that Nietzsche says has been destroyed by slave morality. Punishment is a perfect time to celebrate power, and for Superman this would mean feeling good about defeating evil. Instead, Superman constantly mourns the fact that the evil exists. Punishment is a perfect time to celebrate power, and for Superman this would mean feeling good about defeating evil. Instead, Superman constantly mourns the fact that the evil exists. Punishment separates the demons in the world from the innocents, but because he does not practice punishment and sees everyone as equals, Superman destroys himself by believing that evil exists in everyone and is not isolated within the few. Finally, the rules of the common, those that Superman chooses to follow, prevent him from properly administering justice. How many times has Superman watched Lex Luthor escape prison because his lawyers trample a weak American judicial system? However, the Man of Steel has no other option as long as he agrees with the American belief that no man can play judge, jury, and executioner. Worse, he defers government to the people, even though the people are flawed and weak. Wouldn't the world be better off if he simply seized control? As long as Superman denies the blatant fact that he is superior to the common man, his morality will always force him to leave punishment to the inferior. He must utilize the full extent of his powers and properly administer justice as only he can.

If Superman's corruption through humility prevents him from realizing his potential, then only one man has the will, the arrogance, and the guile necessary to save the world, Lex Luthor. Lex embodies the hero that Nietzsche searches for, as he never once lets slave moralities deny him greatness. Rather, Lex practices his own set of morals, ambition, cruelty, decisiveness, efficiency, and pride. While Superman must

constantly fight others, Lex has no enemies; Lex enforces ruthless punishment, and anyone who crosses him only lives to do so once. Superman practices *ressentiment*, while Lex is proactive and eliminates anyone who threatens him (with the exception, of course, being Superman). Through ambition he creates a multi-billion dollar corporation, becomes President (for a brief period in the comics around the year 2000) and even earns the reputation of a philanthropist. Most significantly, he governs the "Legion of Doom," a sinister society of super-villains. This shows how sheer will and ferocity make heroes, as Lex brings order to the most chaotic group of people ever assembled, a group that Superman could never dream of controlling. Those criminals obey Lex because they fear him, in a way they never will fear Superman. Superman's restraint gives the villains protection, but Lex's intimidation demands respect, and is therefore the better method for maintaining justice. Lex Luthor has the drive to overcome slave morality, advance humanity, and dominate weakness. However, Lex possesses the great will, but tragically not the great strength to enforce it. Superman always prevents Lex from achieving super-status. So, like the man of Steel, Lex is frustrated, because he is forced down to the life of a human when he wishes to be a god, while the Kryptonian is frustrated by his life as a god and believes in common American morality.

One great man can save the world from darkness. The tragedy according to Nietzsche is that Lex Luthor, despite his will is not great enough. Even worse, Superman does not have the will to find out how great he can be. The legend of Superman shows the harm done when the strong is restricted by slave morality, the weapon of the weak that dominates and destroys American government, justice and punishment. To bring order, to truly maintain justice, a hero must unapologetically do what he believes will achieve the greatest good. The common might not accept him; they might even call him a vigilante. He would never defer his judgment to their morality or laws, and, through will, would utilize every weapon at his disposal, including power, cruelty, punishment, and fear, in order to do what he knows to be right. He would probably wear black...

*Instructor: Keally McBride, Writing Seminar in Political Science*

## David Ashkenazi

### One Top, Different Eyes

Innocently and quietly, the top flies like a child in a swing. A carefree girl descending round and round in a spiral slide, the top whips around in a series of intoxicating moments. It continues to skip through the playground of the sky, with my ever watchful but hidden eye intent upon viewing the top's every move. The top glides upon the table with the grace of a boy's slender young foot stroking the floor in a game hopscotch. Instead of heeding the intense passion burning within me, I remain in waiting, as I have so many times before, for the top to make its way to me. But it senses my caged passion, and decides to toy with my emotions; the top knows my game. As it approaches my hands, I reach out to grasp it. It eludes my firm grip and continues its course. My passion is released as I nearly fall forward with desire. Nothing has ever aroused me so! Ah, playtime is over. The top wobbles directly in front of my open hands, becomes erect for a moment, and collapses upon my fingers. I grasp it firmly, and we retire to the dark room.

Dude, this top is sick. I mean, it totally flies through the ocean air like some seagull juts chillin' in the blue sky, waiting to get some dolphin or something. But wait, the top starts to curl down, like a wicked good whitecap on a perfect summer day. Like all rad swells, the top crashes upon the table. The top shoots out of the barrel as the wave collapses and is now the rider on a mammoth wave, one of those giants from Hawaii. As the top rocks the wave, it cuts across the table with moves that rival my own. But the giant starts to wear down the top and it wobbles as it carves the wave. After pulling that many righteous three-sixties I'd be cashed out of my mind. But the top is packing large in the stone zone and slaps down one last sweet trick. After that nectar run, I couldn't blame the dude for wipin' out. He was one gnarly little top.

The top follows a parabolic trajectory with an angle of two hundred and ten

degrees from the North. Its initial horizontal velocity is six inches per second, which remains constant until impact with the table. The vertical velocity, on the other hand, is initially zero, but increases in magnitude as a function of gravity and time. As the top falls, potential energy converts to kinetic energy, for all energy is conserved. Once the top makes contact with the table, the force of the impact is converted to both heat and linear velocity. Therefore, the top initially gains speed, but air resistance and friction respectively slow the top's rotational and linear speed. The friction and air resistance eventually become so great that they overcome the forces of rotation and motion, and the top falls to the ground with a velocity increasing with respect to time. The top's final collision with the table results in another release of energy, which is transferred into heat.

In a chasm of chaos and darkness, a voice called out for a form to appear in the sky, and a form appeared in the sky. The top was good, and divided itself from the surrounding darkness. And the voice called for a firmament to be placed in the sky to divide the waters, and it was so. The voice called for the waters to rescind, and another form emerged from the waters. This was named a table, and it was good. The voice of grace commanded the top to fall upon the table, and appear as seed bearing fruit tree growing from the table. The voice called for the top to spin wildly, like a beast of the earth. But the voice knew the time had come to bestow the consciousness of man upon the top, and it was so. The top soon realized its dominion over table, over its inhabitants. The voice saw that this was very good. However, the top was not prepared for its newfound awareness, and violated the covenant of movement in its actions. Like an apple falling from the tree of grace, the top was driven from its origin, from its innocent rotation. The top wobbled, and fell to the table, motionless. Finally, rest.

*Instructor: John Connor, Writing Seminar in English*

## Rajasekhar Ghanta

### Women's Tennis

Women's tennis has become more popular than ever. It is a far cry from the days when Billie Jean King had to prove that women had even the right to play professional tennis in the famous "Battle of the Sexes" match against Bobby Riggs. Today, female players have become household names around the world. In fact, players like Maria Sharapova, the Williams sisters, and Anna Kournikova are not just tennis superstars but superstars in general. A decade ago, it was rare if women's tennis was even a full-page story in a newspaper; today, its stars grace covers of a wide variety of magazines, including *Sports Illustrated*, *Maxim*, and *Time*. This rapid rise of popularity is, in part, due to the rise of the popularity of tennis in general. It has become more accessible to the general population, no longer just a symbol of America's elite. Nevertheless, the rise also seems to have been partially aided by gimmicks planned by the Women's Tennis Association. These include falsely speculating on rivalries, advertising tennis as a mere "reality series," and even going so far as to change the rules of play by adding instant replay and on-court coaching. Moreover, the WTA even pushes the popularity of certain players such as Anna Kournikova over others in order to make tennis more commercially attractive. Women's tennis has become preoccupied with commercial popularity over athletic skill.

Kournikova and Sharapova are classic cases of players who used their beauty to further their commercial popularity. Both Kournikova and Sharapova have become synonymous with the highest standard of beauty. They have both graced the covers of several fashion and men's magazines including *FHM*, in which Kournikova topped a ranking of the sexiest women in the world. This does not imply, however, that commercial popularity is based solely on beauty. Both players were at times top tennis players, Kournikova reaching a career ranking of number eight and Sharapova

reaching number one. However, the mere fact that these two were looked upon as beautiful gained them a much larger fan base than comparable players; Sharapova was even the most searched celebrity last year according to Google, beating out the likes of Paris Hilton and Justin Timberlake. This is in contrast to other top players on the women's tour including Justine Henin, who did not even reach the top hundred despite making history by reaching all four Grand Slam finals last year. Despite the fact that Kournikova has never won one singles title and has been retired for several years, her name is still one of the only mainstream symbols of women's tennis. Although she had considerable athletic talent, the fact that she was identified as beautiful allowed her to concentrate less on her tennis, which was reflected by her poor results in the latter but more famous part of her tennis career, and to retire at twenty-two in order to pursue more lucrative sponsorship deals.

Cultural identity, whether it is race or sexual orientation, also has become a huge influence on a player's popularity. For example, Martina Navratilova is arguably the most successful tennis player in history. Among her many accomplishments, Navratilova spent 331 weeks on top of the world rankings and holds 341 singles and doubles titles. When she came out as a lesbian in the early 1990s, however, Navratilova lost a significant amount of her fan base. She was often booed at competitions simply because of her sexual orientation. This phenomenon is not just limited to Navratilova. Former Wimbledon champions Conchita Martinez and Amelie Mauresmo have suffered similar backlashes. The day Mauresmo reached her first Grand Slam final, at the Australian Open in 1999, she came out as a lesbian to the press. Her opponent in the final, Martina Hingis, took advantage of this by calling Mauresmo "half a man" and trying to turn the public against her. It seems to have worked, because the next day Mauresmo, despite gaining momentum from defeating three top seeds in the previous rounds, was unexpectedly crushed by Hingis with a score of 6-2, 6-0.

Women's tennis has become an anomaly in the world of sports; it is the one women's sport that has managed to gain a mainstream following. Part of this is due to the fact that the WTA has relentlessly promoted the sport, but it is also due to the fact that women's tennis has something that no other women's sport such as ice skating or gymnastics has: a popular male counterpart. It is a rare to find a tennis fan who follows the men's tour but not the women's. And how could they not? The women's and men's tours share many of the same events, including all the "majors," or Grand Slams: for every Wimbledon men's champion there is also a women's champion. However, the men's tour has not taken the same path as women's tennis. Male tennis players are not considered sex symbols and are not flaunted on the covers of fashion magazines. The average fan does not know about the personal life of most male tennis players, but the lives of many female tennis players are splashed all over the tabloids. A male tennis player's popularity depends on his tennis accomplishments. The two most popular

tennis players on the men's tour, according to website visits, are Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, the two highest-ranked men. Moreover, sponsorship for male tennis players is just as high if not higher than female tennis players. Andre Agassi, who upon reentering the top ten and reaching the U.S. Open Final at the age of thirty-five was already ancient by most tennis standards, earned over twenty-six million dollars in sponsorship through endorsements in 2005. Basically, compared to the men's tour, which has not promoted specific players over the sport of tennis, the women's tour really has not gained that much.

A player's tennis skills on the women's tour no longer seem to matter as much as it once did. Now players seem to be concentrated on courting sponsors rather than winning matches. For example, in 2005 Kim Clijsters earned the most money in women's tennis history by collecting a stunning nine singles titles and pocketing over four million in prize money. However, Maria Sharapova earned about five times as much, or twenty million, solely from sponsorship. Because of this vast difference between earnings, tennis players are becoming more and more concerned with commercial popularity. Tennis is becoming an afterthought, a fact that is best proven by the Williams sisters. Both sisters play the minimum amount of events to remain on tour every year and seem to make a "comeback" only whenever their celebrity status and, consequently, their sponsorship seems to be fading. In my opinion, they only play their best tennis when it suits their other "projects," which include fashion lines, legions of dolls and posters, and even a reality series. Worse still, physical appearances and cultural identities are determining the outcomes of matches. Crowds are becoming more and more biased towards certain players such as Sharapova and against players such as Mauresmo, and, as a result, with the crowd backing them players such as Sharapova are performing better than they normally would. Tennis is becoming less and less about the actual game and more and more about the players playing it.

*Instructor: Jacqueline Sadashige, Writing Seminar in Cinema Studies*

## Nicky Berman

### Snack Fairies and Super Moms: The Subtleties of Gender Role Depiction in Advertising

#### Ad # 1: Campbell's

This *People* magazine ad features a middle-aged woman (Sandra Lee) smiling politely and holding a gourmet casserole, freshly baked and elaborately presented. The woman is wearing a bright white ribbed v-neck sweater and white pants, and a wedding ring can be spotted on her left ring finger. She is wearing quite a bit of make-up, and her blond hair is dyed and styled. In the background, we can see a wall of windows adorned with cream curtains, and a table set made of light-colored wood. On the table we find a home cooked meal, complete with salad, a meat dish, rolls, and several other sides, all displayed neatly amidst a vase of flowers and a lighted candlestick. The quote next to the woman reads, "When the family comes together, make something so good it sets the meal apart." In the bottom right hand corner of the page, there is a box with the recipe ingredients and instructions, and the Campbell's Soup and French's Fried Onions products are pictured. In the bottom left hand corner, we can see the Campbell's Soup logo and their slogan, "Come home to a home-cooked meal." Sunlight brightens both the room and the ad, streaming in through the window.

#### Ad # 2: Nabisco Snacks

Also taken from *People*, this ad pictures a middle-aged man standing in the street of a quiet, suburban neighborhood. The multicolored sky indicates that the sun has just set. The man is dressed in casual suede shoes, khaki pants, a short-sleeved polo shirt, and a pastel pink tutu. He carries a red "snack-sack," upon which is written "Snack Happy" in large yellow letters, as well as a silver magic wand, which he is raising above his head. On the bottom of the page, a large box of text begins, "Every generation

needs a hero. Meet the Snack Fairy.” Then, in smaller text, it continues, “Don’t let his pink tutu and magic wand fool you. The Snack Fairy is on a serious mission...” Next to the box of text, a miniature Snack Fairy is pictured, along with the words, “Snack Happy” and “Sensible Snacking: Wholesome, Delicious.”

At first glance, these two ads from *People* seem to represent the opposite ends of the stereotype spectrum. In the first ad, a young, attractive wife has just prepared a marvelous and elaborate home cooked meal for her husband and family to come home to. She has fulfilled her role in the family, and hasn’t even spilled a single drop of soy sauce on her perfectly white sweater. At first glance, the second ad contradicts our notion of the typical husband/father figure. This time, the husband is the one taking care of the needs of the family, and the wife is not even in the picture. But after a closer and more critical examination of both ads, we discover that the one that seems to challenge our society’s basic stereotypes of gender roles actually does a much more effective job of perpetuating them.

There is no denying it: Sandra Lee is our textbook prototype of the stay-at-home mother, or perhaps, in this new modern era, the prime example of the new-age “Supermom.” She has successfully managed to produce an ornate display of food, cleanliness, and comfort, all before her husband has even arrived home from work. The sparkle of the table cloth matches her pearly-whites. It’s hard to tell which took longer to arrange—the beautiful presentation of the casserole or her elaborately styled hair. The off-white color scheme runs through each element of the ad, from table cloth and curtains to the woman’s clothing and hair, and the resulting visual harmony creates a general image of the perfect home—a home we would all love to come home to. The harmonious colors also have the effect of binding the woman to her home. The image of Sandra Lee standing amidst her food and her dining room remind us of the era of separate spheres, when a woman’s role existed only within the private domain of the home, and consisted in its entirety of cooking, cleaning, and looking pretty.

With the Nabisco ad, we witness a role reversal that veers toward questioning this age-old ideal of separate spheres, but falls far short of challenging it in any real way. In this ad, the man has taken control of the family’s dietary needs, usurping the caretaker role. But a male in the “female role” can’t just be your everyday Dad dressed in regular Dad-clothes. Before he can play this out-of-character part, the man must first undergo a serious transformation. Before he can pitch in and buy some snacks for the kids, he must first be clad in a pastel pink tutu, and given a silver magic wand. After all, if he’s going to be food shopping in the grocery store, he ought to be wearing the appropriate attire.

Furthermore, the Snack Fairy’s attempt at food preparation seems rather inferior in comparison with that of his female counterpart in the first ad. While Sandra Lee has slaved all afternoon to prepare a gourmet meal, the Snack Fairy has simply hopped

into the store and purchased some pre-packaged processed cookies. Nevertheless, the Snack Fairy is hailed a hero for his work. As we can see from his triumphant stance and proud expression, he has won great admiration and respect for undertaking this “serious mission.” In fact, the ad is centered on praising the honorable Snack Fairy and extolling his worthy deeds. Looking back to the previous ad, we find no recognition for the woman and her far-superior efforts. Instead, it’s as if she did nothing more than what was reasonably expected of her.

While the Campbell’s ad uses the attractiveness of the woman, the food, and the home to impress its audience, the Nabisco ad relies on the humor of the idea of a man in the female role to attract the attention of its potential customers. These basic premises are in themselves reflective of gender stereotypes. The physical attractiveness of the woman in the first ad is a key component of its appeal. By contrast, the man in the second ad is older, balding, and not at all attractive. It is difficult to imagine an advertisement in which a female plays a similar role to the Snack Fairy in the Nabisco ad, or one in which a male plays a role equivalent to that of Sandra Lee in the Campbell’s ad. While the Campbell’s ad may explicitly uphold traditional conceptions about gender roles, the Nabisco ad goes further, effectively making a mockery of the notion of ever challenging them.

*Instructor: Felicity Paxton, Writing Seminar in Gender, Culture, and Society*

## Jody Pollock

### Tu amante y tu mamá, también

She stands alone in a white silk dress. The color is pure against the hectic background of a bullring, but it is far too sexy to suggest the innocence that white usually connotes. The neckline is just a little too low and the silk is too clingy for that. But still, the dress is white and her hair is pulled tightly into a bun on the nape of her long neck. There is something unmistakably maternal about her as she scolds her husband for spilling wine on his beige linen suit. Her white shawl slips off of her slender, sloping shoulders as she furrows her brow and leans over to dab lovingly at the stain. The image is appealing, yet ultimately confusing—is she sexy or is she motherly? Or can she, in fact, be both? In the matter of a few seconds, the duality of this scene captures the essence of Luisa in *Y tu mamá también*, Alfonso Cuarón's Mexican bildungsroman. In this way, *Y tu mamá también*, as suggested by the film's title, is an exploration of the Oedipal sexual perversion of Luisa in her dual roles as lover and caregiver.

As defined by Sigmund Freud, the Oedipus complex is the psychosexual development of the male child wherein he shifts from a dependency on the mother “based on nourishment to a dependency based on eroticism” (Chowers 35). What this translates to, Freud writes, is that “It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father” (262). The sexual objectification of the mother figure in *Y tu mamá también* emerges in the very first scene in which Luisa appears. This scene thus serves as a microcosm for her complex Oedipal relationships with Julio and Tenoch. After interacting coldly with the boys upon their first encounter, Luisa lovingly tends to Jano. The omniscient anonymous narrator cuts in to inform the audience that Luisa, orphaned at a young age, has spent the majority of her life nursing a dying aunt, her

last remaining relative. This voiceover, paired with Luisa's cool dismissal of Julio and Tenoch and her concerned care of Jano, establishes Luisa as a mother figure early on. However, after remembering, as only a mother would, that the last time she saw Tenoch he was mourning the loss of a Thunder Cat, she remarks that since then, he has grown into a man. Her comment marks the shift from maternal to sexual in the span of this one scene. Luisa's shawl has slipped down her shoulders at this point, and Julio and Tenoch are entranced. They gradually move closer and closer, cornering Luisa against a railing with their obvious advances, to which she now seems more perceptive. Therefore, the audience's first—and lasting—impression of Luisa is of both mother and lover.

Under the narrative control of Julio and Tenoch, Luisa is first established as an object of sexual desire. The camera follows the boys, rather than Luisa, into their hotel room as they decide to spy on her to see if she “wants to get laid.” In this way, Julio and Tenoch initially define Luisa. As the film progresses, however, Luisa displaces the boys as the narrative agent (Acevedo-Munoz 45), and her sexuality is characterized not only by Julio and Tenoch's intentions of seduction but also by her own sexual references. It is, in fact, Luisa who initiates the explicit sexual conversation (Acevedo-Munoz 45), asking Julio and Tenoch whether they were spying on her so they could see her naked and “go whack off.” Clearly, she is aware of their desires, and rather than discourage them, she condones their lust. In the car ride, Luisa asks provocative questions about Julio and Tenoch's sexual techniques, including favorite positions, and offers up a detailed description of the loss of her virginity. She is comfortable remarking about Tenoch's erection, discussing penis preferences and explicitly demonstrating one of her favorite sexual moves.

The actual consummation of the sexual act of seduction is the final frontier in defining Luisa as a sexual being, and as soon as she demands that Tenoch drop his towel, that line is crossed. Luisa directs all subsequent sexual interaction, guiding Tenoch as a teacher would guide a pupil (or a mother a son), gently reminding him to remove her panties and later consoling him after his poor performance. When he climaxes after only a few minutes, Tenoch mutters “Mamacita” repeatedly as Luisa sighs and cradles his head against her bosom, telling him not to worry. This final gesture pulls the audience in two directions at once, because in this moment, with “Mamacita” lingering in the air, Luisa lies in the balance between sexual and maternal.

It is no wonder, then, that Julio's first reaction to seeing Luisa and Tenoch together is to remember the pain he felt when he spied his mother in the arms of his godfather. The parallel between Luisa and his own mother is undeniable. Julio's sense of betrayal upon seeing his real mother with another man (and subsequently upon seeing Luisa with Tenoch) is derived from the jealousy borne of the Oedipus complex. According to Freud, Julio wants to displace the other men as the sexual companion to these mother figures. Following this Oedipal logic, the jealousy triggers a rivalry with

Tenoch that prompts Julio to reveal bluntly that he has slept with Tenoch's girlfriend—an act of aggression against the father figure of Tenoch. Tenoch, in turn, thinks back to the pain he felt when his father was caught in a political scandal. He makes this connection as he projects his feelings of betrayal onto Julio, thus associating Julio with the father figure and sparking an Oedipal rivalry of his own.

Luisa, the voiceover informs the viewer, subsequently notices the tension between the two friends and assumes that “her transgression had disrupted a natural balance that only she could restore.” The fact that Luisa's solution to this tension is to sleep with Julio rather than mediate a resolution confirms her sexual role. She seduces Julio and the sexual encounter with Tenoch repeats itself in effect, ending with Julio apologizing for his rapid ejaculation and Luisa reassuring him. Both with Tenoch and with Julio, in the height of Luisa's sexuality (in the act of sex), she transitions to the height of her maternity.

This transition becomes more pronounced in the second half of the film as Luisa begins to withdraw from the sexual role, effectively restoring her position as a maternal figure. In the fight between Julio and Tenoch that results from her double seduction, Luisa's concerned attempts at mediation initially fail. She storms away, huffing, “Play with babies, and you'll end up washing diapers!” explicitly referencing her own motherly role. To convince Luisa to return to them, Julio and Tenoch are forced to subjugate themselves to her control, agreeing to her “manifesto” in place of their own. Like a mother, Luisa lays out her rules, the first of which is that she will sleep with neither of them, terminating their sexual relationships—at least for now.

Along with this new manifesto, Luisa's interaction with Chuy and Mabel's children further emphasizes her maternity. Towards the end of the film, Luisa turns her attentions from Julio and Tenoch towards the son and daughter of the fishing couple. She lovingly cradles the young boy in both arms and exhibits endless patience in entertaining the daughter. What's more is that she seems thrilled to do so, insisting, upon Mabel's protests, that the little girl is not a burden but a joy, upon which Mabel tells Luisa that she should have children of her own—all of which casts Luisa in a motherly light.

It could be argued that because Luisa is first defined as sexual, her motherly role is only a by-product of a relationship first formed on the basis of sexual desire, and therefore the Oedipus complex does not apply. This would support a reverse Oedipus complex instead, one in which a sexual being becomes maternalized rather than a mother that becomes sexualized. However, in the second half of the film, after Luisa has fully established herself as a mother figure, the *ménage à trois* at the end of the film, which is simultaneously an act of maternity (in reconciling the two feuding boys) and sexuality, restores her sexual role. Therefore, chronology of relationship roles appears to be insignificant. Regardless of which role Luisa assumes first, in keeping with the

Oedipus complex, she still serves as both mother and lover to Julio and Tenoch.

Furthermore, the Oedipal complex is not absent in the period where Luisa transitions from sexual to motherly. Rather, Cuarón takes this opportunity to introduce the second half of the theory. In the so-called “negative Oedipal complex,” children are characterized by sexual affection towards parents of the same sex and hostility towards parents of the opposite sex, or in this specific case, sons become attracted to fathers and compete with mothers (Eastman 347). If Tenoch can be seen as Julio's father and vice versa, the homoerotic undertones throughout the film and the final sex scene can be attributed to this negative Oedipal complex. What begins as a *ménage à trois* with the boys competing for the attentions of Luisa in the positive Oedipal complex soon becomes the boys competing with Luisa for each other's attentions in the negative Oedipal complex. As Julio and Tenoch begin kissing each other, the camera tilts up and zooms in on them so that Luisa, who is presumably performing oral sex on the boys, is no longer visible. What was once the center of competition now becomes literally (visually) and figuratively insignificant. Paradoxically, the “rivalry over the mother figure's affection” has culminated in the consummation of the negative Oedipal complex as the boys come to terms with their sexual desires for each other (Saldaña-Portillo 760). Julio and Tenoch awake the next morning naked and alone together in bed as Luisa, who has resumed the motherly role yet again, eats breakfast with Mabel's daughter on her lap. This juxtaposition layers both positive and negative Oedipal complexes together as one.

In the jocular conversation that precedes this final act of sex, Cuarón reminds the audience that Julio and Tenoch are, after all, “milk brothers”—friends who have not only slept with the same women but who have also suckled at the same breast. It is in this scene, as the film comes to a close, that the audience finally hears the title phrase spoken as Julio raises his glass and says, “Tenoch, y tu mamá también,” joking (or perhaps admitting) that he has slept with Tenoch's mother. In their drunken stupor Julio and Tenoch toast to all of their transgressions, and, turning to Luisa as she saunters away swinging her hips, they cheer “Por las mamás.” This final toast is a clear indication that the title of this film is certainly no coincidence.

*Instructor: Elena Lahr-Vivaz, Writing Seminar in Cinema Studies*

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## Irene Yiu

### Confession

I am Asian. Biologically, I am Asian because of my Asian ancestors, who bequeathed me their yellow complexion and petite physical features. Culturally, I have an intimate network of Asian friends and family, whom I do Asian activities with. While I am proud to be Asian, I yearn to be someone more than the quiet, reserved, and studious person my culture has shaped me to be. I detest racial stereotypes, yet I cannot help but live up to them. My escape from this cultural reality is dance. Flamenco dance, in particular, allows me to release my emotions, exposing a different side of myself. Through flamenco, I become a Spanish gypsy.

Passion and emotion are clearly the defining features of flamenco, emanated not only in the dance, but also in the *flamenca's* appearance. My once dull and invisible almond eyes are lined in black, smoky and cryptic like the darkest of nights. I extend the lines up and outward to create the fierce look of cat's eyes, gazing at the world with arresting intensity. My brow is furrowed, and my lips, devoid of superficial smiles, ooze a rich, bloody red lacquer. The rose in my hair and my crescent-moon earrings add an exotic touch, uniting me with the beauty of nature and that of Spain's Moorish history. The mysterious strumming of the guitar awakens my senses. I move my wrists and extend my fingers into infinite space and time, like a wave gently caressing the ocean's shore. Slowly, I bring my arms up in defiance, pushing against the onerous oppression of gravity and the world. I snap *pitos* above my head in a simple manner, but one that demands complete attention to the individual. The music stops. I wait.

Suddenly, the guitar ignites a *bulerías* in a fast twelve-count. Deftly I whip my polka-dotted skirt around myself. With each turn, the skirt soars and flaunts its many layers of ruffles. I collect the skirt in my fists, gripping it with the same tension that a *torero* must have to beckon his bull. My feet, flaming in agitation, beat the earth without mercy. My flamenco shoes, armed with nails on the heel and the sole, produce

an eclectic sound of stepping and stomping. The singer of the *cante* wails a harsh and discordant melody, but one that verbalizes pain in all its purity. Infused with the music are the primitive cries of *jaleo*, or words of encouragement from my fellow flamenco dancers. Some clap *palmas* to the rhythm, while others echo the counter-rhythm. The tempo increases furiously, yet I maintain my steady composure, challenging flamenco to overcome my body. Hypnotized by the music, intoxicated with the ecstasy of *duende*, one word escapes me: “¡Olé!”

Coolly and confidently, I exit the stage while the audience claps enthusiastically, they themselves screaming “¡Olé!” to the performance. The dance was for an audience, but the adrenaline of pain, desire, and even happiness were genuine. How exhilarating it felt to reveal the Spanish gypsy in me! And many more times I will do it again, without inhibition. But even when I dance, I am under the spotlight of reality. I can never perform without my anonymous Spanish name and face. I especially can never let my Asian friends and family witness such passions in me. I cannot bear to see their looks of bewilderment—and even mockery—in my attempts to be someone I clearly do not appear to be. And then there are others who would be quick to underestimate me if they discovered that not a trace of *gitana* blood flows through my veins. How seriously would they take my artistry and cries of Spanish *jaleos*? Not very, I should think. So perhaps I am damned with this Asian face and Spanish gypsy nature of mine. Maybe I am a cruel joke from God, created for His own amusement. But I am no imposter. Yes, I cannot escape the world’s judgments, but I must never forget that flamenco is first and foremost for myself.

*Instructor: Jeehyun Lim, Writing Seminar in English*

## Yonah Esterson

### Like a Pile of Bricks

The clock’s ticking echoed off the blank walls. The boy exhaled deeply, trying to slow the pounding of his heart. He heard the clicking of heavy heels on the sterile white tile from down the hall and silently hoped the doctor would enter another room. He didn’t. The doctor was an imposing, although rakish looking, individual. He wore his thick black hair slicked back, a sharp contrast to his well-pressed, pristine lab coat. His skin was deeply tanned and his eyes a piercing shade of gray. Slowly the boy looked upward until his eyes met those of the doctor. The boy’s surroundings flooded his senses. The clock. The doc. The white. Everything was cloudy yet perfectly clear.

“I’m sorry to inform you,” said the mellifluous voice, “you have epilepsy.”

The clock’s second hand stopped ticking.

“An epileptic can live his life like every other person.”

Every other person? What would the boy tell every other person? What if his friends vilified him? Epilepsy: Uncontrolled, unexpected shaking fits. This is what his friends will think of when they think of him. A gust of air blew in through the open window and slammed the door closed.

“All you need to do is swallow a pill twice a day.”

Too simple. There must be more.

“There are side effects; drowsiness, nausea, anorexia, and hair loss are some of the less serious effects.”

Hair loss? Would he have to walk around the hallways of his high school with a horseshoe baldness pattern? After all that time at the gym, would he soon look sickly and emaciated? A nurse in scrubs entered the next room holding a syringe.

A few seconds later, a shriek resonated through the hall. A shot? A shot is all she’s crying about?

“The drug may also cause liver failure. As a precaution, you will need to take a blood test every two weeks and you may not consume any alcohol. You must understand,” the doctor continued, “if not closely monitored, the drug can be fatal.”

The boy looked up at the clock. The hands began to rotate again as the news sunk in. The time was two months ago, the boy, my brother.

*Instructor: Rachael Nichols, Writing Seminar in English*

## Abigail Fine

### A Guest in His Own Home: Isolation and Racism in Documentary Photography

It is not surprising that during America’s Great Depression there was an almost unparalleled outpouring of social documentary photography. Whether commissioned by a government agency or generated by freelance journalists, documentary photography of the 1930s depicted sharecroppers, migrant workers, and tenant farmers with breathtaking precision. But while some photographers—such as Margaret Bourke-White in her 1937 book *You Have Seen Their Faces* (a collaboration with journalist Erskine Caldwell)—documented life in typical Southern sharecropping areas, others depicted isolated, unique communities. One such photographer was Arthur Rothstein, hired in 1935 by the Resettlement Administration to document a community of tenant farmers in Gee’s Bend, Alabama. Two photographs in particular manifest the contrast between these cultures. Rothstein’s image, captioned, “On the Pettway Plantation. Probably Adell Pettway” (Fleischhauer and Brannan 155), depicts a young African American girl standing with her hand on the rustic wooden fence of her family’s plantation. Some feet away, a dog is sleeping before the fence posts in the hot sun. Similarly, one of Bourke-White’s images from *You Have Seen Their Faces*, “East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana,” depicts an African American boy photographed through a doorway in his house. Beside him stands a gaunt, morose dog. Despite the photographs’ apparent similarities, their subjects have differing relationships with their environments: one relationship illustrates the comfort with one’s surroundings that arises from an isolated culture devoid of prejudice; the other illustrates the detachment from one’s surroundings that arises from racism.

A number of superficial factors may lead the viewer to believe that these photographs represent the same cultural background. Both depict African American

children of about the same age (around eight). The children are evidently poor—their clothing is simple at best—and they are both barefoot. Though one photograph is taken in an open outdoor space and the other in the interior of a house, the children are both in a home setting. Finally, the two photographs have dogs as their secondary subjects. The children and the dogs are the only “characters”—that is, neither photograph has people or animals in the background. The images focus the viewer’s attention on three elements: the child, the dog, and the home. Most importantly, both images depict children of African American farmers, and both are illustrations of poverty.

Despite these visual similarities, however, the subjects of the two photographs differ in their relationships with their environments: whereas Rothstein’s subject is at ease in and at home with her environment, the boy in Bourke-White’s photo is detached from his. In Rothstein’s photo, the girl (Adell Pettway) is physically in contact with her surroundings. She is touching the fence post in a way that suggests pride and ownership. Her confidence is evident in her expression as well as her body language—she stares directly at the camera with a placid, comfortable expression, and she is standing straight with shoulders squared. Rather than photographing Adell Pettway from above, as Bourke-White did with her subject, Rothstein is at the same level as the girl, lending her an air of almost queenly dignity. Other elements, such as the fence, dog, and plantation background, are compositionally as much a part of the image as the girl. The photograph, a scene of clean, straight lines and open spaces, has an indescribable serenity. In contrast, the boy in Bourke-White’s photograph is uneasy and uncertain. He stands in a messy and chaotic home, with clothing piled on top of furniture and images covering the walls. He is not touching anything related to his surroundings; his hands are held in front of him. His detachment is emphasized by his separation from the viewer: he is looking slightly to the right of the camera with an expression of fear, anxiety, or surprise, as though there were someone standing immediately behind the photographer. Additionally, the house’s wallpaper (comprised of pages from newspapers) is a poignant reminder of the detachment between boy and home. Though we presume that he is not well educated, the boy is surrounded on all sides by reading material—and, interspersed throughout the reading material, images of well-groomed, glamorous white people. Whereas Rothstein’s subject is a natural component of her environment, Bourke-White’s subject is disjointed, a guest in his own home.

It is clear from these visual clues that the two children have differing levels of comfort with their environments; this discrepancy in comfort is also apparent from a discrepancy in the children’s relationships with their dogs. In Rothstein’s photograph, the dog is sleeping on the ground some distance from Adell Pettway, and they appear to be uninterested in each other. This detachment blends the dog with its environment; it becomes as much a part of the plantation landscape as the trees or the fence. In

Bourke-White’s photograph, however, the dog is more closely associated with the boy than with the environment. They huddle together in the center of the photograph, the same frightened expression on both their faces. Bourke-White’s caption, “Blackie ain’t good for nothing, he’s just an old hound dog,” seems at first to imply that the boy regards the dog as a nuisance. However, Bourke-White frequently used captions that contrasted with the most obvious interpretation of her photographs, lending her work a shade of irony. In this case, the caption implies not that the boy dislikes his dog, but rather that he is repeating a phrase he’s heard from others. The way in which the dog cautiously peeks around the boy confirms that though the dog has been treated with disdain, the boy is protective of and attached to it. The boy and his dog are as one in this photograph, a single subject frightened of its surroundings.

Not only are the boy and his dog frightened of and even condemned by their surroundings, but they are also united victims of racism. When viewers read the first half of the caption, “Blackie ain’t good for nothing,” they may be momentarily taken aback, thinking that “Blackie” is a nickname for the boy. As viewers realize that “Blackie” is actually a dog, they become aware of how conditioned their minds are to racism: they have assumed without thinking that the caption refers to the boy. This trick that the caption plays on viewers also causes them to temporarily confound a person with a dog, a subtle implication that African Americans were regarded as animals by the white community (which, in the sharecropping regions of the 1930s South, was inarguably true). One might even extrapolate that “Blackie ain’t good for nothing” is a phrase the boy will hear in reference to himself for a good deal of his life. This extrapolation is striking in a setting that contrasts the boy’s threadbare clothing with the pictures on the walls of white people—pictures that target other white people with the means to afford the luxuries advertised. Barefoot, poorly clothed, and photographed from above (thus appearing to be smaller than he is), this boy looks insignificant and primitive in the ubiquitous world of the white man.

The differing relationships to environments that Rothstein’s and Bourke-White’s photos suggest are in keeping with the discrepancy between life at Gee’s Bend and life as a sharecropper. For instance, various attributes (with the exception of Adell’s westernized clothing) cause Rothstein’s photo to look almost as though it were taken in Africa: Adell’s bare feet seem to be a part of her culture rather than a result of poverty, and the dog, bright sun, rustic fence, and dusty landscape are indicative of another country altogether. This quality is not coincidental. As described in Carl Fleischhauer and Beverly W. Brannan’s *Documenting America: 1935–1943*, the tenant farming community at Gee’s Bend was “isolated and primitive, people whose speech, habits, and material culture partook of an African origin and an older way of life” (147). Journalist John Temple Graves II wrote in a 1937 article in *The New York Times Magazine* that “no one can visit Gee’s Bend without an appreciation of racial virtues

preserved there, which tend to disappear in more civilized quarters where the ambition of the Negro is to become only a carbon copy of the white man” (qtd. in Fleischhauer and Brannan 148). The African quality of Rothstein’s photograph is a sign of Adell Pettway’s strong ties to her heritage—ties that are essential to her sense of place.

Bourke-White’s African American boy, on the other hand, is representative of the racial tensions characteristic of sharecropping life in the South. As awareness of personal rights and freedoms increased among sharecroppers and farmers, plantation landlords struggled to direct the blame away from themselves. By hiring black families to work their best land, landlords manipulated the jealousy of white farmers and fueled racial tensions for the purpose of self-preservation. As a result, African Americans were continually criticized for living in white men’s homes and farming white men’s land. An anonymous farmer in Magee, Mississippi, said, “Give a nigger an inch and he’ll take a mile. I know them. That’s why you have to keep them in their place, and the less you give them, the less they’ll try to take from you” (Bourke-White and Caldwell 17). It is no wonder that, in the face of this attitude, the boy in Bourke-White’s photo is unsettled in his environment; the environment is not truly his, but that of another (racist) culture.

*Instructor: Denise Tanyol, Writing Seminar in English*

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## Brian Kelly

### The Ebonics Debate: From its Early Origins to its Precarious Future

Few members of Oakland’s School Board could have realized the impact of their fateful decision in December of 1996. It was late, around 11 PM, and the board was, once again, being inundated with the disappointed scores and grades achieved by the majority of their students. The facts were nothing new; African-American students, who constituted 53% of Oakland’s student body, represented an inflated 71% of “special- needs” students, 64% of students held back each year, and 80% of all school suspensions. It became clear that black students as a whole, with a 1.8 grade point average, the lowest of any ethnic or racial group, were just not “making the grade.” So on that night the Oakland School Board, in the words of Peter Applebome, “hurriedly approved a recommendation many members had barely read” (1997 p.10). The resolution was an attempt to gain more federal financial aid for its English programs. Simple as that, resolution approved, problem solved, *meeting adjourned*.

If only it were so simple. The majority of the school board that night failed to see the potential for one of education’s greatest controversies. This controversy was, of course, over Ebonics. The resolution passed by the Oakland School Board on December 18th, 1996, effectively recognized Ebonics not only as a separate language from English, but as the *primary language* of many of its African-American students. Through a minor clause in the resolution the school board was essentially declaring over 50% of its students to be non native English speakers who were, theoretically, entitled to federal funding for bilingual language programs.

No one that night could possibly have imagined the consequences of passing that seemingly trivial resolution, which essentially caused Americans nationwide, nearly thirty years after the Civil Rights Movement, to again question the precarious status of black culture, customs, traditions, and language in American society. A debate over the linguistic status and classification of Ebonics quickly turned into an assault on black culture and language, putting African-Americans throughout the country on the defensive. As this war of words erupted into a field day for conservative journalists, political leaders, and media publications, the origin of the debate—the plight of many inner-city blacks—was sadly forgotten.

The multifaceted layers of heated discussion, racial strife, and arrogant linguistic supremacy cast the true origins of Ebonics in the shadows. Few in the country were impartial enough to realize that Ebonics, far from being a form of slang or a careless colloquial version of English, is essentially the time-tested result of a slave pidgin language, which has steadily developed over the last three centuries. In a true celebration of human will and creativity, black slaves were able to overcome not only physical and mental torment but linguistic barriers as well to establish their own pidgin language, created from a mixture of English, Caribbean dialects, and West African languages. Americans must realize that Ebonics is a compromise of cultures, the result of a cultural collision, and it should not be ridiculed for its imperfections, but instead celebrated for the very concept it represents: *a truly American culture*. Americans should not look down upon Ebonics as inferior (as many do through what could only be called “Mock Ebonics”), but instead praise black youths who are intelligent enough to master both this beautiful concoction *and* Standard English. If using Ebonics in the classroom helps students more easily learn Standard English, then these linguistic programs should be implemented without hesitation.

Unfortunately, many prejudiced and discriminatory views remain about Ebonics. One often hears Ebonics degraded as “poor grammar,” “slang,” or simply “ignorance.” What these critics fail to realize is that Ebonics is not simply “ghetto talk,” “broken English,” or an urban cultural phenomenon of the late 20th century. Ebonics’ roots lie much deeper and can be traced far back in American history, before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the establishment of the United States, and what would later emerge as “American English” (as opposed to the “British English” spoken by a majority of the colonists who originally came to North America). According to several self-described “Ebonologists,” Ebonics was formed during the early years of the slave trade in the 17th century. Captured slaves were not only incapable of communicating with their English-speaking captors, but most of them

were incapable of communicating with *one another*. Slaves were abducted from all over Africa, from different regions, tribes, and linguistic backgrounds. Hence, it is absurd to think that, solely because these slaves were all black, they would be able to speak and communicate with each other. Popular misconceptions, however, often cause critics to overlook this fact. Many of these critics remain persistent, insisting that slaves did not form their own language. Rather, they argue, the slaves incorrectly learned the slave master’s English.

Yet history has taught linguists that in a time of dire need, in which linguistic barriers must ultimately be torn down for survival, a new language will emerge. Studies done by Don Kulick in his work *Language Shift and Cultural Reproduction* have corroborated this trend through the example of forced laborers in Papua New Guinea in the early 20th century. These laborers, who came from diverse linguistic backgrounds, learned to communicate with one another by forming Tok Pisin, a pidgin language which was rooted in English, German, and several indigenous languages of New Guinea (4). Three centuries earlier, African slaves, while crossing the Atlantic in shackles, essentially did just that. According to the linguist Dr. Robert L. Williams, slaves incorporated English vocabulary they had recently learned into the grammatical syntax of a number of West African languages, including Ewe, Yoruba, Fula, Twi, Mende, Mandinka Igbo, Nupe, Mossi, and Kanuri (Heilbrunn 3).

The results of many Ebonologists’ studies are astonishing. Williams and others are essentially saying that the young black girl who is ridiculed for saying, “I be hungry in class,” is not displaying ignorance towards the grammatical conventions of English, but is instead practicing an old and time-endured pidgin language or dialect, established well over a century before the founding of the United States of America and the subsequent development of American English over the next two and a half centuries. This deep-rooted history hidden beneath Ebonics’ unusual syntax and grammar should not be scorned or suppressed, but instead acknowledged and celebrated.

Unfortunately, this inspirational story of survival and endurance has been clouded not only by the vicious attacks of Ebonics’ opponents, but by the poor defensive maneuvers of many of Ebonics’ *proponents*. For instance, many black leaders have frequently cited Alex Haley’s successful book *Roots* as a source of renewed black pride; yet many feel Haley put too much emphasis on African pride as opposed to *African-American* pride. Jim Sleeper, author of “Toward an End of Blackness,” argues that blacks are the most American of all minorities because they uniquely established their own American identity from scratch. He derides so-called “Back to Africa” movements by asserting that Africa’s people are of diverse religious, linguistic, and tribal backgrounds, and the ties African-Americans have today with Africa pale in comparison to the ties they have developed with mainstream, white America. Somewhere along African-Americans’ grueling three-century journey, the emphasis

<sup>1</sup>In this context, the term “Mock Ebonics” is meant to display the disparaging nature of faking Ebonics accents, overemphasizing “black” words, and “speaking ghetto.” It follows the basis of “Mock Spanish” introduced by Jane Hill in “Language, Race, and White Public Space.”

on their identification shifted from *African* to *American*. As African-American Nathan Huggins says, “We’re not an alien population, we’re the alienated population” (Sleeper 43). Africa, torn by ethnic warfare in Sudan and Somalia, is also no more tolerant than America. Descendants of slaves should not forget that their ancestors were not captured by whites, but by fellow Africans. As Sleeper says, “Haley idealized an Africa and a blackness that had been so overwhelmed (indeed, defined) by European invasion that they flourished only as negations of whites” (38).

Such proponents of Ebonics and black pride often take the power and beauty from African-American culture and unfairly place it in the realm of *African* pride. Ebonics, however, is representative of one of the most American concepts of all, and credit should be justly attributed to America’s black population. Where most ethnicities (e.g. the Irish, the Italians, the Germans) came to America with a collective culture already formed, African slaves were forced to start anew, and combine many of their diverse African traditions with new English and American elements. Ebonics is essentially as testament to the complete formation of a cultural identity.

There always will remain, however, the faction of African-Americans who look down upon Ebonics as harming blacks’ chances of obtaining substantial political power in American society. As James B. Boles, an African-American, said in a letter to *The Washington Post*, “In order for us to succeed in their world, we must speak their language [whites’ English] flawlessly.” Boles’ statement, of course, has substantial merit. “Language is power,” writes Theresa Perry, co-editor of *The Real Ebonics Debate*. This is undeniable. Many question how effective the Civil Rights Movement would have been had Martin Luther King Jr. given his legendary “March on Washington Address” in Ebonics.

King, however, realized the appropriate time and place to use Standard English. He was aware of the rhetorical effects that using proper grammar and formal English conventions would have on his multiracial audience. It is this very use of Standard English that Oakland’s teachers are trying to show their students. They are attempting to teach their children that in many real world situations it is the one with a strong command of Standard English who is given the advantage. They are not teaching Ebonics. Rather, they are using Ebonics as a means to teach the appropriate use, function, and command of *English*, Standard English. Through the aid of Ebonics, these children can more effectively learn the value of the gift of the English language in today’s society. Critics must be hesitant before demeaning such language programs and must re-examine exactly what the goals of these programs are: the education and advancement of our youth through King’s dream. These same critics, along with the rest of America, must also reexamine their own cultural and linguistic values, and must come together to cherish Ebonics for the diverse elements, both black and white, that it harmoniously incorporates. Perhaps this language can be used as a microcosm of what

American society should strive to be—a society in which cultures peacefully blend and mix, blurring the lines of past difference, while carefully retaining their most essential and distinct elements.

As with all true controversies, however, there will always remain a group of dissenters who refuse to accept the aberrant, refuses to accept the change, and refuses to embrace the difference. Yet no amount of anti-Ebonics ads, anti-Ebonics tirades, or anti-Ebonics campaigns will alter the cultural link that exists between African-Americans and Ebonics. Though critics may doubt Ebonics’ political power, one question alone can break the heart and soul of their argument, and finally give Ebonics the respect, reverence, and admiration that all cultures so deserve: if Martin Luther King Jr. had turned his back on *his* culture, *his* people, and *his* language, would he have been the one on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial poetically dictating *his people’s* dream?

*Instructor: Paja Lynn Faudree, Writing Seminar in Anthropology*

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## James Kania

### Another Day in the Sun

I felt a bead of sweat drip off my brow as he walked slowly into the cross hairs of my .50-caliber machine gun mounted on top of our Humvee. I suspected that he would claim to be a repairman working in the same camp to which we were convoying. Clad in over thirty pounds of gear, I sat atop an armored truck behind an automatic mounted machine gun that fired half-inch bullets. He was in a traditional long-flowing one-piece cloak. I watched him open his door and I took careful note of his hands; mine were firmly fixed on the handle of the mounted weapon as I had traversed it to follow the motion of his car. As he advanced, I reached for my M16 rifle and held it at the low ready, the stock already positioned on my shoulder. We both understood: I was in control. Why else would he bother talking to me? He spoke to me in broken English and Arabic. I had picked up several phrases and words during my time in the desert, and by the six-month mark I was rather adept at communicating with civilians and insurgents alike. He complained that I should let him join our convoy so he could get to work; I was already at work, and I trusted no one out of uniform. In my mind I agreed that there were air-conditioning units in need of repair at Camp Anaconda, but my demeanor did not change. He was upset that the civilian bridge had been restricted to military traffic because a nearby bridge had closed. I motioned for him to return to his car; he took a few more steps forward. I shifted my position and brushed my hand across the gun to the trigger, feeling the gun's lubricating oil drip out hot in the noonday sun. He paused and reached into his cloak. I yelled "تَوَقَّفْ" ("Stop!" in Arabic) as I switched the gun's safety to fire. Even if he was a local, he had disobeyed me and showed little concern for his safety. Suspicion rising, I mentally reviewed our rules of engagement. Slowly he pulled out an identification card, and in Arabic and broken English he reiterated what I already knew: that he wanted to show me his card and join our convoy to get to his job. I tried to wave him off, wondering if he knew

that I understood him perfectly, but he took another few steps forward as I yelled and swung the rifle up. Instantly I was sighted in on his chest, specifically his sternum; center mass, high probability lethal, one shot, one kill. He stopped, frozen; as his hands dropped, I wondered if he had a weapon or explosives strapped to him or in his car. My finger rested on the trigger as he took a step back, walked to his car, and realized that he was not going to get to his job today and that I was not going to help him. Later I wondered if he, while staring back at me behind my rifle, realized that I deeply empathized with him. His grasp of English showed he was educated. He dressed well for a local and he had a technical job. Under other circumstances we might have known each other differently. To this day, I wonder often if he understood that I had a job to do that day too. Our jobs were both simple and complex, highly technical and very specialized. I felt for the man, but I could not care. I will always remember him, because when I looked past my rifle I saw me.

*Instructor: Joshua Ratner, Writing Seminar in English*

## Evan J. Horlacher

### Old Man Brown

Old Man Brown stands wild-eyed and wounded, aglow in a full-body halo of red, yellow, and orange against inky black. Open Bible in hand, sword and guns in his belt, he extends his hands as curls of scripture arch from his shoulders in the same yellow blaze. Preaching to an unseen mass of the faithful, he calls forth a choir of wicked worms, tiny winding lines of paint. These little strings lift their heads to sing, accompanying the mad Brown and his Biblical verse.

Joe Coleman's evocative portrait of John Brown, *Old Man Brown*, shares several prominent similarities with Coleman's other portraits of historical figures and pop culture icons. The subject stands in the middle of the canvas surrounded by smaller portrayals of people, places, objects, and events important in the subject's life. Text weaves its way through the muddle, and a thick border lies around the painting's edge. Also characteristic of a Coleman portrait are the thin, wriggling brush strokes that compose the piece. Altogether, his techniques produce two senses of noise in *Old Man Brown*: the visual noise of the crowded space on the canvas and the distinct paint marks, and the noise suggested by the scenes depicted in the painting. Despite the fact that the violence in the painting is run-of-the-mill compared to the popular entertainment of today, this noise gives the work its grotesque feeling. Just because the painting is noisy doesn't mean it lacks a visual pattern. Coleman's portraits typically feature a crowded symmetry, and *Old Man Brown* is no exception. The piece's many voices do not sound all on top of each other, but rather, they proceed by turns, one overlapping into the next, bright, leering text entangled in a collage of images ranging from mundane portraits to gruesome murders. There is no clear progression between elements. For instance, the first thing a listener might hear upon entering the painting may be the ringing of John Brown's gun. The shot harmonizes with the nearby thwack of his ally's sword slicing off the arm of a man. Rounding out the

chord are the muted thuds of their victims falling on the banks of the Pottawatome. The almost-melody jumps to the cracking of a whip against the back of a boy. He is a son of John Brown and soon to be a soloist. He croons with cracked lips the manuscript his father has lain before him: "Disobey mother, 8 lashes... telling a lie, 2 lashes," and he is soon joined by the paint-mark chorus, decrying the hypocrisy of our hero John Brown, the abolitionist who treated his own children like slaves.

Only a particularly astute listener may pay any mind to the next gunshot or the gush of the river rising to meet a man thrown off a bridge, as they are tied in time to such an outbreak of noise that it threatens to swallow the rest of the piece: Harper's Ferry. Here Brown joins in the clamor, and here is his most eloquent solo. He is confident. His hostages surround him as he condemns his enemies to eternal damnation, assured of his own victory. His maniacal ranting draws forth demons from the canvas, just as the events that transpired at Harper's Ferry gave rise to this story, this painting, and these strange sounds.

Only a few remain silent. So dead are several of these, the friends and family of John Brown, that their black and white faces cannot hear the blare about their heads. No, the only true listeners to the twisted din of the life story of John Brown, are the severed ears of Brown's comrade Dangerfield Newby, lying in fresh blood at the sides of the painting. They take in everything, from Brown's lunatic ravings to the most barely perceptible of sounds, the creaking of a rope above Brown's head at his execution.

One who looks into this painting is not forever lost. Like soundproof walls, the dual forces of time and mortality protect the internal ears of the modern day viewer. Out of these elements, Coleman constructs a protective barrier around his work, a border in the same snake-poison red, yellow, and green as the text. Adorning it are the monochrome faces of Brown's counterparts throughout history, beginning with Spartacus and ending with "Charlie" Manson, madman, rebels, self-proclaimed messengers of God. Across the bottom portion, a scroll lists Brown's dates of birth and death. Adorning the very top of the border is John Brown, his wild hair and beard still attached, as a skeleton in the ground.

Instructor: Grant Potts, Writing Seminar in Religious Studies

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## Morgan Rogers

### Hip-Hop v. Hip-Pop: Socially Conscious Rap as an Art Form

It seems that Americans today are living in the midst of a hip-hop nation. Rap music's most popular icons are packaged, marketed and sold to the American masses through a variety of mediums. Musicians are no longer confined to one industry as a means of producing capital, but rather they engage in selling products in multiple industries such as fashion, liquor, restaurants, and even bottled water. They are endorsed by such large companies as Pepsi, Coca-Cola, and Reebok. Through such a vast array of undertakings, these young, Black superstars are America's *nouveau riche* and the undisputed kings and queens of bling. The artists who promote materialism and what has been dubbed "real street life" are hip-pop artists. That is to say that they cater to the consumptive desires of mainstream America. They display a blatant reverence for all things expensive and ostentatious, which gives the genre of hip-hop and the culture as a whole, an aura of materialism. Rappers often augment negative perceptions of themselves by spitting lyrics that glorify violence and misogyny. However, this generation of hip-pop is not a reflection of the less glamorous and less frequently mass-produced hip-hop that makes its way through the underground circuits. Hip-hop, in its truest form, is not about materialism or degrading women, but it is in fact, a form of Black protest poetry. These poems, through the tradition of signifyin(g), are in many ways great contributions to the oral history of African Americans, and affirm the idea that culture can be found in more places than simply the Greek classics.

Oftentimes, the only concept that people have of this particular genre of music is that its purveyors are young men and women from disadvantaged backgrounds who perpetuate negative ideas about the Black community. Rappers such as Lil' Kim validate the stereotype that Black women are overtly sexual. Mogul Jay-Z has further denigrated Black women through songs such as "Big Pimpin'," and makes known his personal involvement in drug culture. As their songs and the songs of others have made their way out of the urban ghettos and into suburban living rooms through MTV and BET, a portrait has been created of both black people and of their art form. Lyrics about being in the club, and living a "ghetto fabulous" life full of jewels, cars, and clothes is not a strong indication of high culture. In fact, these depictions of the black

experience are simplistic and demeaning.

The side of the hip-hop that most mainstream listeners are not aware of is that of socially conscious rap. For the majority of listeners, names such as Common, Talib Kweli, Mos Def, and The Roots are vaguely recognizable, but not identifiable for their work. These are hip-hop artists who represent the various aspects of Black life in the United States. They are not nearly as popular as other artists, but their protests are heard. Mos Def captured the power of hip-hop well in his song “Mathematics” when he said, “Hip-hop passed all your tall social hurdles / Like nation-wide projects, prison industry complex.” In these two lines, Mos Def alludes to racism as a whole and in the housing and prison industries of America. Not only do true hip-hop artists represent Black protest, but they also assume the roles of oral historians. They are able to take current situations and connect them with people and places of the past to make them relevant and to keep the past alive. Tupac Shakur, one of the most controversial rappers of the early to mid-90s gives an excellent example of this relationship between past and present in his song “Changes”:

*First, ship 'em dope, watch 'em deal to brothers.  
Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other.  
It's time to fight back, that's what Huey said,  
Two shots in the dark now Huey's dead (Shakur, "Changes").*

This quatrain refers to Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party, one of the most militant civil rights groups of the 1960s and 70s. The lines are also an allusion to alleged government indiscretions regarding its handling of the Civil Rights Movement. Tupac's reference to an outstanding and outspoken advocate of civil rights is a protest of the government's ability to silence Black leaders and quell overt protests.

*Instructor: Patricia Williams, Writing Seminar in English*

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## Maggie Rusch

### The Flaws of Memory: Christopher Banks in Ishiguro's *When We Were Orphans*

*When We Were Orphans* by Kazuo Ishiguro exists as a patchwork of memories, vacillating between present events and past episodes to piece together the narrative of Christopher Banks. The novel chronicles Banks's maturity from recently displaced orphan to well-known socialite and detective. Ishiguro merges the narrative of Banks's English life with images and memories of his early life in Shanghai, slowly revealing the details of his past life and the kidnapping of both his parents. While he is in London, a series of events compels Banks to finally pursue his lifelong dream of investigating and solving the mystery surrounding the disappearance of his parents. However, Banks encounters numerous obstacles and, ultimately, fails in his search to solve the case. Instead, Banks discovers that the truth concerning the disappearance of his parents exists far from the way he imagined. As a result, Banks experiences a revelation regarding the ways in which he perceived the single event around which he established his entire life and career.

At its most basic level, the work functions as a conventional detective account. However, on another level, Ishiguro explores the theme of subjective perception as he integrates the intricacies of memory and the relationship between past and present into the narrative. This additional layer illuminates the flaws involved in the perception of any individual, forcing readers to explore the implications that emerge from the way the mind functions in Banks's story. Along with the overarching theme of memory, the discrepancies between various recollections serve to pull together the shifts in scene and time that arise throughout *When We Were Orphans*.

Ishiguro successfully contrasts the ways in which Banks remembers specific events or descriptions with the memories of other characters. These incongruities force the reader to question the credibility of the narrator and whether or not his descriptions

of past events are real or partially corrupt. For example, Banks's personal recollection of Colonel Chamberlain bringing him to England after the kidnapping contradicts the account of the voyage that Colonel Chamberlain relates to Banks over dinner. Banks narrates: "His repeated insinuation was that I had gone about the ship withdrawn and moody, liable to burst into tears at the slightest thing.... For according to my own, quite clear memory, I adapted very ably to the changed realities of my circumstances. I remember very well that, far from being miserable on that voyage, I was positively excited about life aboard the ship, as well as by the prospect of the future that lay before me" (28). Banks appears irritated at the incongruities, arguing for the validity of his memory while rejecting Colonel Chamberlain's version of the episode. These ambiguities highlight the flaws involved in memory and the extent to which memories are affected by personal understanding.

At a later point in the novel, Banks contradicts his own claim to have a "quite clear memory" and admits to a diminishing capability to remember, saying that "over the past year, I have become increasingly preoccupied with my memories, a preoccupation encouraged by the discovery that these memories—of my childhood, of my parents—have lately begun to blur. A number of times recently I have found myself struggling to recall something that only two or three years ago I believed was ingrained in my mind for ever" (70). As the narrative progresses, the reader and Banks simultaneously discover the flaws within his memory, and the reality is uncovered.

Although he adeptly weaves the distorted memories of Banks into the present narrative, Ishiguro leaves many pieces of the plot without explanation, denying the reader adequate clarification. For example, while Sarah Hemmings plays a large role throughout the novel, Banks only briefly mentions her fate when looking back at the conclusion of his narrative. Ishiguro provides a set of ambiguous assumptions and no further explanation, forcing the reader to draw conclusions without proper evidence. Perhaps these components serve to mirror Banks's failure to solve the mystery under the circumstances initially imagined; perhaps they serve a separate purpose. However, these pieces act more as side plots that simply distract the reader from the more interesting parts of the novel. Ultimately, Ishiguro produces a plot much more complex than necessary to effectively reach his central theme and conclusions. Ishiguro produces a very intriguing story—although at times it is dotted with irrelevant side plots—to integrate the past memories of Banks into his present, exploring the flaws inherent in memory.

*Instructor: Katherine Gustafson, Writing Seminar in English*

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## Marcus Stuhr

### A Failure to Communicate

Gripping the back of my chair, I began to slide it out from underneath the table. As I pulled, the chair let out a stuttering squeal as it dragged across the floor, turning the heads of everyone sitting down. Apologizing, I hastily shifted down into my seat. My Chinese girlfriend had brought me along to a dinner hosted by the parents of her close friend, Ji. I had never before met Ji or Ji's parents, nor had I ever sat down to a dinner with an entire Chinese family. Rapidly cycling through ideas (Nice tie? The food smells great? The house is beautiful?), I thought of what I could say in an attempt to make conversation. However, what if Ji's parents were somehow offended by something I said? Unfamiliar with their customs, I was merely a foreigner. Since I was the only non-Chinese individual at the table, I decided, it was best to keep silent in order to avoid saying anything foolish.

Meanwhile, quick bursts in the Mandarin tongue flew back and forth across the table from various directions as swift hands exchanged plates of steaming food, scraping the contents down into their bowls with chopsticks. The plates contained a vast plethora of foods: gravy-covered chunks of chicken resting upon mounds of rice; wrinkled, tan-colored strips of unknown origin; dark brown slices of meat coated in scarlet juice; tangles of wispy bean sprouts; and heaps of shiny, glistening noodles, among other things. I even recall a crackled, purple tentacle. The language barrier was an obstacle in itself, but I realized that not even the food could provide me with any comfort.

The "Chinese Dinner Etiquette" portion of my brain had not been developed. Was it safe to simply reach out across the table for something that looked appealing? Would it be worth the risk of accidentally dropping food from my chopsticks while attempting to transfer the food from a distant plate to my own bowl? Glancing down at my awkward approach to holding chopsticks, I decided to play it safe and stay close to

home, shoveling into my bowl a small portion of what appeared to be golden globules surrounded by a smattering of red and green vegetables. I also reached for one of the wrinkled tan strips nearby, cautiously taking a bite. As I chewed through the strip's soft, crinkly exterior, Ji's father gave his wife a nudge, saying something to her in an inaudible tone, glancing at me briefly out of the corner of his eye. Were they talking about me?

"*Ni yao he shui ma?*" Ji's mother suddenly inquired, passing me a glass of water.

My only response was a fluttering of confused blinks. My girlfriend quietly told me that I had taken a bite of spicy cow stomach. I could not tell if my face was aflame from the stomach or from embarrassment. Beads of sweat rolled down my forehead as my shirt plastered itself to my back, drenched. Trying to ignore the chuckles around me, I gulped loudly, sensing the burn of the spices against the back of my tongue as the bits of cow stomach slid down my throat. Noticing that everyone was looking at me expectantly, I forced a smile and shoved a thick batch of rice into my mouth, not knowing what to do or say. My girlfriend looked mortified.

Why hadn't General Tso been there to save me? I was fully versed in Chinese food vocabulary: I knew my lo mein from my kung pao, and yet, as I looked over the table before me, I could barely distinguish between chicken and tofu. I realized that what I knew as Chinese dining had nothing to do with China at all.

*Instructor: Thomas Devaney, Jr., Writing Seminar in English*

## Catherine Villeneuve-Tang

### Sniffing Out the Odorless Genius: Identity in *Perfume*

The French describe a person's intangible quality that charms the senses as a "*Je ne sais quoi*." This phrase translated into English closely resembles the expression, "There's something about her/him." The notion of an attractive aura surrounding a person conjures up images of an invisible force at work. For the most part, ordinary human scent passes relatively unnoticed since all humans are accustomed to their own smell. But this general observation cannot be applied to one exceptional example of the human species: Grenouille, having no odor of his own, indulges in the minutest shred of scent and can deconstruct a person's "*je ne sais quoi*" into the building blocks of smell. Ironically, Grenouille lacks all personal odor; he is inadequate in an area to which he devotes himself wholeheartedly. In chapter 29, Grenouille discovers his odorlessness and realizes that he lacks an identity which, according to his eccentric disposition, equals personal scent. His subsequent endeavors to create a perfect perfume reflect his desperate attempt to create an identity for himself. In Süskind's *Perfume*, Grenouille's desire for an identity and subsequent self-destruction elucidate the futility in manufacturing a false sense of self.

The power of Grenouille's nose puts the rest of his senses to shame. Endowed with an exquisite nose, Grenouille identifies the world around him according to its smell and overlooks all other sensory input. When he stumbles upon a young girl's scent, "he actually thought he had never in all his life seen anything so beautiful as this girl...[he] meant, of course, he had never smelled anything so beautiful" (Süskind 41). The correction the narrator makes at the end of the quotation highlights the bizarre and unique way in which Grenouille assesses the world. Out of a force of habit, the narrator expresses Grenouille's rapture on the level of sight when in reality Grenouille's

enjoyment of the girl takes place on the level of scent. Grenouille masters the use of the alembic to extract “that scented soul, ...[that] ethereal oil, that was in fact the best thing about matter, the only reason for his interest in it” (96). The scent-laden oil extracted by the alembic represents the intrinsic identifying quality of matter. The alembic spurs envy in Grenouille because he yearns to similarly extract his own identity in the form of smell from within his own body. He fantasizes of becoming the alembic to be the one drawing out all the souls of smell so that with the “exquisite plants that he tended within him...with their unique scent he could... [flood] the whole world with a distillate of his own making” (97). By assigning properties inherent to humans, such as the soul, to smells, Grenouille personifies odors thus giving them personality and identity. His daydream of becoming the alembic itself and imparting his unique distillate, his unique smell, onto the world symbolizes his desire to concoct an identity through a perfume, acceptable and pleasing to all, that could demand the love of those who alienate him. He soon suffers a rude awakening as he realizes that, unlike the alembic, his distillate hardly smells good. In fact, it doesn’t smell at all.

Catastrophe strikes in chapter 29 when Grenouille’s desire to find his personal odor sends him on a fruitless search, whereupon his nightmare becomes a reality. The chapter begins with a premonition of disaster with Grenouille’s dream of suffocating in his own odorless fog and ends with a materialization of this fear that his body is, in fact, devoid of smell. He tries to detect scent on his body by smelling the cradle of his elbow, “the spot where all humans smell like themselves...But he could smell nothing” (135). Grenouille falls into an identity crisis and becomes frozen with “the fear of not knowing much of anything about himself” (137). The connection Grenouille stresses all along between understanding things and people in terms of smells now shows him that he cannot know anything about himself since he lacks smell, the identifying quality. The close association Grenouille draws between scent and identity throughout the book now truly plagues him since his deficiency of odor undermines his integrity as a being according to his own established standards. The arrogance and snobbery he once exercised over human odor by deeming it “nothing special...ghastly...totally uninteresting—repulsive” (41) now haunts him since he himself cannot even qualify to be compared to the foulest of smells for his smell is nonexistent. By his own definition, Grenouille arguably lacks the “scented soul” (96) that all people possess and therefore the intrinsic qualities such as personality and identity. With this alarming revelation that chills him to the core, Grenouille emerges from his seven-year hibernation at the end of chapter 29 with a renewed mission to artificially acquire a sense of self that was missing all along.

After Grenouille’s desire to identify his own odor proves impossible in chapter 29, he refocuses his life’s purpose. Chapter 29 serves as a pivotal point in the book since it readjusts the direction of Grenouille’s compass, thus leading him towards his demise.

Prior to his epiphany, Grenouille fate was to “becom[e] a creator of scents...not just an average one...But, rather, the greatest perfumer of all time” (44) with admiration as a goal. However, after his discovery in his cave, Grenouille exploits his genius to formulate a most irresistible human odor to represent his identity. His endeavors start on a smaller scale as he devises scents and thus identities to fit the context of his surroundings. For example, among a throng of people he wears a “concoction of cat shit, cheese, and vinegar as an odor just like their own” (153) in order to blend in and remain inconspicuous. Grenouille’s self-assurance grows as he sees how “[people] gained confidence in him—and with the first breath, they gained confidence in him, for they were inhaling his artificial odor—they believed everything” (160). At this point, his greediness for love and acceptance escalates. Whereas Grenouille once aspired to become “not just an average one...But, rather, the greatest perfumer of all time” (44), he now hails himself as the “omnipotent god of scent” (155). The elevation of his self-expectations demonstrates an increasingly desperate need to validate his existence. Grenouille disillusion himself into believing that if everyone loves him, he might be able to believe himself loveable. Unbeknownst to him, Grenouille seeks authentic rather than artificial love that springs voluntarily, not automatically as a response to perfume, from people’s hearts. His disillusionment leads him to create the most horrific and traumatizing scene of love coupled with self-hatred.

In the midst of a public outpouring of love for him, Grenouille experiences contempt and hate and cannot reciprocate the feelings of love since the artificial spell cast on his audience fails to work its magic over him. Aware of the spurious nature of the public’s love for him, he cannot indulge in the moment even though “he had always longed for...people [to] love him” (240). The temporary relief Grenouille receives from assuming various identities characterized by his different perfumes only serves as a band-aid on the underlying and unresolved issue of his lack of odor and thus his inability to identify himself on his most intimate plane, scent. The horrible discrepancy between the beautiful perfume and his actual lack of odor highlights the fact that “he was masked with the best perfume in the world, and beneath his mask there was no face, but only his total odorlessness” (241). Grenouille craves the power to captivate others but “if he [cannot] smell himself and thus never know who he [is], to hell with it, with the world, with himself, with his perfume” (252). Ultimately, Grenouille surrenders himself to the “riffraff” in an acknowledgement of the senselessness of living as a stranger in his own body.

Although potentially the best perfumer of all time, Grenouille never truly enjoys his talents since he cannot reconcile his horror at possessing no identifying odor himself. His attempt to give himself a “soul” through perfume only fools the rest of the world, but still cannot convince him of his fake persona. His failed plight to find a scent that equals his identity brings to his consciousness the impossibility of ever recognizing

his soul. Unable to see past the emptiness of an estranged life, Grenouille relinquishes his power to “rule the hearts of men” (155) and succumbs to the overwhelming sense of futility that consumes him and eventually destroys him.

*Instructor: Mary Beth Wetli, Writing Seminar in Germanic Languages and Literatures*

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## David Zhuo

### Patriotism in Another Form

*In the Shadow of No Towers* employs at times such a bombastic personality that one often confuses style with Art Spiegelman’s intentions. With an unmitigated bias against George W. Bush’s “cabal” and its war-mongering tendencies, as well as periodic sanctimonious rants that he is the only person worried about another attack, Spiegelman invariably leaves his audience as bewildered as he was following September 11. However, should one wade past the partisan and sometimes irrational sentiments vented throughout *In the Shadow of No Towers*, an inconspicuous but nonetheless significant conviction reveals itself from the pages. Indeed, Art Spiegelman expresses in the work his own subtle brand of patriotism for his country, albeit in a less-than-conventional fashion.

To be sure, Spiegelman assumes an antipatriotic pulpit at times, chiefly by expressing his disgust at actions usually identified with patriotism. For instance, Spiegelman bristles when recounting the manner in which an unidentified party “... tried to wrap a flag around [his] head and suffocate [him],” during what he sneeringly labels the “...mind-numbing 2002 ‘anniversary event.’” From his tirade, Spiegelman reveals his substantial distaste for flag-waving and disparages the coercion employed by some of others less enthused about America. Indeed, his abhorrence of the flag’s usage by zealous citizens is glaringly evident when he portrays himself hiding under an American flag, with a Homeland Security advisory caption “Red, White and Blue Alert! Virtual Certitude of Terrorist Attack” underneath the panel. Here, Spiegelman unleashes his most withering rhetoric on the practice in two ways: first, that the American people blind themselves from the truth by huddling under the “protection” of the Star-Spangled Banner; and second, that they simply forget about displaying their nationalistic fervor in between atrocities. With such a caustic diatribe on the phenomenon of flag-waving, it is no wonder that Spiegelman’s tirades can be construed

as disloyal to the memory of September 11 and thus the country.

Certainly, Spiegelman leaves little breathing room for the patriotic cause in his work. By mocking jingoistic enthusiasm and railing against the hollowness of post-September 11 nationalism, Spiegelman roundly criticizes the validity of such loyalty. Yet if *In the Shadow of No Towers* appears to veer toward outright hostility at what many consider the purest expression of patriotism, the work nevertheless promotes an *amor patriae* of its own. In fact, it is primarily Spiegelman's identification with New York after September 11 that reveals his true appreciation of America. Although he describes himself prior to the terrorist attacks as without a home (or indeed a country) to identify with, Spiegelman discovers himself afterward having a "...pang of affection for his familiar, vulnerable streets." Transformed by the very catastrophe that produced the work in the first place, Spiegelman now finds himself "rooted" in the cosmopolitanism of New York and allied, for better or for worse, with America by association. Furthermore, Spiegelman's commiseration with the Holocaust victims heightens his appreciation of the gravity of September 11, for he acknowledges that he "...finally understand[s] why some Jews didn't leave Berlin right after Kristallnacht". Any comparison to the Holocaust cannot be taken lightly, so the fact that Spiegelman comprehends the overwhelming desire of the Jews to remain in their homes amid terrible danger only strengthens his own connection with the United States.

*Instructor: David Chase, Writing Seminar in English*

## Mark Leung

### Schooled: Gertrude Stein Imitation

I will tell you about the time that we went on our quasi-disastrous expedition. We had been planning this trip for so long that Mark Leung was starting to wonder whether it was going to measure up to expectations. He would say, hiking is very enjoyable and very satisfying and very torturous but it is certainly not very uneventful. Why, I replied, why can't it be uneventful? Other people seem nonchalant about the entire experience. I could not understand what exactly he was trying to say.

What Mark Leung really felt, though, was that hiking shouldn't be uneventful. That would simply annoy and pester him constantly, for someone to think that it was a walk in the woods, as people would say. Can't you see, he would say, people have to understand why we do the things we do. How stupid it would be for us to go through our lives without ever going over a bump, he insisted, only shuffling along. Now to think of it, that is what most of us did, including Mark Leung. There was one instance where Mark Leung had tried the high diving board and could not jump off because he couldn't get over the bump. I never want to go through that again, he said.

Someone took a photo of that, which Mark Leung still keeps in his house.

To get back to the trip. We had finally assembled at Sai Kung, all of us eager to leave. We had come in Neeraj's car, and they could not find the area because they did not know it at all. It is useless, he said, this trip will be doomed from the start. How is it that such a small place can have so many places in which to get lost. Neeraj sat back and laughed gently and I replied, it can't be far now. But Mark Leung was still beside himself until we did see the figures of our other group members. I was a bit nervous about how day two would go, I knew that that was the hardest day. Mark Leung saw Seung Beom eating a sandwich and began to feel hungry. Eating a lot of cereal, which Mark Leung had done, helped more than eating a bit of cereal, which was what I had done, but food was to be scarce after this, and we all knew. Mrs. Cowland found us and

we started walking. She was stern with all of us.

Throughout the morning the trek had been relatively straightforward. Mark Leung enjoyed the feeling of his new backpack, as did I. My old backpack had been on its last legs for a very long time, and Mark Leung had laughed many times about it. It had been through a lot, though, so that was an adequate excuse. It did finally give way. About time, said Yo. No one really missed it, although I was quite fond of it. Like all fake products from Thailand, it was cheap but looked and felt like the real thing, which was why it was such a nice bag, I suppose. Mark Leung would say, I can barely tell them apart, as Allan wore his real arsenal shirts one on top of his fake arsenal shirt. Maybe it's just the light, we would laugh. I think I remember Hin's shrill giggle, and Mark Leung certainly got an earful of that. There were many amusing laughs to remember.

I must continue to tell you about the trek, though. We would let Clemence and Neeraj lead the way, said Mark Leung. They seemed to have a pretty good idea of the task, I remarked. And they did have a good idea of where they were going, but the map didn't seem to do such a good job. Mrs. Cowland left us soon after. We were free to explore some more, but we really didn't have a lot of time to spare, so we found a more comfortable field to rest on while we made and ate our sandwiches and relaxed before we got to the hard part of our journey. We didn't really need a chance to explore, said Mark Leung. He felt sure that we would have more than four days' worth of excitement. How could we possibly not, he confided to me. I remember well thinking about the different ways that we could experience this excitement, but Mark Leung was pretty worried about what we were about to encounter.

We did see a funny deep shaft keep children away sign that we all had a good laugh at and took silly photos of.

Ryvita made for unpleasant dining and Mark Leung was the first one to say so. Are we having such disgusting food for four days, he said, you were the one who bought it, Clemence replied. We all knew that was true, and that shut him up, at least until we started telling bad offensive jokes. Had all our decisions been wrong, wondered Mark Leung. At that point, we decided to finish lunch, and begin the painful arduous trek for the first of four days of painfully arduous trekking, in which we would get thoroughly schooled in what it meant to travel four hundred meters in four hours.

*Instructor: Jane Malcolm, Writing Seminar in English*

## Amanda Herald

### Dove's Battle Against the Thin Body Image

In recent decades, the media has emphasized slim figures, beginning with the infamous model "Twiggy" and Barbie dolls. This has developed into a widespread trend, and now the women in television commercials, major motion pictures, and magazine articles are all basically stick figures. The ideal body image according to Americans changes over time, for we associate attractiveness with the media's portrayal of it. Recently, one company has altered the way we view the human body through their innovative advertisements and product lines. Dove, known for its affordable body care products, has changed our perspective on outward appearance in creating what they call their "Campaign for Real Beauty." The new campaign breaks the barrier of the thin ideal with its refreshingly realistic focus on the human body.

The portrayal of real women using the new line of Dove products, rather than the former use of models, revolutionizes what the purpose of beauty products should be. In recent years, the trend to create products that will make you look like a model has escalated. The commercials target their brand and products at ridding thighs of cellulite, toning arm flab, or calming frizzy hair, all to give the end result of looking like the beautiful celebrity who promotes them. Dove takes a different approach and aims at exemplifying what a woman has rather than altering it. When purchasing products online, they first ask you what you think you need rather than telling you, as the other companies do, and then suggest products accordingly. They offer an array of products to target all body and hair types. This refreshing break from the constant ads portraying products to make you like the "perfect" women diminishes the thin ideal. They work to convey that thinness isn't necessary, and that anyone with any body type can be attractive. The women in the ads all have different bodies, some with large thighs, chubby stomachs, wide waists, and big arms, and they are all taller or shorter than ideal model height. Even so, the women embody true happiness, smiling and standing in

their underwear, proud of their bodies. Every average-sized American woman would rather see this than a size zero, no body, stick girl, and they are more likely to pay attention to what the ad has to say because they can relate to the body types without feeling inferior. The broad audience to which the campaign appeals is the ultimate success factor of the ad, for the larger the attraction to the campaign, the more products Dove sells.

The Dove campaign combats the thin ideal and breaks through it by altering the attitudes of beauty campaigns' audience: average American women. The morale of women in terms of beauty is diminished by the media, and, according to Dove's website, only two percent of women deem themselves beautiful. The effectiveness of the focus on real, curvy figures in contrast with previous figures in product advertisements is evidenced by women's reaction to Dove's campaign. It draws women because the break from the thin ideal boosts their self-esteem in making them feel like what they have is already adequate and beautiful. Many feel as if they too could be models promoting a product. In fact, after the launch of the commercials and ads, over 4000 women posted pictures of themselves on the campaign's website declaring their own real beauty. Many stated that beauty comes from within, showing their increased self-confidence and improved attitudes. This shows the campaign's promotion of a healthier way of living and behaving, and, by encouraging them to stop attempting to fulfill the thin ideal imposed upon them by the media, Dove creates the potential to reduce eating disorders and emotional problems that many women face. Even teenagers, who are the most likely candidates for image struggles, have shown their interest in Dove's efforts. Over one thousand teenage girls submitted essays to Dove's campaign concerning their own view on self beauty. The campaign's revolutionary methods of conveying body image and beauty products have captured the attention of a larger audience which was previously turned off by the seemingly incessant ads portraying perfect women. Dove's marketing technique has accomplished something far beyond what other companies have accomplished and works to improve the impact the highly criticized media has on American women.

*Instructor: Jacqui Sadashige, Writing Seminar in Cinema Studies*

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## Kelly Jin

### Painting My Masterpiece

White, hairy, long-nosed barbarians aren't supposed to be teaching classes. But in World History class freshman year of high school, I found myself facing Mr. Coleman—fully clad in his plaid shirt, khaki pants, with graying hair and a characteristic belly. He leaned over the podium and whispered to us a collage of Confucius proverbs, the guidelines by which we were to follow in his class. Jack wanted us to “paint the masterpiece” we were all capable of, but he would help us choose our brushes and paints along the way. Everyone shifted a little in their seats, unsure of what he meant.

He expected me to know things I simply could not answer in class—seemed incredulous whenever I didn't know something about my own country. Jack would point at his nose, grasp at his arm hair and tell me “I'm a white, hairy, long-nosed barbarian!” And it frustrated me that he knew more about my ethnicity than I did. Dinner conversations soon became filled with my questions of the Revolution of 1911, the Rape of Nanking, anything and everything I could scrape from my parents' secondary education during the Cultural Revolution.

When I was five, I told my mom I was most definitely not Chinese, that I was most definitely American. “But you were born in China!” “It doesn't count, I'm growing up in America,” I used to mumble back. So for years I forced myself into believing I was surely an American in Chinese clothing. As part of my assimilation, I denied much of my heritage, almost embarrassed at the interest people took in my origins. For Chinese-Americans coming of age in recent years, the conflict of old and new challenges the need for an identity growing up.

But Jack Coleman taught me the intricacies and legends of a culture I felt I no longer belonged to. Maybe he was born into the wrong culture. An embodiment of the integrity and respect I felt was characteristic of Chinese culture, he found himself as a soldier in the army during the War and fell into teaching when he returned.

He despised apathy and inefficiency above all else; his unyielding critiques of the administrators were harsh yet fair. His standards were high, and his disappointment more crushing than one's failure.

And as he guided the class quickly along through the five-thousand years of Chinese history, I found myself immersed in ancient traditions, the rise and fall of emperors and dynasties. Teachers hold this power to paint a picture for their students—it's the grittiness of the Middle Ages or the faded sepia of the early 1900s that comes alive from books. As I began to redefine my own education, I found the purpose to my education changing. While my culture called for academic success from almost militant repetition and copious amounts of homework, its history revealed both novelty and creativity. The blending of two cultures created for me the true benefits of assimilation. I no longer questioned being neither fully American nor fully Chinese and was content with simply being Chinese-American, complete with the hyphen.

For my family, our assimilation into American culture has meant children dressed up as ghouls and witches don't bewilder us every October 31st, that my parents can even tell the difference between 'NSYNC and the Backstreet Boys on the radio. And my education was not only my schooling, but also the culture that was pulsing underneath everything at school—the syntax and semantics, chain letters, playground insults. At four, I quickly picked up the language once I began *Head Start*; at five, I learned from my classmates who Michael Jackson was. Though jarring at points, two cultures do not necessarily clash. Each culture takes away something, and for my family it's been the barbecue beans, sushi, chicken fajitas that my mom occasionally makes for dinner. It's also been the *Chinglish* that has developed, a phenomenon of language integration confined to only a few generations of immigrants. For American culture and customs, it's the incorporation of *feng shui*, Chinese New Year's and General Tsao's Chicken into mainstream culture.

“You know it's not just the Chinese,” Jack called after me one day as I was leaving class.

“Well, it's all the Asians.”

“It's not just the Asians who push their kids. You kids seem to think it is.

Give me any culture and you'll find parents pushing their kids to succeed, grasping at a slippery American Dream.”

Strange to think a stranger to my culture should encapsulate the qualities I believe to define my own culture. That a stranger should strike an interest in the history of a culture I have been born into, and to change my opinion of my education—unchanged since kindergarten. As a history teacher, one of his lasting lessons happened to be the fundamental similarities between cultures. At a point in my life where I could not

resolve American and Chinese cultures in the most material sense, I realized many of the values—hard work, determination, an emphasis in education—were not just restricted to my birth culture. Jack has long since retired, but I'm still painting my masterpiece and calling on his proverbs for advice.

*Instructor: Raymond Gunn, Writing Seminar in Sociology*

## Alexandra Milin

### Crossing Over to the Dark Side . . . of Photography

As the accessibility and popularity of photography has grown, more and more films have been produced that tend to reveal its dark side. Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) and Mark Romanek's *One Hour Photo* (2002) are no exceptions. These movies complement each other by exposing the dangers of voyeurism, the predatory nature of photography, and the fears associated with this often misunderstood medium. In doing this, they warn about the consequences of photography's misuse and reveal certain contemporary attitudes about this complex visual tool. More specifically, these films heighten the paranoia about being watched, emphasize the effect of the paparazzi, and highlight the mass consumption of photography.

Both *Peeping Tom* and *One Hour Photo* reinforce the negative aspects of photography by showing how addictive and destructive voyeurism can be, especially when it is carried out through the lens of a camera. The unfavorable perspective of voyeurism that is generated from watching these films reflects the modern qualms that people have about being observed and photographed without their knowledge. It also warns against the public's growing fascination with watching people in movies or, more recently, on reality shows. In *One Hour Photo*, the scenes related to photography become darker as the movie progresses and as Sy Parish becomes more blatantly voyeuristic. The first photograph appears at a little boy's bright, happy birthday party, but by the end of the film, Sy uses the camera as leverage against a cheating husband. Sy becomes obsessed with looking at and displaying other people's personal photographs. At first, he procures the pictures from people that have their film developed at the neighborhood Sav-Mart. However, as his addiction grows he becomes an active voyeur, following a family to their house and spying on them through his camera. The film portrays this as an unhealthy and terrifying obsession by showing how easily it takes over Sy's life and leads to his arrest.

A similar scenario presents itself in *Peeping Tom* with respect to Mark, a man who is obsessed with photographing and filming people at their most horrified moments. He observes his victims from a distance before brutally killing them in what is without a doubt, one of voyeurism's bloodiest manifestations. Mark's addiction to this extreme type of voyeurism culminates in his suicide at the end of the movie, which shows how devastating the practice can be for people on both sides of the lens.

Viewers of these movies also act as voyeurs because they, too, study the lives of the characters on their screens. The fact that the audience is pulled into a cycle that has proven to be so detrimental is a testament to the power of film. Movies have become such a large part of our culture that people are drawn to them and can easily become addicted. Indeed, we are all voyeurs when it comes to the cinema.

In addition, the sentiments present in *Peeping Tom* and *One Hour Photo* serve as a commentary on a more direct form of present-day voyeurism: the paparazzi. Perhaps the most tragic and eye-opening expression of this is the death of Princess Diana, which occurred as a direct result of photographers chasing her car. This situation reinforces *Peeping Tom* and *One Hour Photo*'s claim that voyeurism can be extremely harmful. The ongoing problems with paparazzi are perfect examples of how grievous voyeurism can be for the people being photographed as well as how addictive it can become for those who constantly look at photographs of celebrities. Thus, these films should be seen as a warning to everyone associated with this industry, including the photographers and the consumers.

Another attribute of photography that is usually emphasized in movies about the photo is the use of the camera as a weapon. This practice further casts a shadow on photography and relays once again how powerful and destructive it can be if used in the wrong way. *Peeping Tom* shows the parallel between cameras and lethal instruments in an extremely forthright manner. In this film, the camera and its tripod are literally weapons that Mark uses to stab his victims. The movie is therefore a demonstration of the deleterious uses of photography and serves as evidence for the idea that this authoritative medium can be used for evil.

In *One Hour Photo*, photographs are employed as weapons in a more discrete manner by exposing Will Yorkin as a cheating husband. Sy uses the camera to threaten Will by giving him the impression that he is snapping pictures of him and his mistress in bed together. Also, at one point during Sy's narration, he comments that the word "snapshot" was originally used as a hunting term. The act of taking photographs is therefore linked to predation, and the camera becomes analogous to a gun.

Susan Sontag, an acclaimed critic of photography, explores and echoes this attribute of the medium to a great extent in her book, *On Photography*. She argues that "there is something predatory in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to violate them . . . it turns people into objects that can symbolically be possessed"

(Sontag p. 14). According to Sontag, by taking a picture of someone, we secure a piece of that person's life. In India, for example, many believe that taking photos steals people's souls. Why then do most people outside of India have no problem with being mass consumers of photography, taking thousands of pictures of people and events, even though they are capturing parts of their lives and perhaps even aspects of their inner beings? By raising such questions, *One Hour Photo* and *Peeping Tom* force people to think about their actions and their implications. The fact that these (and other movies) accentuate the predatory nature of photography shows that they regard its abuse as a pressing issue that needs attention.

The association of fear with photography in both of the films alludes to the modern day paranoia of being watched and photographed. With the ability of an image to travel around the world in a split second through the internet comes the concern that every move one makes could be public knowledge in a matter of minutes. These films document the lack of privacy in this increasingly interconnected world. In *One Hour Photo*, fear and the camera intermingle when Sy confronts Will and his mistress. The couple cowers at the thought of what Sy might do with the powerful camera in his hands. When the two lovers are confronted, one of their greatest fears materializes because their affair is not only discovered, but documented. The theme of photography and horror is taken even further in *Peeping Tom* when Mark kills his victims just so that he can capture them at their most terrified moments. Because he believes that "there is nothing more fearful than fear itself," he makes people look at their panic-stricken reflections right before he photographs and murders them. By depicting the camera as a murder weapon, the film alerts the public to the fact that photography can be dangerous. Furthermore, it awakens people's fear of being photographed without their consent and, in extreme cases, even killed as a result.

In both of these films, the audience, too, gets a taste of this terror through the movie camera. It is disturbing to see Sy's wall of pictures of people who are unaware that he possesses some of their most joyous moments. As Sy begins to stalk the family, it becomes more apparent that he is psychologically unstable due to his obsession. The film seeks to have the audience identify with the common fear of being stalked, which has sadly become a very real possibility in today's world. Like *One Hour Photo*, *Peeping Tom* encourages the audience to feel the connection between fear and photography first hand. It accomplishes this by projecting the videos of all of the people Mark has murdered and by showing how much control he loses due to his addiction. Thus, the movie successfully links terror and photography, which expresses the modern fears about what can transpire from being watched and photographed unknowingly.

The dark side of photography that is emphasized through *Peeping Tom* and *One Hour Photo* (not to mention in other contemporary films such as Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) and Christian Frei's *War Photographer* (2001)) forces

the public to recognize the camera's potential for destruction. This is in sharp contrast to the early days of photography when people focused on all of the ways that cameras could be used as instruments of progress and good. For instance, in "The Daguerreotype," which was published in 1840, Edgar Allen Poe praises the camera "as the most important, and perhaps the most extraordinary triumph of modern science" (Poe p. 37). Why has there been such a dramatic shift in attitudes since this time? The reason lies partly in the contemporary fears associated with photography. Pictures have become so widely used and are so easily mass produced that anyone's most intimate moments can be revealed without their knowledge. The interconnectedness of the modern world also makes it much simpler for people to be watched, which is why there has been a sharp increase in the number of stalkers. Hollywood films feed off these fears through movies like *Peeping Tom* and *One Hour Photo*, painting a disparaging portrait of photography today.

*Instructor: Ari Blatt, Writing Seminar in Comparative Literature*

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## Heidi Zhang

### A Survivor in War and Wild

When the Americans dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, thousands of people perished, and most buildings were reduced to debris. A month later, when survivors surveyed the damage to a temple located 1.1 kilometers from the blast center, they were dumbfounded by the ginkgo tree blossoming beside the ruins. Unlike other burnt and toppled trees, it had suffered only minor scorch marks. Three more ginkgoes were later found in the same miraculous condition.<sup>1</sup> Hiroshima revealed the strength of the ginkgo tree to the Japanese people, who came to regard it as the “bearer of hope.” Despite the wrath of the atomic bomb and natural trials, the unique features of the ginkgo have enabled it to persist and rank alongside ancient organisms like the horseshoe crab and dragonfly as one of the few “living fossils” in the world.

The ginkgo is easily recognized by its seed’s bright yellow outer flesh that emits a rancid butter odor, and its fan-shaped leaves that shimmer like gold flakes in autumn. The tree’s deep roots enable it to stand tall in the face of strong wind and snow. Specialized biological apparatus that allow the ginkgo to reproduce both clonally and sexually are stimulated by disturbances in the environment...an atomic blast, for instance.<sup>2</sup>

Ginkgo trees are excellent survivors in the wild where historically they grew in frequently disturbed environments along stream margins and the distal sides of levees.<sup>3</sup> However, what distinguishes them as one of the world’s most adaptable and favored plants is their equal ability to thrive in the cities. Unlike mundane gymnosperms, ginkgoes can withstand a wide variety of climates and temperatures as low as -20° C. Pollution, disease, fungi, and pests—the common grim reapers for plants—are rendered powerless by the malic acid and oxalic acid in the ginkgo leaves.<sup>3</sup> The ginkgo’s antioxidant properties also account for its resistance to microbes and mutagenic toxins

like radiation.

Since its origination in eastern China during the Permian Period some 270 million years ago, the species representing the order Ginkgoales has dwindled from 11 to only one: the *Ginkgo biloba*.<sup>2</sup> The Ice Age wiped out all native ginkgoes in the wild; the ones living today are direct descendents of a few Buddhist-grown specimens that were unaffected by the drastic climate change.<sup>4</sup> Since its lonely days in the Chinese monasteries, the ginkgo has been widely propagated throughout the world.

The ginkgo’s popularity lies not only in its aesthetic value, but also in the therapeutic and spiritual benefits it offers. For the Buddhist monks, the flame-retardant ginkgo sap served a practical purpose: to shield them against fire.<sup>5</sup> In addition, through its manifestation of strength in Hiroshima, the ginkgo has secured a spot for itself in the temples, where many live to be 1,500 years old and are honored as a sacred symbol of longevity.<sup>3</sup> Today, ginkgo extract is a major component of herbal medicines; its flavonoid glycosides and ginkgolides, are shown to prevent vertigo, combat depression, and alleviate the symptoms of Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases.<sup>1</sup> If the ginkgo were not inherently beneficial to humans, perhaps the Buddhists would not have bothered to cultivate it many centuries ago, likely permitting its extinction.

Survival often constitutes an interplay between vigor and chance. The ginkgo’s deep roots and built-in insecticides provide solutions to survival. Luckily, the ginkgo has come to partake in a win-win game of life though its gift of benefiting humanity, which has been repaid by embracing the ancient tree and ensuring its continued existence.

*Instructor: Joan Capuzzi, Writing Seminar in Biology*

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## Chinawat Iradisaikul

### Thai Textile Family

I was eight years old. Just as the first rays of dawn were beginning to brighten the sky, a taxi stopped in front of my grandmother's home. Stepping out of the cab, my mother and I walked toward the familiar light-blue front door. My mother rang the bell, actually a type of electric buzzer. The sound, as always, frightened me, seeming to vibrate the whole house. Then Richie, the Dalmatian, started barking. I always thought he would bite me, since he was the tallest dog I had ever seen. He could jump higher than I could, and I never wanted to wrestle with him. Thankfully, my aunt always chained him before opening the door to us. Entering the house, we carried many plastic bags; we regularly brought snacks and souvenirs as gifts. Although they were heavy, I was happy that this caused my mother and me to walk quickly past Richie's cage and past the rows of electric weavers and electric thread spinners. We finally arrived at the back office and put down our presents. Still remembering the comfortable taxi, I dropped into a chair.

However, the deafening noise of so many wooden sticks striking shuttles across their looms grabbed my attention. The sticks' synchronized rhythm never irritated me; rather, the harmonious sound gave me energy. On this visit, the hum of one spinner attracted me. I left the office and walked over to discern how the machine cut a continuous thread at the end of a spool, then immediately started spinning the next spool. My mother called me to help her. Nearby, two blue barrels with remains of the thread-making process and other trash gave off a dizzying odor. I had to squeeze my nose when I walked past them. I began to feel tired, as if I could not keep my eyes open, after the sleepless trip all night on a train. My aunt put wet clothes into an antique spinner. The roar was like thunder. I held tight to my mom for fear that an earthquake would shake down the house. She hugged me and then told me my chores. When

all housekeeping work was complete, my aunt, uncle, grandmother, mother, and I gathered in the office for a family reunion.

When I was growing up, I learned that my mother's parents started this textile factory business in suburban Bangkok. After my grandfather passed away, long before I was born, my grandmother maintained the factory. Richie became my best friend on our many visits over the years, and my grandmother and I would play with him and feed him treats. I often watched my grandmother slicing a mile of disused threads out of spools in the office. Wearing a long-sleeved, navy-blue shirt and black Chinese trousers, she told me in Thai, "Although I'm old, I still have to work." Her task seemed relatively easy: to remove the threads so the spools could be reused. But for an eighty-year-old woman, this was a tiresome task. Her wrinkled hands were calloused from a lifetime of working with textiles. I was willing to help, but she never allowed me to, lest I cut myself on the sharp threads.

Last year, when I was eighteen, my mother asked me to drive to my grandmother's house to do some final cleaning. I opened the red garage door with the key my mother had lent me and parked the car. Entering the door, I waited for a moment for Richie to bark and gallop toward me. Even his empty chain seemed lonely. No wooden sticks hit shuttles; no spinning machines hummed. I pushed my suitcases along the path I had walked ten years before, through the darkness. Stopping by the blue barrels, I saw that one was full of unused threads, the other containing white boxes with rusty mechanical tools used to fix textile machines. The obsolete spinner, now moved to the third floor, slept quietly. The only sounds emanated from two washing machines. I went into the office and turned on the light. The blunt knife and black bucket my grandmother had used to clean spools still sat in a corner, but the old gentle lady who had hugged me and taught me life lessons would touch them no more. Richie, loving her so much, had followed her to the next life. I thought back to the many times my grandmother and I had sat and talked together. Tears came to my eyes. "Now you don't have to work, Grandma," I whispered. "I will be the one working for you from now on."

*Instructor: Therese M. Lafferty, Writing Seminar for International Students*

## Kristin Bagnoli

### Economy and Sensibility: An Analysis of *Pride and Prejudice's* Mr. Collins

To be berated, ridiculed, and criticized...such is the fate of *Pride and Prejudice's* Mr. Collins. In his pursuit of an advantageous marriage—romantic interest notwithstanding—the Jane Austen brainchild commonly portrayed in caricature form as a pompous, idiotic clergyman capable of mere apologetic, incessant mutterings and excessive flatteries may be too hastily condemned in literary consciousness for his seemingly laughable discourse. Despite the assertion of protagonist Elizabeth Bennet that Mr. Collins has neither “manner nor sense to recommend him” (103), it is possible to argue that in regard to his proposal of marriage to the heroine, Mr. Collins’s appeal for Elizabeth’s affections is of a more realistic and sensible nature than her rejection of his offer. It may be surmised, therefore, that Mr. Collins’s request for her hand demonstrates not crassness (as judged by modern readers) but a practicality appropriate to the age in which he existed. Judicious? That Mr. Collins may rarely be; yet in the event of his offer of marriage to Elizabeth, the clergyman exhibits astute economic reasoning that contrasts with the idealistic notions of love harbored by his (usually commonsensical) cousin.

Twenty-first-century American polite society frowns upon the discussion of certain topics deemed inappropriate for casual dinner conversation. The triad of taboo subjects most often consensually discouraged in such occasions of amusement includes religion, politics, and money. The questioning of one’s salary, in particular, prompts disgust from respected persons who view such an inquiry as a rude, unnecessary invasion of another’s privacy. Ironically, however, nineteenth-century England (widely perceived, in its pursuit of strict sexual morality and patriarchal family structure, to be socially conservative in contrast to the modern era) believed the issue of salary to be

one of common knowledge. Simply through word of mouth, for example, does Mrs. Bennet of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* determine “four or five thousand a year” to be the annual sum earned by the eligible Mr. Bingley (3). This societal expectation, therefore, is a reflection of the economically driven social relations between the sexes, and an affirmation of a natural assumption of the era that “advantageous” marriages concerned an economic, impassionate context. Thus, Mr. Collins is unfairly charged of social misconduct by modern Austenites who view his unsentimental attempt to persuade Elizabeth of the suitability of their match as insulting to her femininity and who accuse him of using vulgar terminology to liken their future marriage to a business transaction. Would it have been reasonable, however, for Mr. Collins to lovingly coo over Elizabeth, as if she and he were established lovers and not three days met? Is it not more sensible to assert that his resolve to “chuse a wife from among [Mr. Bennet’s] daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible” (73) is a courteous, even gallant gesture? Is not his promise that “no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips,” with respect to her limited inheritance, a blessing? Such remarks assert that Mr. Collins’s offer is perfectly respectable in all it entails: a comfortable parsonage, the future ownership of Longbourn, and a formidable companionship with Lady Catherine de Bourgh. To berate the clergyman, therefore, for his lack of flowery diction is to foolishly disregard the capital opportunity presented by his proposal.

The five thousand pounds delegated to Mrs. Bennet and her five daughters (their shared inheritance upon the event of Mr. Bennet’s death, according to the settlement of the Longbourn estate) is a paltry sum in comparison to the astonishing wealth of a Georgiana Darcy, whose thirty-thousand-pound bequest will allow her the best of suitors. Mr. Collins, in an attempt to persuade Elizabeth of accepting his hand, notes her probable lack of future marital offers, insisting that her “portion is unhappily so small that it will in all likelihood undo the effects of your loveliness and amiable qualifications” (Austen 74). This considerable disability in the marriage market is of great issue to the Bennets’ respective futures and only further confirms Elizabeth’s selfishness and foolishness in her rejection of Mr. Collins’s proposal. The headstrong female refuses to consider a match beneficial to her entire household (as it would resolve the settlement entailing Longbourn exclusively to Mr. Collins) and instead entertains childish notions of marrying for affection. Despite the protest of similar idealists—who may argue that Elizabeth’s romanticism is what eventually leads her to wed a man of significantly higher consequence, Mr. Darcy—such an event is the pure imagination of Austen, an almost miraculous, Cinderella-like occurrence normally unfathomable to the majority of women of her station.

To be promised a beloved estate...is not such an offer recommendable? Elizabeth Bennet, despite the inferiority of her social and economic connections, refuses to accept this practical yet beneficial marriage proposal of Mr. Collins. Commonly

portrayed as the literary epitome of grandiose, meaningless flattery and insensible mutterings, Mr. Collins in contrast exhibits a logical sense (greater even than that of Elizabeth's) in regard to his request for the heroine's hand.

*Instructor: Stephanie Harzewski, Writing Seminar in English*

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## Alexander Yen

### The Preponderance of Kinship in Chinese Heritage

Why is my name, Yen Hsueh-Hong, more an indicator of the strength of kinship in Chinese heritage than a simple means of identification? While Hsueh-Hong is a personal name just as Alexander is my personal name in English, my Chinese name is different from its English equivalent because of the character "Hsueh." "Hsueh" is known as a generation name: following the surname and preceding the family name, the generation name indicates my position on the family hierarchy (Zhonghua & Lawson, 2002, p. 163). Based on generation names and the long existence of Chinese naming practices, I have learned, my ancestor is Yen Huai, believed to be a great scholar of Confucius (Rita Yen, personal communication, December 19, 2006). My Chinese name not only gives me an identity but also determines my place in the family hierarchy, which determines how I regard my relatives.

Although the traditional Chinese naming practice helps individuals identify with their families, more importantly the practice reveals the immense role kinship plays in heritage. Kinship forms the basis of social interaction for Chinese people: whom you regard as an elder, as well as whom you respect as a peer, is more a reflection of kinship than is age or intelligence (Bin & Millward, 1987, p. 14). Another important aspect of kinship—perhaps more important than kinship's role in governing relations between family members—is its immutability: despite China's social upheaval in the mid-twentieth century, the fundamental qualities of kinship in heritage persisted. The aforementioned evidence points to the importance of kinship. Kinship permeates Chinese heritage in both its ability to drive social interaction as well as its ability to move forward despite imminent destruction.

I will first explain traditional Chinese naming practices. I will discuss the generation name, the family poem of generation names, and the book, or *Jia Pu*, containing the poem and the family tree. I will demonstrate how these naming practices

represent kinship in Chinese heritage. I will then argue that kinship permeates Chinese heritage for the following two reasons. First, using a family anecdote and cultural analysis, I will examine how social relations are governed through traditional nomenclature and kinship. I will then use historical evidence to demonstrate how kinship not only survived social upheaval but continued to drive heritage by dynamically changing, thus revealing kinship's importance within families. I will use these two points to demonstrate the value of kinship to Chinese heritage and offer further implications that highlight the role of kinship in heritage.

## Generation Names, the *Jia Pu*, and Traditional Chinese Naming Practices

Traditional Chinese nomenclature is derived from generation names. The "Hsueh" in Yen Hsueh-Hong indicates my position on the Hsueh generation of the family tree; my father, Yen Chia-Ping, has "Chia" in his family name, indicating that he is one generation my elder. I respect my father because he is my father but also because he is my elder; I equally respect any member within the Yen family as long as his generation name contains "Chia." I therefore give family members with the same generation name equal respect (Bin & Millward, 1987, p. 15), and I pay more respect to family members with higher generation names.

Generation names are obtained from the family poem, a work of variable length written by family ancestors. Each character within the poem is used as a generation name. Generation names cycle because the following generation will adopt the first character in the generation name poem after all the characters in the poem have been used. The poem, notwithstanding its importance as a respectable literary text, allows generations separated by hundreds of years to share the same generation name (Bin & Millward, 1987, pp. 14-15).

The family poem, as well as the entire family tree, is stored in the *Jia Pu*, or family book (Liu & Schafer, 2002, p. 42-43). The *Jia Pu* lists the entire family genealogy, including each generation, the male members of that generation, and a brief description highlighting the significant events of that member's life. The *Jia Pu* resides within the family temple, a building created by the ancestors of a family in the village of the family's earliest origin; for the Yen family, the temple resides in Wuhan in the Hubei province of China (Rita Yen, personal communication, November 19, 2006). Chinese tradition states that after a son is born, the family brings him at a young age to the temple to write his name in the *Jia Pu*. In an elaborate ceremony, the family elders write the son's name into the family book. The elders place the son's name on the same row as his generation name and within the same branch as his family.

My family, like other families that practice traditional Chinese nomenclature, derives generation names from a family poem. The *Jia Pu* lists this poem as well as

the family tree, which lists the family genealogy for hundreds of generations. The document lies in the family temple in the original family village, which in this case is Wuhan in the Hubei province. These ruins, relics, and rituals provide the basis for kinship.

## Kinship's Significance in Social Interactions

While traditional naming practices are an intricate and storied element of Chinese heritage, families value kinship more than nomenclature because kinship drives social interaction. One can argue that all explicitly stated heritage is the result of social interaction—people share and express their cultures and values, and others inherit this shared heritage. I therefore argue that kinship drives social interaction, which drives Chinese heritage; and syllogistically I argue that kinship is the driving force behind heritage.

To understand kinship's role in social interaction and in turn heritage, consider the story of my great-great grandfather, Yen Yong-Miao, who demonstrated the important role kinship played during his childhood trip to Wuhan in the 1940s. He arrived in Wuhan with his son, and when they reached the village a man in his twenties offered them a ride on his rickshaw. Yen Yong-Miao was tired and mounted the rickshaw. After some conversation, Yen Yong-Miao discovered that the man carrying the rickshaw also had the last name Yen. This revelation intrigued him, because the Yen surname is rare; Yen Yong-Miao hypothesized that he and the rickshaw carrier were related. Conversation confirmed his conjecture and further revealed that the rickshaw carrier was several generations older than my uncle based on generation names. Yen Yong-Miao was startled and embarrassed, and he and his son dismounted the rickshaw. Chinese tradition dictates that you defer to your elders, and my great-great grandfather had just asked his elder for a rickshaw ride. The anecdote is intriguing because it illustrates how strongly kinship, through generation names, drives social interaction. Yen Yong-Miao eventually offered the carrier a ride on the carrier's own rickshaw because the rickshaw carrier was his elder (Rita Yen, personal communication, November 23, 2006).

The example of Yen Yong-Miao and the rickshaw carrier illustrates the driving force kinship has in social interaction as a result of traditional Chinese nomenclature: members of a family defer to their elders, respect their brothers, and instruct their minors based upon entries in the *Jia Pu* and not on age or intelligence. This practice explains why I defer to my uncle of age 27, Yen Chia-Ju (Ben Yen). Ben is my elder because he belongs to the Chia generation: he is grandson to Yen Yong-Miao. While Ben is only nine years older, I must treat him and my father with equal respect (Rita Yen, personal communication, November 23, 2006).

I have stated how members within a family respect their elders strictly due to the

generation name; I will now elaborate upon the actions performed to demonstrate this show of respect, and the actions will in turn demonstrate that kinship through generation names drives the social interaction indicative of Chinese heritage. The most prominent example of respect being paid to elders is the practice of bowing to elders during Chinese New Year. During this holiday, family members continue to adhere to the kinship structure outlined by traditional Chinese nomenclature. The bowing process is simple: bow to your elders. With this practice and the kinship structure in mind, I bow not only to my father but also to my uncle Ben. The action of bowing to elders during Chinese New Year illustrates the driving force kinship has in Chinese heritage as a result of traditional nomenclature: I must always respect my elders, because they possess an older generation name (Bin & Millward, 1987, p. 14). Respect based on kinship therefore underlies all social interactions, and illustrates the significance of kinship in Chinese heritage (Rita Yen, personal communication, December 23, 2006).

Kinship, as a result of traditional Chinese nomenclature, drives social interaction, which forms the basis for heritage. Kinship has foremost importance because it determines how members of a family treat each other, whether the action is as small as bowing to a uncle who is only nine years my elder or is more significant, such as offering an elder a service the elder does not need simply because doing so indicates a show of respect. Kinship clearly underlies all interactions within members of a family. But what is even more important—and what I will soon prove—is that kinship is so important to a family that unlike other elements of Chinese heritage it persists despite social upheaval and continues to evolve.

### Surviving the Cultural Revolution: Kinship's Importance Among Families

The presence of kinship in social interactions illustrates the importance of kinship and in turn the significance of traditional Chinese naming practices; therefore, the family temple, which houses the family poem and *Jia Pu*, is fundamentally responsible for the kinship structure and in turn the practice of respect and deference towards family elders. But the Yen family temple, which quite possibly is the most important relic of the Yen family heritage, was destroyed in the mid-twentieth century. The temple, in Wuhan, was caught in the wake of a vast struggle in July and August 1967 between the Communist Party and the “Million Heroes,” one of many organizations in opposition of Mao. Several skirmishes resulted, and parts of the town were damaged (Daubier, 1974, pp. 197-200). Consequently, the temple was burned to the ground (Rita Yen, personal communication, November 19, 2006). The Cultural Revolution is responsible for the destruction of the temple, but I maintain that kinship is too significant to Chinese heritage to be destroyed at the hands of Mao Zedong, and

instead kinship persisted despite social upheaval.

In order to understand the Cultural Revolution's impact on Chinese heritage, and specifically the Yen family temple, some background information on the Cultural Revolution is necessary. On August 8, 1966, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) passed a resolution called the “The 16-Point Directive on the Cultural Revolution” (Benson, 2005, p. 38):

Although the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, it is still trying to use the old ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the exploiting classes to corrupt the masses, capture their minds, and endeavor to stage a comeback. The proletariat must do just the opposite: it must meet head-on every challenge of the bourgeoisie in the ideological field and use the new ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the proletariat to change the mental outlook of the whole of society. (Milton, Milton, & Schurmann, 1974, qtd. in Benson, p. 104)

The CPC ordered China's people to transform the country in order to complete the socialist revolution. The Red Guard, consisting of students, dismantled the “old society” by destroying books, street signs, and any item that involved literature or thought from the old way of life, i.e., the ideas, culture, customs, and habits of China prior to the Communist Revolution of 1949 (Esmein, 1973, pp. 107-118). Family reports from the time of the Cultural Revolution describe how Red Guard members approached the family temple in Wuhan and destroyed the temple for the aforementioned reasons (Rita Yen, personal communication, December 19, 2006).

The *Jia Pu*, which held the entire genealogy of the Yen family, was destroyed simultaneously, resulting in the loss of knowledge about the family tree and the generation names needed for future naming practices. The Yen family poem initially contained twenty-four words; the family now remembers only eight of the characters. The character following “Hsueh” is “Ke,” meaning “to conquer,” but subsequent characters have disappeared (Rita Yen, personal communication, November 19, 2006). While the loss of family history and heritage is drastic, instead of denigrating Mao Zedong for his Cultural Revolution I wish to emphasize that despite these events the role of kinship in heritage prevailed. Destroying the *Jia Pu* may have eradicated family history, but kinship and traditional nomenclature survived.

Evidence that kinship and traditional nomenclature exists despite visual evidence of the destruction of such documents is evident in the proportion of people in the post-Mao era who have generation names. Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution ravaged China from 1966 to 1976; anyone born after 1976 should therefore have been directly affected by the Cultural Revolution. However, my name, Yen Hsueh-Hong, is an indication that traditional Chinese nomenclature survived the Cultural Revolution, and the

persistence of generation names appeared throughout the entire population. A survey conducted in 2001 in the city of Qingdao, China, revealed that while 90.4 percent of people carried generation names prior to the revolution of 1949, 41.2 percent of people maintained generation names throughout Mao's Cultural Revolution. Another statistical group—those born in the post-Mao era until 1983—revealed a 53.0 percent frequency of generation names, indicating the resurgence of generation names after Mao (Zhonghua & Lawson, 2002, p. 168). These statistically significant values ( $\chi^2 < 0.05$ ) signify that although Mao Zedong destroyed a large proportion of generation names in his Cultural Revolution, evidence suggesting a rise in generation names indicates that his actions were ultimately fleeting.

Latent generation names partly explain this persistence of generation names. Many Chinese citizens secretly kept their traditional Chinese names while publicly displaying a name that satisfied the Communist regime. Their generation names became latent because they still existed but were no longer explicitly used verbally or in writing (Zhonghua & Lawson, 2002, p. 167). A man named Xue-ru interviewed by Li Zhongti from Jiangnan University in China expresses the following sentiments:

From now on, don't call me Xue-ru. My name is Xue-biao. If anyone still calls me by my old name, I won't answer him. (Zhongti, 1989, p. 268)

Xue-ru changed his name to Xue-biao after Lin Biao, one of Mao Zedong's most loyal successors. When Lin Biao died, Xue-ru again changed his name to Xue-ru, but used a different character "ru" to differentiate from the first character "ru," which meant "studying Confucius" (Zhongti, p. 268). Xue-ru, like so many others, hid his name to avoid persecution by the Chinese Communist Party. The survey conducted in Qingdao revealed similar findings, because the proportion of people with latent generation names rose during the Mao era. While only 6.8 percent of people reported having latent generation names, a staggering 24.8 percent revealed similar latent generation names in the post-Mao era (Zhonghua & Lawson, p. 164). This information reveals that Mao Zedong simply scared his people into hiding their generation names; they never lost those names completely. And the people retained their generation names because they value the kinship resulting from naming practices: it is an element of their heritage they must keep.

Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution ultimately did not eradicate kinship or traditional Chinese nomenclature. At its worst, the Cultural Revolution merely suppressed the Chinese population from being public about their generation names and their strong ties to family. What the Cultural Revolution revealed was that kinship drives Chinese heritage such that it persists despite imminent destruction. And not only did kinship survive; it continued to change. In a heritage dominated by millennia

of stagnation, kinship remained dynamic because of traditional Chinese naming practices. My family now gives the generation names to females: my sister is named Yen Hsueh-Min, and this is a clear indication of the social and cultural progress Chinese heritage has made (Rita Yen, personal communication, December 23, 2006). And this rapid growth in generation names seems to be evident throughout China: the study conducted in Qingdao reveals that the number of females with generation names has risen from 13.9 percent in the pre-Mao era to 24.1 percent since (Zhonghua & Lawson, 2002, p. 169). Kinship not only survived the Cultural Revolution but continues to be an element of social change.

## The Preponderance of Kinship in Chinese Heritage

Kinship's ability to drive social interaction and propel itself through the Cultural Revolution demonstrates how powerful a role it plays in Chinese heritage. This is true especially because the practice of traditional Chinese nomenclature—generation names, the family poem, the *Jia Pu*, and the family temple—is visible both in kinship's role in driving social interaction and surviving the Cultural Revolution. Kinship drives social interaction and heritage through traditional naming practices because Chinese society structures social life using generation names and family trees. Kinship's ability to survive the Cultural Revolution, furthermore, indicates its role in driving heritage—despite the ubiquitous destruction of culture, kinship persisted in families and continues to be a dynamic, changing force in Chinese heritage.

Kinship is so significant to Chinese heritage, in fact, that even its detractors will forever be known for their kinship. Mao Zedong's name, ironically, will forever be remembered by his own generation name. "Ze" is the fourteenth character in the Mao family poem residing in Shaoshan in the Hunan Province in China (Zhonghua & Lawson, 2002, p. 164). Mao, despite his intentions to eliminate kinship and traditional Chinese naming practices, failed to eradicate his own. Mao Zedong's own name exemplifies kinship's importance in Chinese heritage. Its power cannot be understated—the naming practices representative of kinship continue to drive social interaction, persist and change through Chinese heritage, and remain an underlying force behind Chinese life.

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Instructor: Benjamin Porter, Writing Seminar in Anthropology

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## Laura Sciuto

### Don't Judge a Magazine by Its Cover: A Glance inside One of Today's Most *Cosmopolitan* Publications

With a scantily-clad Cameron Diaz and the headline “101 Sex Tips” featured on its hot red cover, *Cosmopolitan* blazes as the most eye-catching magazine on the shelf this October. And it's not only this month that *Cosmo* has such a bold face—every month offers a different celebrity cover-girl alongside promises of raunchy reading. Though opinions of *Cosmo* range from adoration to disgust, the magazine's flashy appearance captivates all, inciting curiosity in even the strongest disdainers of pop culture. The content of *Cosmo*'s articles, however, causes the magazine to lose its luster. The entire magazine—from the first fashion advertisement to the last make-up tip—reads like an etiquette manual for women who have nothing better to do than make themselves attractive and be social butterflies. *Cosmopolitan*'s utility ends at its ability to visually stimulate; beyond its bright pictures, the magazine provides nothing but superficial and demeaning reading material.

The word “demeaning” is often associated with male chauvinistic attitudes toward women; *Cosmo* not only reinforces this association, but also reverses it so as to make men look like mindless sex tools. Each month, *Cosmo* brings “a new half-naked hunk” to its readers via the “Guy Without His Shirt” feature. Though many women protest man's objectification of the female figure, *Cosmo* devotes an entire page to objectifying males—a hypocritical act, especially since the magazine's female writers and editors undoubtedly had to overcome gender-related obstacles to achieve successful careers. Furthermore, when women objectify men, they lower themselves to a revenge-seeking level, which not only detracts from outsiders' abilities to respect them, but also from their own capacity for self-respect. Beyond the “Guy Without His Shirt” feature lies more shallow nonsense, such as the sultry Ralph Lauren ads in which a tan, thin female

model in a Lauren bikini stares suggestively into the camera as if to say, “Ralph Lauren clothes will make you sexy, too.” Every woman intellectually understands that Ralph Lauren clothes will not make her sexier, but advertising sends powerful messages that affect even those people who believe themselves impervious to commercial influence. The magazine also promotes casual sex in its “reader submission” section, which contains people’s personal stories about one-night stands, adultery, and other profane topics.

The truth of *Cosmo*’s detrimental nature becomes more apparent, as well, with each new issue published. The latest issue contains an article, “20 Things Never to Say Sorry For,” which opens with,

Saying ‘I’m sorry’ is a good thing when you accidentally slam your stiletto down on someone’s foot. But, frankly, apologizing over every little thing that might raise an eyebrow is silly, especially when it comes to indulging yourself in the fashion and beauty departments.<sup>1</sup>

A list of 20 things for which a woman should never apologize follows. Among the 20: “buying \$400 worth of clothes” and “enhancing reality” via fake eyelashes or padded bras.<sup>2</sup> This advice—if it can be called “advice” at all—implies that the entire feminine thought process grows from an obsession with the superficial. Articles like this present the dangerous concept that female existence centers around appearance, thus furthering the idea that women are trophies.

*Instructor: Michael Lempert, Writing Seminar in Anthropology*

## Notes

1 “20 Things Never to Say Sorry For,” *Cosmopolitan*, Fall 2005, 100.

2 “20 Things Never to Say Sorry For,” *Cosmopolitan*, Fall 2005, 102-103.

## Joshua Sun

### The Malaria that Cured Us All

“Before I came to America, I became brutally ill, and I really almost died.” It is Tej Patel’s first time away from his home in India, but thus far, he has handled the transition brilliantly. A college freshman at the University of Pennsylvania, Tej is on his way to earning joint business and engineering degrees from the highly selective Jerome Fisher Management and Technology Program. His small stature and scruffy young looks are only too revealing of his delightfully childlike amicability and trusting nature. In spite of a tremendous workload, Tej manages to make time for his new friends, who adore him for his boundless cheer and a genuine love for life that is rarely encountered. However, his longtime dream of coming to America was nearly over before it began.

“I was bitten by a mosquito, and I came down with a terrible case of malaria,” Tej explains. In India, there are two main forms of the disease-causing parasite, and most malaria victims contract only one of the two. Unfortunately, the mosquito that bit Tej had the rare coincidence of carrying both strains.

“My body temperature shot to 106 degrees Fahrenheit, and I felt unbearably hot. Yet I just couldn’t stop shivering. My whole body trembled for days,” Tej gravely recalls. “I remember my head blistering in pain. And then there was this constant dull aching in my joints. The agony, it got to be so much that I could barely think about anything else.” For over a week, Tej was confined to his bed while doctors struggled to combat his infection.

Tej’s condition only continued to deteriorate after initial treatments. In many parts of the world today, parasites, particularly the most dangerous strains, have built up resistance to many of the most commonly used antimalarial drugs. It was not until doctors tried alternative treatments that Tej’s illness finally began to respond. But by that point, he was already in critical condition.

“I just wanted to scream—I would have, if I didn’t feel so tired and weak. The

constant shivering and chills, it drained away all my energy, until I had nothing left to protest with. To be so helpless...it was just a terrible, terrible feeling.” As the effects of malaria began to take their toll on his body, Tej experienced a swarm of emotions.

“At first, I was completely terrified. Being bedridden for days, all I could think about was the possibility that I might never get up again. All the pain and the fatigue...it just seemed like there was no way I could possibly survive.” But it was not long before Tej’s fear deteriorated into a state of severe depression and self-doubt.

“I just didn’t understand why I felt so powerless, why I was so helpless and weak. After days of lying in bed, trembling, I began to blame myself for being so feeble, for submitting so easily to adversity. I began wondering if maybe...I deserved to die after all.” As Tej recalls his story, the small room falls quiet for a moment, his thoughts swirling tangibly around him.

Interestingly, Tej’s illness took place in the context of an even larger story involving his entire family. The Patels had been dealing for some time with financial difficulties and were only just beginning to recover. Yet the emotional side effects of the ordeal were far from resolved. Compounded with a number of ongoing issues, the situation left the Patels mired in daily arguments and misunderstandings as a family crisis began to emerge.

“I remember right before I got sick, we used to fight over everything—the smallest issues. I can’t even recall the kinds of things we fought about. We were all just really frustrated with life, and we took our feelings out on each other. And over time, I guess I just sort of stopped talking with my family. I began to feel like I didn’t need them.” But just as this growing rift between Tej and his family reached its culmination, illness struck swiftly and left him utterly reliant upon those around him.

“After all my efforts to be defiant and independent, all of a sudden, I was completely vulnerable and weak, completely dependent on others. The malaria took away the energy that I needed to be so combative and angry, and left me just feeling tired.” For days, Tej was limited to simply resting, enduring, thinking and observing. Despite the immense suffering he experienced in that week, it was only in this period of anguish that Tej was able to truly contemplate his life thus far and learn about himself.

“During my illness, I really, truly believed that my time had come. That I was going to die in that bed. And as I lay there, so vulnerable, so dependent, all I could do was think back over my life. I asked myself, in all this time, what had been truly important to me? What had really mattered? Had I managed to lead a good life? And I suddenly thought about the way my mother used to always ask me, when I was little, how everything was going, how school was, how my tests and my friends were, how I was feeling. And I used to just get annoyed and frustrated by all her questions. I always felt like she didn’t give me my own space...until I got older, and we grew apart, and she finally stopped inquiring...and at that point, I just remember feeling so terribly guilty

and lonely.” Tej pauses for a moment as a tear rolls down his cheek.

“You know, as I think back now to the suffering and misery, one thing stands out more than all the rest...and that’s the way my mother and my brother cared for me...the tenderness, the love that they showed me that week, when I needed them most...I think it was probably the first time I realized how much they really meant to me.”

Even now, he says, he holds no regret for his suffering. As Tej puts it, without his illness, he may never have opened his eyes.

“I really took my family for granted before. But it wasn’t until I got really sick that I realized it wasn’t worth isolating myself from the people I love.”

The antimalarial drugs ultimately took full effect and saved Tej Patel from his brush with death. But for Tej, the true healing came not from any doctors or pills.

“I guess you could say that I had been ill for most of my life. I was ill in the way I took others for granted, ill in the sense of my relationship with my family. And it was really the malaria that cured all of us.”

Often, times of extreme calamity can drastically and permanently alter the way people view the world around them. The difficulties can seem insurmountable and the injustices unlimited. And it is only human nature to respond with anger, frustration, and, particularly, self-pity. But it is a rare person who can realize in that moment some reality of human mortality and extract some truth about the shared human experience. It takes a truly special person in his moment of greatest uncertainty to see past his pain and suffering and, ultimately, realize some truth about himself. And despite all his simplicity, despite his youthful outlook on life and his childish nature, Tej proved himself mature far beyond his years. He managed to see his own life in the reflection of his pain and misery. And in his greatest illness, Tej Patel discovered himself.

*Instructor: Elizabeth Mackenzie, Writing Seminar in Science, Technology, and Society*

## Ariel Tichnor

### The Musical Soundtrack to the *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* depicts a time in American history when strong racial barriers and ambiguous racial blending caused the so-called "race question" to sit at the tip of both black and white tongues. Endowed with a pale face and mixed blood, the narrator in Johnson's novel finds himself caught between the two distinct racial worlds as he seeks to quell his racial uncertainty. He provides a soundtrack that complements his quest for racial identity, playing throughout the novel a mixture of instinctual, improvisational black music and the written, fixed classical pieces of white musical heritage. His musical learning techniques and ever-changing musical selections provide insight into the racial identity he chooses to honor at different stages in his life, while solidifying his mulatto heritage. Yet, the abrupt end to his symbolic musical journey suggests that turn-of-the-twentieth century America simply was not ready to embrace a multiracial culture.

As a child, the narrator performs European classical music, which mirrors his desire to be a part of America's white society. Everyone—from his mother to audience members in sold-out concert halls—praises his talent of playing the music of white classical composers; a local newspaper even deems him an "infant prodigy" (Johnson 18). The young narrator happily accepts this reputation because he wants society to categorize him with the dominant white race. He held a "very strong aversion to being classed" with the other black students and accordingly mingled in predominantly white social circles, which included his white school friend "Red Head" and his duet partner, the talented pale violinist with whom he falls in love (18). Though a white outlook reverberates in his classical performances, the manner in which the narrator

plays reveals the other side of his dual heritage. He learns the art of the piano in auditory, "black" fashion, imitating "by ear all the hymns and songs [his] mother knew" and preferring "not to be hampered by notes" (5). The instinctual way in which the narrator plays songs further demonstrates his black musical heritage. He "always tried to interpret a piece of music" and always "played with feeling", similar to Singing Johnson, the great black singing leader he hears later in the novel, who masterfully improvises according to his audience and evokes emotions strong enough to bring his listeners to tears (18). This manner of music-learning and making—combined with the pieces the narrator plays—creates a composite of black and white music analogous to his true mulatto identity. Though the community knows he comes from black roots, the narrator's outward classical performances show that at this stage in his life he would rather hide his colors under a homogeneously white label.

As the narrator reaches young adulthood, his attitude shifts to one that embraces his black heritage. He develops "wild dreams of bringing glory and honor to the Negro race" and a pride in his colored background (32). The genre of music he performs illustrates the change in his racial mindset as it, too, shifts from classical to ragtime. Ragtime embodies the participatory, instinctual, and auditory characteristics of black music. The narrator first describes it as music that "demanded physical response," containing "barbaric harmonies," and played by a "natural musician" who composed his music "by ear alone" (72, 74). When he moves to New York, ragtime becomes the staple of his identity as he quickly becomes a regular performer in the public "Club" and the private sphere of a millionaire's home. Now he basks in his esteemed reputation as a great black ragtime musician, which reflects his newfound pride as a colored man. While the narrator externally adopts the black race, mixed blood still plays in the undertones of his music. He still utilizes European classics from his childhood as he thumps out ragtime tunes, integrating white music format into black rhythms by making "ragtime transcriptions of familiar classic selections" (84). Though New York society identifies him as black, his dual heritage lingers beneath the surface.

While traveling in Europe as the millionaire's ragtime musical accompanist, the narrator's racial attitude shifts again, this time progressing towards an acceptance of his true mulatto identity. This new outlook mirrors his motivation to integrate his white and black backgrounds by voicing "all the joys and sorrows, the hopes and ambitions, of the American Negro, in a classic musical form" (108). He leaves his black ragtime job in Europe for the American South, where he hopes to find rich material in black sermons and old slave songs, the inspirational and improvisatory music that Salim Washington describes as "the archetype of black culture" (Washington 251). Combining this music with written notation symbolizes his individual recognition of a dual heritage. Yet while he shows no favoritism towards one race or the other, society will not recognize him as mulatto and views him strictly in terms of black or white. He

takes on a black identity while in the company of other African Americans on the boat ride back to America, is seen as white on a Pullman to Atlanta filled with other white men discussing race issues, and uses his pale skin for safety when he witnesses a white mob grotesquely kill a black man.

This last incident causes the narrator to realize that a country whose ideology allows for a man to be burned alive could not merge what the narrator calls “the great and impassable gulf between the races” (Johnson 137). His black pride plummets to immense shame that leads him to give up his active racial quest and “let the world take [him] for what it would” (139). His race-blending artistic vision correspondingly dissipates as he reverts to passively playing white classical pieces, merely imitating the written notes of the European composer Chopin. Meanwhile, his manuscripts of merged racial music remained silent in a box as “a dead ambition” and “vanished dream” (154). The digression from creative innovation to simple imitation reflects the narrator’s individual denunciation of the black race and his mixed heritage as he exchanges the life of a progressive musician for the banal world of business and real estate.

The yellowing manuscripts of his dead artistic dream—symbolic of the narrator’s failure to fuse black and white cultures—also embody America’s divisive attitude towards race at the time of the novel’s publication. His journey between the worlds of classical and ragtime music revealed a country composed of a multitude of races, like his own multiracial background. He plays the piano in diverse settings that range from poor, black Southern towns to an integrated New York club to the homes of white northern elitists. However, in this diverse nation he saw a stark racial divide. The majority of people he encountered opposed intermarriage and although the “law would restrain and punish the malicious burning alive of animals,” it would not prevent a white mob from viciously burning a black man to death (139). By deciding to denounce his mixed blood and musical dream, the narrator shows an understanding of the American mental state that could not adopt biracial music and blur the distinctive color lines.

The narrator’s unrealized musical goal of integrating black musical culture into the realm of white music mirrors the plight of his real-life contemporaries, which further emphasizes America’s prejudiced attitude towards the black race. In an era of segregation, Jim Crow laws, and flagrant racism, these early twentieth-century black musicians sought to integrate their music into white mainstream American society. Like the narrator, they hoped to blur the color lines by transforming their plantation spirituals and ragtime rhythms into a written musical language that white America could understand. But for these black musicians, American success meant abandoning their true musical tradition for white tastes. As Cristina L. Ruotolo argues, despite their attempts to bridge racial barriers, “an authentic black musicality [could not] be

incorporated into the mainstream music industry” because of the industry’s prejudices and “ongoing investment in racial stereotypes” (Ruotolo 258). Similarly, Ruotolo stresses that “the narrator’s repeated attempts to bridge these differences—either to unfix European texts by “ragging” them or to transfer the spirit of black music to the notated page—inevitably fail” (251). The narrator and his contemporaries’ unsuccessful attempts reflect white America’s failure in the early twentieth century to recognize black culture as an inextricable part of their society.

Using music as a metaphorical guide, Johnson effectively captures America’s own racial ambiguity and ultimate inability to accept a multiracial background. The tunes that play throughout the novel shed light on the mulatto status of the narrator and the racial attitudes of turn of the twentieth century America. This music serves as an impetus for societal change as it turns *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* into a political tool that sings out Johnson’s hopes for a society that could one day transcend racial barriers.

*Instructor: Lydia Fisher, Writing Seminar in English*

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## Jessica Rosenbaum

### A Whole New World?

Society sets standards to which the film industry typically conforms when it comes to accepted criteria of gender roles. Animated fairy tales produced by The Walt Disney Company have clearly reflected this notion. The evolving role of the female protagonist in Disney films has led to changes in the male characters as well. In turn, audiences have witnessed a perceptible difference in the relationship between men and women: a slow, yet steady erosion of the concept that it takes merely a kiss from Prince Charming to win the heart of a contemporary woman.

Disney first made headway in the animated picture industry with the production of *Snow White* in 1937. This film created a new concept with the introduction of a full-length animated movie, yet it made sure to conform to societal standards in doing so. During the early to mid-twentieth century, women were expected to be obedient, gracious, and charming. The protagonist Snow White fit the bill perfectly by being portrayed as a weak, shallow, epitome of beauty of the 1930s. Her “skin is as white as snow”, her “lips as red as blood”, her “hair as black as ebony” (Walker 1). These physical characteristics contribute to her being referred to by the evil queen as “the fairest one of them all.” Snow White’s demure nature is observed in her domesticity. Although she appears to enjoy doing housework (she whistles while she works), she clearly needs the assistance of the forest animals to help her complete her tasks. When she realizes that eight dwarves reside in this tiny, yet comfortable abode, she becomes a maternal figure to them, caring for them tenderly in return for their generous hospitality. Snow White possesses a childlike innocence and naïveté. These traits, however, nearly cost her her life when she accepts the offer of a shiny apple from an old hag. Her trusting nature goes along with the whole persona of “beautiful and brainless,” and results in her death by poison. Disney makes us wonder if this calamity may have been avoided if Snow White had a better head on her shoulders. This scene

is reminiscent of Eve’s fateful bite of the apple in the Garden of Eden, which changed the course of history. Like Eve, Snow White lives in a state of child-like innocence in her own little garden, too naïve (or stupid) to realize what the consequences of her actions would be. The difference in the biblical story is that Eve and Adam suffered the consequences together, whereas Disney’s *Snow White* brings to big screen a gallant prince to save the day.

The prince, who remains nameless in the film, easily wins the heart of the beautiful Snow White, and rides off with her into the sunset. The prince curiously does not exemplify any qualities of strength or honor necessary to win his lover’s heart. Apparently, Snow White is so smitten with the enchanting prince and his passionate wake up kiss that he practically kidnaps her without a struggle (“A Feminist Critique of Disney’s Heroines” 2)! All the male characters in the film are able to control Snow White’s fate. For instance, when the queen sends the huntsman on a mission to kill Snow White, he is unable to murder her after she begs for her life. Instead, he allows her to run away into the forest (Wallace 1). This soft spot that men have in their hearts for the lovely Snow White is a consistent theme throughout the film. Snow White is always being rescued by men. The seven dwarves offer her a place to stay and try to protect her from the dangers of the forest and the malice of the wicked queen. Men are portrayed as Snow White’s saviors and protectors. All of the male characters, including the huntsman, prince, and dwarves, do not seem to have any particular agenda for trying to save Snow White, other than the fact that she is sweet and beautiful... and that they are, well, men! The huntsman proves to be a spineless character because he cannot follow the orders of his queen. The dwarves are a bunch of domestically challenged characters, incapable of taking care of themselves. And the prince does not have any quality other than being a Prince, that he relies on to win Snow White’s heart. Disney’s *Snow White* sends a message to its audience that in spite of man’s weaknesses, he maintains control over the submissive female.

*Snow White* is a film that portrays women as inferior to men. This subordination creates a relationship between men and women in the film that is one-sided and superficial. The men have all the power in a relationship. They determine a woman’s destiny by allowing her protection from danger, shelter from the wilderness, and life via the passionate kiss. A woman’s responsibilities are outlined clearly in this film and include cooking, cleaning, and molly-coddling her charges while smiling and singing. The success of the male/female relationship according to this Disney film depends on the woman playing her part and not deviating from the standards set by society and hence by the film industry. *Snow White* presents its audience with an idealized concept of marriage, in which the union between man and woman is implied to be happy, faithful, and uneventful. If a woman does what is expected of her, she will be able to snag the man. This concept of love is warped and unrealistic, yet it exemplifies the gender roles of the times.

As the twentieth century progressed, so too did Disney's portrayal of female stereotypes. In 1950, the corporation released its own animated version of *Cinderella*. As in *Snow White*, the female protagonist in this film possesses physical beauty which enables her to attract the prince. This film provides the audience with the message that even the most socially disadvantaged women will be able to find love simply by being beautiful. Cinderella is blonde, thin, beautiful, and fair (Walker 2). The tension between her, her stepmother and step-sisters stems from their jealousy regarding her beauty. This causes them to look down upon Cinderella and treat her as a slave. They taunt and tease her, always lauding their advantage of freedom over her. Cinderella lacks human friends, and therefore turns to animals for companionship. Her beautiful voice attracts the animals, and she becomes especially close with the mice. Cinderella's qualities of humility and patience make her a good friend to these creatures, but also exemplify her incapability of caring for herself. Aside from doing domestic chores, Cinderella is quite inept. It is the mice who are responsible for sewing the spectacular gown for the ball, the Fairy Godmother who uses her magical powers to get her there, and the prince who, so smitten with her beauty, invites her to dance. ("A Feminist Critique" 3). If not for the help of others, Cinderella would not have found happiness at the end of the story because she would never have sought the opportunity for herself.

Whereas Cinderella is "obedient, hardworking, always composed, and practically emotionless," the prince is "active and in control" (Lucero-Miner 2). He is named a generic "Prince Charming," a big step from 1937's *Snow White*, as this prince actually has an identity. Cinderella's prince exemplifies a number of masculine qualities that might make him appealing to her. He is perfect, strong, powerful and handsome. He also seems to have a mind of his own, as he defies his parents' proposal of an arranged marriage in order to choose a woman who he truly loves. Yet it is still the obligation of his parents to arrange a ball, the purpose of which is to have Prince Charming view all eligible maidens. If he does not choose a wife for himself, his parents will ultimately make the decision. The threat of having his parents choose a wife shows a flaw in his strength and sheds light on an aspect of the prince that may be viewed as weak. In spite of all the prince's potential flaws, the film provides a message to its audience that a man can still save the day and get the girl with merely a kiss and a wedding. Prince Charming need not be powerful to win Cinderella's heart; he must simply find the foot upon which the glass slipper fits. This most tedious task is all that is required for the prince to find his true love.

The relationship between men and women is given new meaning in *Cinderella*. True love is somewhat more defined, as the prince must invest some time and energy searching his vast kingdom to find Cinderella. He shows determination and strong will. Yet the woman is still portrayed as the poor damsel in distress, waiting for her man to rescue her from her dismal existence. Once again, Disney makes it clear that if a man

wants a woman, he will get her without much trouble. The prince is the only major male character in the film, and it is him who she weds (Baum 5). A meaningful relationship between Cinderella and Prince Charming never fully develops in the film. Cinderella appears at the ball, a vision of beauty and grace. After a dance and a song, the pair professes love at first sight. As in *Snow White*, the concept of marriage has a utopian connotation. A good man and the promise of marriage validate a woman's existence.

Cinderella's character is quite similar to her predecessor, *Snow White*. Their female characteristics coincide with American cultural standards of the mid-twentieth century. Both women depend on their men to overcome the obstacles that will enable them to ride away with their true loves at the end of the story. As Esther Harding writes in her book, *Woman's Mysteries, Ancient and Modern: A Psychological Interpretation of the Feminine Principle as Portrayed in Myth, Story, and Dreams*, "the success or defeat" of a woman's life was measured by her ability to marry. "If she married well she succeeded, if she failed to marry she was all too likely to be considered a failure" (Harding 9).

Unlike earlier Disney films, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) departed from previously held views of gender and "reflects modern views and criticisms" ("A Feminist Critique of Disney's Heroines" 3). Belle is a strong woman who takes initiative and does not wait around for things to happen. She is a "take charge person" who is daring and welcomes challenges. She believes that life has more in store for her than what a small provincial town can ever offer. Belle is a beautiful young woman, yet it is her inner beauty that attracts her "prince," or in this case, the Beast. Others consider "Belle a bit strange because of her love of reading and how she is always walking around town with her nose stuck in a book" (Leslee M. 3). It is therefore the Beast's astounding library that immediately captures Belle's attention. Unlike her predecessors in Disney films, Belle is a scholar, a woman who speaks her mind and has the courage to take an active role in her destiny. "There is a feminist message here, made even stronger by the absence of any positive male role models" (O'Brien 5).

The role of men and their behavior in Belle's life, changes to adapt to Belle's strong feminine persona. Gaston, the most handsome, muscular, and arrogant, man in town wants to date Belle. Gaston is astonished when he realizes that Belle is not interested. He sings and cheers with his cronies about his irresistible good looks, extraordinary physique, and about his ability to appeal to any woman he lays his eyes on. Yet Belle desires someone more intelligent, worldly, kind, and emotionally involved. Therefore, she adamantly rejects Gaston's overtures. "The evil character in this movie is Gaston....He is, again, the ideal male with the muscular body, cleft in chin, and hairy chest. He wants Belle to be his wife so badly that he resorts to treachery. Gaston says things like 'The most beautiful girl in town, that makes her the best!' showing the obvious shallowness" of his character (Leslee M. 3). Because of Gaston's

condescending and egocentric nature, Belle will never love him. In fact it is the Beast who Belle ultimately falls in love with. The Beast must work hard, however, to win Belle's heart. The Beast exemplifies the idea that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. He attempts to show off his masculinity by bellowing and throwing furniture around to scare Belle. This is just a show of anger and frustration on his part, for he is a man stuck in the hideous body of a beast. Slowly, the audience sees the characteristics that humanize him. Beast's insecurity about his physical appearance is something he must conquer. Belle perceives this very human quality, and with her help the Beast overcomes his angst. He also shows generosity and a genuine interest in the things that are important to Belle—her books and her father. These qualities further serve to endear him to her. The Beast eventually wins Belle's heart in the end and turns into a prince. "The Beast is the New Man, the one who can transform himself from the hardened, muscle-bound, domineering man of the '80s into the considerate, loving, and self-sacrificing man of the '90s" (Hoisington 6). The Beast proves that love has no foundation in physical beauty. The Beast's kindness triumphs over Gaston's physical beauty, and this brings out the film's rejection of the notion of hyper-masculinity.

As Belle and the Beast find true beauty in each other, and hence true love, the film relays a profound message about relationships to the audience. Whereas in previous Disney movies the relationship between a man and woman was one-sided, *Beauty and the Beast* undermines traditional thought and exemplifies the way in which men and women must work together to achieve happiness. Not only must Belle learn to tame and civilize the Beast, but the Beast must please Belle. It is only because of the reciprocity of their relationship that they are able to be successful in love. Only when Belle is able to see the Beast's inner beauty, does he begin his transformation back into a prince. The spell cast on the Beast is finally reversed when he finds love, which he is able to discover together with Belle.

In 1992, Disney continued its trend of portraying another strong female character in the animated version of *Aladdin*. Jasmine, the only woman in the movie, is a free-spirited girl who refuses to choose a suitor to marry as her father requests. Not only does she disobey her father, but she sneaks outside the palace walls in order to discover "a whole new world." Jasmine is demanding, bossy, smart, and does not give into men's whims (Leslee M. 4). She proves to Aladdin that he will have to work to win her heart, and does not submit to Jafar's desires for her to be his wife. Jasmine uses her sex appeal to distract Jafar from hurting Aladdin, and it is through her cunning nature, sharp mind, and quick wit that she helps defeat the evil antagonist.

Jasmine has an effect on all of the male characters' lives. Her father wants her to be happy, yet grows impatient as she refuses to choose a husband. The Sultan is energetic, yet extremely naïve. His naïveté allows him to trust Jafar and be brainwashed into going along with the sorcerer's plans. Jafar uses guile and trickery to gain the

trust of Jasmine's father. He seems to need these things to procure any success with Jasmine, because Jafar, the old menacing sorcerer, is very unappealing to Jasmine. Jafar's goal is to wed Jasmine and kill Aladdin. He has a commanding presence, as a tall and thin man who wears long and dark robes. It is ultimately his greed and the "reverse psychology by Aladdin" that lead to Jafar's demise (Leslee M. 4). Jasmine and Aladdin work together to defeat their nemesis. Yet it is not because of Aladdin's intelligence and strength that Jasmine falls in love with him. Aladdin wins her heart with a lot of hard work, as well as with a lot of luck. After finding a magic lamp, Aladdin wishes to marry the girl of his dreams, and in the end, his wish comes true. Aladdin therefore utilizes the work of the supernatural to get the girl (Fernandez 2). It is only after Aladdin can prove his worth by defeating Jafar, that he is accepted into the family and permitted to marry Jasmine. Aladdin's character and his eventual acceptance into Jasmine's family offer many conflicting images about men and society in general. The fact that Aladdin finds a magic lamp is an extremely unrealistic portrayal of the way in which one gains wealth and good fortune in life. "Even before Aladdin finds the magical lamp, he gets everything that he needs by stealing it. He does not work for anything he ever gained in his life. Sure, he has to brave the 'Cave of Wonder,' but that is fairly easy when you have a magical rug and a smart little monkey on your side" (Fernandez 1). The movie presents an idea that in order to get what one wants, one must pretend to be someone one is not. Aladdin is poor and thinks that he will never be able to marry Jasmine, so he concocts an elaborate plan to gain entry to the palace, which includes presenting himself as a royal suitor. "Though Aladdin has to change his outward appearance to be accepted as a suitor, Jasmine loves him for what he is on the inside. This message teaches children an obviously good moral lesson: you shouldn't try to pretend to be someone you are not; people will like you for who you are on the inside" (Fernandez 4). The development of the relationship between Aladdin and Jasmine gives the audience a clear message about love and gender roles. In this film, unlike in earlier Disney motion pictures, marriage is no spontaneous matter. Aladdin and Jasmine work as a team of equals to combat obstacles that stand in their way and in the end are rewarded with the Sultan's acceptance of Aladdin as a suitable husband for his daughter. Jasmine's ability to choose her own life companion shows a change in the traditional father-daughter relationship in which a girl was expected to wed the man her father chose. Jasmine has the freedom to find her own love, and that love is not based on wealth, but instead on true emotions, trust, and partnership.

For decades, it appeared that one Disney film after another portrayed the female protagonist as a weak and subservient pawn in a world dominated by Prince Charmings. It was the Prince's sole mission to save the damsel, kiss her, sweep her into his arms, and live happily ever after. One Disney critic explains that "the films reinforce the nostalgia for eternal youth and a well-ordered, clean world in which evil is always

recognizable and good takes the form of a male hero who is as dependable as the phallic principles that originally stamped the medium of animation at the beginning of the twentieth century” (Zipes 94). Consistent with this critique, the films *Snow White* and *Cinderella* relate a message to their audiences supporting the notion that a woman cannot survive a treacherous and evil world without a man at her side. Unfortunately, this further translates into a warped perception of romance between a man and a woman. According to an excerpt taken from the endnotes in Jack Zipes’ *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children and the Culture Industry*, “when Disney built his Burbank studio in 1939, he took pride in the fact that he could provide a special lounge for his male workers to gather without female intervention” (Zipes 147). Additionally, in *Walt Disney: Hollywood’s Dark Prince*, Marc Eliot comments: “Disney took great pleasure in a studio press release describing the club as a ‘womanless paradise for the recreational use of the Disney male employees. The women may have taken over the bars and the barber shops, but they still can’t crash the profession of animation. The only skirted artists in the studio are the girls who trace the animator’s drawings on celluloid and paint them” (Eliot 108-109). Perhaps these poignant comments about Walt Disney give one an inkling as to why he perpetuated the portrayal of female characters the way he did for so many years. Quite simply, he was a male chauvinist in every sense of the word. Yet by the time the 1980’s rolled around, these female stereotypes were unacceptable by American society and film audiences alike. Change was slow, but the release of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin* were like gifts given to a ready and waiting audience. Witnessing the evolution of the dismal damsel into contemporary women like Belle and Jasmine was something to rejoice about. Their emergence as vibrant women possessing self-confidence, passion, intelligence, independence, and strength of character, proves to have a positively healthy impact on their relationships with their charming princes.

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## Nick Watson

### The Modern Masculine Ideal

What does it take, in today's society, to be a man? How can we know what "masculinity" actually represents? Although the masculine views presented in *Fight Club* may seem chauvinistic from the plot-driven point of view, Chuck Palahniuk essentially wishes to highlight the absurdity of the current societal conception of the "masculine ideal." Palahniuk presents a generation of men who have been "raised by women" (41) and who, due to the lack of a paternal influence, are lost in their personal sense of identity. This confusion with regard to identity presents itself most clearly in the narrator of the novel, who, out of necessity, personifies his understanding of masculinity in the form of an alter ego, Tyler Durden. For the narrator, Tyler represents the opportunity to escape the monotony of his current life, which is characterized by both commodity culture and the societal pressure for monetary success. The creation of *Fight Club* and *Project Mayhem* extends from the narrator's release of his own masculine ideal in the form of Tyler Durden, the embodiment of unrestrained manliness. Palahniuk, through the presentation of these destructive groups, looks not to emphasize a sexist view of the world, but instead to highlight his idea of the ridiculous nature of society's masculine ideal.

Initially, the narrator's understanding of the world seems to be entirely socially constructed, and this conception leaves little room for the fulfillment of his specific masculine necessities. Before the creation of his alter ego, the narrator exists in a world characterized by the acquisition of money and material goods. His infatuation with "Tomas Harila quilts," "Klipsk shelving units," and "Alle cutlery" (33) provides for him the illusion of satisfaction in life. All of this "stuff" defines the narrator's existence, and he is essentially unable to release any masculine energy because he is a "slave to my nesting instinct" (33). One of the obvious characteristics of modern society's definition of "femininity" comes with this concept of the "nesting instinct," which seems to be,

for the narrator, the constant infatuation for, and eventual acquisition of, furniture, shelving units, dinnerware, etc. It takes the narrator his "whole life to buy this stuff. . . . Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you" (34). The narrator realizes that he is part of a generation that has "been working in jobs they hate, just so they can buy what they don't really need" (141). Although he needs to escape the confines of his current life, the narrator is unable to do so without help. Only through the creation of Tyler, the perfect example of unrestrained masculinity, can the narrator passively allow "another person" to destroy his "tiny life single-serving butter and cramped airline seat role in the world" (164). Before Tyler, the material aspects of the narrator's life define his existence: "The lamps, the chairs, the rugs, were me. The dishes in the cabinet were me. The plants were me. The television was me" (102). The narrator's sense of identity relates only to the "things" around him. Clearly, the narrator's conception of "identity" is socially constructed, and this construction acts as an inhibitor for his release of any aspect of his "own" masculinity.

Furthermore, the narrator's sense of masculinity is not so much a representation of the narrator himself as it is a representation of his environment—his "society." The narrator is raised amidst the hurried confusion of a media-controlled generation. He is a part of "the middle children of history, raised by television to believe that someday we'll be millionaires and movie stars and rock stars" (157). In addition, the narrator's childhood is characterized not only by the observance of a broken parental relationship but, more generally, by this absence of a concrete father figure in his life. The narrator remembers, at one point, when he had to take "messages back and forth between my estranged parents. I hated this when I was six" (57). Although the narrator mentions very little about his family, it is still fairly simple to see that he is without a substantial parental model for masculinity. For the narrator, "if you never know your father, [or] if your father bails out" (133), and, in fact, the narrator's father does "bail out" on him, then the only way to understand masculinity is through the filter of a "media-driven" view of the world.

This particular "socially influenced" understanding of masculinity leads to the supposition that a "man" is simply a strong, sexually driven, destructive individual. The narrator's alternate persona, Tyler Durden, is the embodiment of this definition of masculinity, and from the first time the reader observes Tyler, aspects of his personality highlight the notion that he is, in fact, the representation of the narrator's specific perception of the masculine ideal. When the narrator first meets his "shadow" on a nude beach, Tyler is "naked and sweating, gritty with sand, his hair wet and stringy, hanging in his face. . . . Tyler was pulling driftwood logs out of the surf and dragging them up the beach" (22). While this initial description of Tyler revolves almost completely around the primal, natural aspects of a "male" being, it presents the idea

that a real “man” must display, and continually preserve, the basic appearance of physical strength. Following this first meeting, Tyler’s actions continue to relate, in some way, to the social characteristics of masculinity. After the narrator and Tyler spend their first night together in the same house, for example, Tyler explains that he “and Marla had sex about ten times” (51). Although this upsets the narrator, in reality, Tyler is fulfilling the narrator’s masculine desires, all of which are socially informed. Clearly, modern society values sexual drive as one of a “man’s” most important qualities, and so the narrator fulfills this criterion, as well as various others, through Tyler. The most obvious of these criteria is Tyler’s sense of “destruction” throughout the novel. Whether it be splicing frames “of a lunging red penis or a yawning wet vagina close-up into another feature movie” (19), or farting “on a whole cart of Boccone Dolce for the Junior League tea” (71), or even blowing up the narrator’s condo, Tyler clearly upholds the masculine conception of destruction.

It is this idea of “destruction” that leads to the inception of Fight Club. The first instance of fighting in the novel occurs one night at a bar when Tyler asks the narrator to “do me a favor. I want you to hit me as hard as you can” (43). The purpose of the first fight, according to Tyler, is “to know more about himself. About self-destruction” (43). Tyler desires to increase his knowledge about “getting hurt, about what you’re capable of doing against another man” (43). These desires are, on some level, the narrator’s own, yet he cannot regard them as “real” without Tyler’s help. Tyler’s curiosity regarding “self-destruction” leads to the theory that the narrator is unsatisfied with his current life, and that he needs Tyler, a separate part of his “being,” to transform his means of existence. In essence, the inception of Fight Club occurs because of the narrator’s extreme curiosity. He has never been in a fistfight before, and because human nature inevitably demands curiosity with regard to the unknown, the narrator’s alter ego wishes to satisfy his interest. Once Fight Club begins, the participants become addicted to the realization of a masculine ideal which they have not equally experienced before in their lives. It is clear that the club is a type of masculine “escape” for its members because, according to the narrator, “who guys are in fight club is not who they are in the real world” (40). The release of masculine emotion mixed with the enticement of experiencing something intensely unconventional provides the basis for a club that cannot fail. The members of this club are looking for something which provides less meaning in their lives, because at Fight Club “nothing was solved when the fight was over, but nothing mattered” (45). Clearly, the purpose of finding a masculine identity within the confines of a cultural identity seems to be the underlying objective not only for the narrator, but for all those associated with Fight Club and Project Mayhem.

With this notion of finding a personal identity, Chuck Palahniuk clearly specifies the distinction between the primal, unrestrained aspects of masculinity and those which

are under the conscious control of a male psyche. Palahniuk presents this dichotomy between two distinct, yet indefinite characters, the narrator and Tyler, in order to stress the fact that a balance between these two forces is necessary for the preservation of human sanity. Clearly, the ending of the novel endorses this concept with the narrator’s institutionalization after “pulling the trigger . . . and [after] Tyler died” (197). Palahniuk suggests that the narrator loses some portion of his sanity whenever he experiences either the absence of masculinity or, in contrast, the unadulterated presence of his masculine ideal. Essentially, the narrator cannot live in the modern world without the realization of various aspects of masculinity. This is immediately clarified at the beginning of the novel when the narrator demands deliverance “from being perfect and complete” (36). With this, the narrator wishes to leave the life he creates in the absence of masculinity. At the same time, however, the narrator is unable to retain a sense of sanity when his conception of masculinity completely controls his actions. With Tyler as the narrator’s “hallucination” (195), the narrator is clearly without any glimpse of sanity when a sense of absolute masculinity controls his world.

Throughout the novel *Fight Club*, Chuck Palahniuk strongly endorses the concept of balance regarding both the search for, and eventual realization of, a personal identity. Furthermore, Palahniuk highlights the treacherous nature of the common aspiration, conscious or not, toward any societal ideal. He suggests that any conceptual “extreme” is necessarily irrational and dangerous. Thus, the danger of certain “socially constructed” characteristics of personal identification is clearly defined because these specific characteristics are founded upon various conceptual “extremes.” Palahniuk also suggests that the modern conception of the masculine ideal is unreasonable in the sense that its distinguishing characteristics are essentially unrestrained and unchecked. Society pushes for masculinity in the most primitive, basic, unadulterated sense of the word, which is, according to the author, not only dangerous but could theoretically lead to the destruction of humanity.

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## Sally Elbaum

### The Necessity of Flip-flops

I always giggle to myself when I see girls limping down the street barefoot, with stiletto heels in their hands. The torn bandages on their heels lose their adhesive as the night progresses, and swollen pus-filled blisters appear. Oh how these suffering girls must envy me as I strut down the street, looking just as stylish in flat comfortable flip-flops! Why would girls put themselves through such torture when a much more practical and still fashionable alternative exists? After suffering from many blisters and calluses due to unnecessary torturous heels, I have concluded that trendy, comfortable, and healthy flip-flops are an essential part of any girl's wardrobe.

Flip-flops come in all different colors, patterns, and styles and can therefore match almost any ensemble. The inexpensive Old Navy shower shoe comes in about 15 different colors, 15 different prints, and even in one-inch platforms. At a mere three dollars, these flip-flops coordinate with outfits ranging from the mini skirt and camisole, to the mesh short and sweatshirt, and conform to any personal style. Even movie stars don these economical alternatives, so why go through the expense and torture of heels? Flip-flops can also enhance girls' confidence by displaying newly painted and adorned toes after a pedicure. As a result, girls will hear remarks such as: "Wow, nice pedicure," or, "What pretty feet"—compliments that any girl would love to receive. Comfort is another beneficial feature of flip-flops. These 'thongs' mold to the shape of feet so that even after a night out or a long walk to class, feet feel wonderful! Having healthy feet, however, is the greatest advantage of wearing flip-flops. Flip-flops prevent calluses and blisters, protect and cushion the arch, and allow feet to breathe. While walking in flip-flops your feet are free and cradled by a smooth, cushioned surface. Now imagine walking in a pair of three-inch stilettos—with each step you take, the tight, pointy, prison abrades your skin, gradually creating inflamed and infected

blisters, and bruises the balls of your feet. Even podiatrists agree that flip-flops are a healthy alternative to heels, wedges, and stilettos. Since they do not restrict feet to a small, sweaty, germ-filled space, feet are less likely to contract fungi, such as athlete's foot. Wearing flip-flops allows air to gently move across the foot, eliminating bad odors, and promoting happy, healthy, fungi-less feet.

*Instructor: Jane Kauer, Writing Seminar in Anthropology*

## Brad Murtha

### Memoir of a Philadelphia Eagles Fan

They say you never forget your first heartbreak. I sure haven't. I was no more than eight years old when the deed was done. The heartbreaker in this situation was not your average, however. The heartbreaker in question was the Philadelphia Eagles.

At first glance, it seemed to be your typical Sunday morning in Philadelphia. Gray, damp clouds hovered over the standstill of traffic on the Schuylkill Expressway as early morning rowers sped along the Schuylkill River. The city skyline jutted out like crooked teeth in the background. Upon further inspection, it could be seen that this Sunday was not as usual as it seemed. There was a bustle of excitement for the Eagles' game against their NFC East rivals, the New York Giants. Armies of barbarians clad in green swarmed the battleground of Veterans Stadium, thirsting for blood and beer.

Being only a tyke at the time, I was not used to seeing shirtless grown men slathered in paint parading around in public. Despite my inexperience, I was still excited to see my first football game. I must admit, though, the Philadelphia Eagles were not my favorite team at the time. I favored the Miami Dolphins because dolphins were so much cooler than birds. Nevertheless, I entered the Vet with bright eyes. Hypnotized by the flashing neon signs and the multicolored pennants, I became transfixed by the crowd as it writhed in a frenzy of green. My shoes stuck to the beer-stained floors, crackling as I walked to the nosebleeds. From my seat, I could see the crooked skyline of Philadelphia ominously peering over the Vet. I was ready for some football.

The game was nothing short of a classic. The Eagles battled neck and neck with the Giants for most of the contest, putting my young nerves through a test. Even though the field was a distance from our 700-level seats, the six-foot-five, three-hundred-pound goliaths still appeared to stand like towers. Colliding with brutal intensity and jaw-breaking force, the players piled together to create a green and blue

mass. As I downed my third Coke and gobbled my fourth hot dog, I watched the game with eagle eyes (pun intended). I roared when the home team scored, scoffed when the opposing team triumphed, and screamed when the refs made stupid calls. I felt at one with the crowd, like I shared something in common with them. I wanted just as badly as they did for the Birds to beat the Giants. But they didn't.

As the seconds wound down on the play clock, I felt something rumble in my stomach. No, it wasn't the four hot dogs and liter of soda, but rather the feeling of disappointment. The Eagles had lost, and I was not happy. I cried and cried as my dad carried me out of the stadium among a crowd of bitter (and shirtless) men. I still remember the expression on one man's face as he left the game. He looked as if he had lost everything, as if the whole world had come down on him, and nothing was left. My heart was indeed broken, but his was shattered.

The sense of disappointment I felt that day was my first taste of what it really means to be a Philadelphia Eagles fan. You see, the Eagles are a lot like a drug: they are capable of giving great pleasure for brief periods of time, but are ultimately bad for your health. Every year, the Birds storm the league, amassing win after win, only to choke in the big games. In the past six years, for example, the team has been to four division championships, losing three of them. When the Birds did reach the league championship, they, as well as their fans, were humiliated by the reigning New England Patriots. Season after season after painful season, the Eagles build up the fans' confidence and then rip out their hearts.

Despite all the heartache and unfulfilled dreams, however, the fans are always there. No matter how painful or ugly to watch, the fans continually flock to the stadium or huddle around the television, clinging to that shred of hope that maybe, just maybe, this could be our year. Whether the Eagles are 12-4 or 4-12, the fans will always be there. I have tried to understand why Philadelphia fans continue to support a team that disappoints on an annual basis, but I would be lying if I gave a reason. At best, I can say that being a Philadelphia fan is a lot like believing in a religion. It might be hard to explain why you believe in it, but at the end of the day, you believe. Oh yeah, and Sundays are sacred.

As corny as it sounds, for Eagles fans, football is a way of life. It is the topic of discussion at the dinner table, the reason to lounge around on Sundays, and the perfect excuse for yelling at the television. Whoever coined the phrase "only a game" had obviously never been to Philadelphia. Should the Eagles lose a "game," 1.2 million hearts will break simultaneously. After all, when the Birds play, it isn't the Philadelphia Eagles versus their opponent, but rather the city of Philadelphia versus the opponent. We are a community, a family that laughs, cries, boos, and cheers together. Whether you're a blue-collar worker taking the Broad Street line home or an upper-level executive driving in your Mercedes, you still bleed green. It is with this passion that

Eagles fans continue their collective dream of a championship.

Although I left my first Eagles game disappointed, I left as a member of the Philadelphia fan community. Baptized through tears of disappointment, I became part of a society of fans who want to learn the hard way. These fans are willing to constantly have their hearts broken solely on the hopes that one year their team may finally win the big game. In the end, it is this heartbreak that makes you an Eagles fan. I, like countless others in the city, await every season with the same emotional baggage, but still full-heartedly believe that the Eagles won't let us down. If that doesn't speak to the character of the city—our city—then I don't know what will.

*Instructor: Jacqueline Sadashige, Writing Seminar in Cinema Studies*

## Alexander Chernyak

### ESC!: On the Paradoxes of the TEXTile Exhibit

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The Guardian

Thursday Nov 23, 2006

TEXTile by Jean Shin at The Fabric Workshop and Museum,  
Philadelphia, USA.

Esc. Esc. Esc. Pause. Pause. Pause. Ctrl. Ctrl. Ctrl. Backspace. Backspace. Backspace!!! Much to our despair we cannot escape, we cannot pause time, we cannot go back. We see the black screen of death. Perhaps we can Ctrl-Alt-Delete Out and escape this technological nightmare—but paradoxically our very remedy to escape this technological nightmare is technology itself.

Upon entering Jean Shin's TEXTile Exhibit on the second floor of The Fabric Workshop, I fall into a trance-like state. Hypnotized by the overload of information surrounding me, I cannot resist the great omnipotence of the exhibit in front of me. Surrounded by data everywhere, my mind goes in circles like a merry-go-round, faster and faster. "Enough!" I shout. My calls go unanswered. I desperately embark upon a quest for help. Alas—a blanket, a source of comfort, of warmth. Things will get better I tell myself—just wrap myself in this blanket—and everything will be alright. As I envelope myself—I realize the awful reality too late. Covered by the very source of my pain, the blanket consists of keys from the keyboard—the very data that has overwhelmed me.

We cannot trust our eyes. Such a phrase captures the very contradictory essence of Jean Shin's work - and through these contradictions Shin reveals the paradoxical nature of technology is revealed and shows the deleterious effects of computers.

Of course, it is important to note that the purpose of this review is not to vouch for the Amish and rip apart technology. Improvements in technology have greatly improved society's efficiency as well as its ability to cope with problems. Because of computers, we are able to potentially get work done faster, so we can spend more time with the kids. The argument here is that Shin's work addresses the growing trends in reliance of technology—and its overuse. Shin's work takes a technology that is perceived as a positive step for civilization by most and creates a world built solely on this technology. This overwhelming environment consisting of repetitive key strokes and overwhelming data creates a hostile ambiance and compels an epiphany in the viewer. Just like chocolates, computers are excellent in moderation, but excess can lead to a tummy-ache.

A unique element of this work is its interactivity. Traditional art has often been created by an artist for the consumption by the viewer. Here, at first glance, we as viewers create our own works of art. At the edge of the blanket lays a functional keyboard which complements a monitor that displays the text that we input. We cannot resist using the creative mind to the full potential and taking full advantage of the keyboard's multifaceted capacities. This includes but is not limited to typing in obscene language and proceeding to giggle like a schoolgirl. Regardless of what the keyboard is specifically used to enter, the viewer is immediately entranced by the newly gained artistic license that he or she inherits. It is not long before this innocent novelty becomes a dangerous compulsion. Because of the interactivity of the computer and because of the dynamic elements that make it so great, the viewer becomes more and more reliant on the computer with a growing addiction. And this consequentially raises the question: who really controls whom? Does the user control the computer or does the computer control the user? In the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, "He who cannot obey himself will be commanded." And it is precisely this dependence, the user's loss of self-control that siphons power to the computer, and makes it the victor.

Another duality emerges in the role the computer plays in our lives. Computers were originally created with the goal of simplifying our day to day tasks. The blanket, one of humankind's most straightforward items designed to meet one of the most basic needs of warmth and shelter, represents this simplicity. Yet, the design of the blanket is convoluted and cumbersome. Unlike a quilt there is no pattern—but rather just a hodgepodge of keystrokes splattered on a canvas. Perhaps computers have made the world even more complex. While the blanket may be used as evidence that computers have simplified the world—the ambiance seems to point otherwise. A contradiction and paradox emerge. With the onset of the internet, data can be stored with virtually no

limits. Like the universe, this data is constantly expanding and there is no end. To make sense of all this data will make one go crazy as indicated by Steve Nash in *A Beautiful Mind*. In the beginning, computers promised to organize data—but its growth surpassed our mind's organizational capacity.

One advantage of the computer is to save time. Shin's work clearly shows this advantage through videos of two keyboards across from one another communicating with each other. Yes it is true that oftentimes communicating digitally is more efficient and more effective. However, something very crucial is missing from these videos—the person. Shin's work raises interesting questions. If something is most efficient, is it necessarily the best option? Undeniably, communicating digitally saves us time of having to meet face-to-face, but at what cost? Unfortunately as we rely more and more on these tools to communicate we lose the human component of interaction—we lose the emotions, the feelings, the desires that normally distinguish us from machines. So in retrospect, whether or not Shin incorporates the human hand in the work does not matter - since it is no longer the hand of a human but the hand of a robot. As we communicate more and more online, we lose the vital social skills on which healthy relationships and communities are built.

In the end, Shin's work has opened my eyes to better understanding the world in which we live. Often society adopts technology without fully evaluating the repercussions of doing so. And Shin's work provides the audience with a glimpse of the future—a future that seems to contradict the much idealized notions we have of technology today. A future that we should ctrl-alt-delete out from and esc.

*Instructor: Colette Copeland, Writing Seminar in Fine Arts*

## Shannon Dwyer

### A Mobster Hero

Beginning in 1999, American television viewers became addicted to *The Sopranos*, an HBO series about the life of main mobster Tony Soprano. According to *TV Guide*, *The Sopranos* is the most successful cable series ever aired on television, having reached a peak of 13.4 million viewers.<sup>1</sup> The show has also been ranked fifth on *TV Guide*'s list of the "Top 50 Greatest TV Shows of All Time" and has been referred to as a cultural phenomenon. American viewers and critics alike have gathered in tremendous praise of the series despite its lack of moral content. *The Sopranos* often depicts high levels of illegal activity, including violence, drug use, embezzlement, and much more; yet the most law-abiding of Americans seem captivated by every episode. The immense popularity of *The Sopranos* is a result of American fixation with power and with the thrill of lawlessness.

Most would argue that Americans are vehemently opposed to crime and those who commit crime. After all, we have built entire economies out of successful prisons. The nation currently has the largest prison population in history. Political leaders often run campaigns based on their ability to be "tough on crime." All evidence seems to prove that Americans hate crime. The question is, then, if Americans appear to be so radically against crime, why are they so in love with criminals on television? Why do they root for Tony Soprano and see glamour in a life consumed by criminal activity? The reason is simple. The thing that motivates Americans to create huge prison populations is the very same thing that draws them to idolize Tony Soprano: power. As a character, Tony Soprano is the "main man" of the mob, and what he says, goes. When someone acts out against him, he immediately punishes that person, often with physical torture or even death. All these actions are expressions of his power. His ability to call the shots, to make others feel pain, and to get away with all of it epitomizes his role as a powerful leader within his own environment. This trait is desirable to the powerless average

American who is controlled by a job, a paycheck, a spouse, children, the government, and several other forces. The average American can only dream of having power like Tony Soprano's power. The average American's solution? Command power by strictly enforcing the law and punishing all those who violate it. Sentence a man to life in prison and you can feel powerful when controlling the destiny of one man's life, despite the fact that you may have little to no control over your own. Thus, the massive prison populations today are not representative of America's disgust with crime but rather of America's desire to feel power. Americans don't hate Tony Soprano because he's a criminal. They love him because he's powerful.

Americans are attracted to Tony Soprano not only because of his power over others but also because of his ability to do something most wish they could do: break the rules. American society is built on the belief that in order to be successful, one must be obedient at all stages in life. Follow the rules in high school and avoid disciplinary action, and you might be accepted into an Ivy League university. Attend that university, follow their rules, and if you're lucky you'll be offered a job at a major corporation. Join that corporation, follow their rules, and you'll be more likely to get promoted. Follow the rules every step of the way and one day you'll be successful, wealthy, and maybe even happy—this is the American philosophy. So what happens when people actually do all of that? They create leaders of corporations and governments who have an underlying itch to do something bad or to break the rules simply because they never have before. When people finally reach the level of success they've been striving for all their lives, they grow tired of being obedient. They become the Enrons and WorldComs of our society—some of the smartest and most successful people destroying lives in an effort to bend the rules. Because most Americans never reach the pinnacle of success that the leaders of these corporations did, most Americans never get to that stage where they have the comfortable opportunity to actually bend or even break the rules. Instead, they sit in their living rooms once a week and watch a man who does it all the time. Tony Soprano is essentially free in a way that most Americans feel they are not, and *that* is why they tune in week after week.

*Instructor: Keally McBride, Writing Seminar in Political Science*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia editors, "The Sopranos," wikipedia.org [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Sopranos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sopranos).

## Amira Burns and Julie Cohn

### The Moustache Manifesto

A dark and hairy shadow has deviously crept into our offices, hospitals, schools and even homes. It could be contaminating your father, your brother, or even you at this very moment. What may you ask is this hirsute henchman of Satan? What has inexcusably leached itself to countless victims throughout the course of history?



**This.**

**Could.**

**Be.**

**You.**

You have heard of us, you have seen the markings of our uprising—the office peer nervously stroking his newly shaven face, the housewife whose upper lip suddenly shines in unscathed beauty... We are divinely propelled; we fly on the wings of justice. Our calling is clear, our mission is unstoppable, and our numbers are growing. With this building crescendo of power, we must now delineate, in writing, the simple and righteous Moustache Manifesto.

#### **I**

First and Foremost, moustaches are, in a word, atrocious. Those thinking that their moustache makes them appealing are tragically and pathetically deluded. For any person it is a blotch, a patch that hides the contours and form of the visage. It is a distracting, beastly fuzball that destroys the worth of an otherwise attractive member of the male or female species. Especially the latter. It is no coincidence that the most common defamation of pictures today, the easiest way to mock the portrayed, is by the simple addition of a moustache. The people who harbor such facial flaws live in blatant false-consciousness—keeping a moustache means living a lie. Long live truth! Die fast the moustache!

#### **II.**

Moustaches are unsanitary. Food particles get trapped in their wiry tentacles. According to the FDA, un-refrigerated produce can be a breeding ground for parasitic, often fatal diseases, ones that duplicate at an alarming rate. On its own, this is reason enough for men (or women) not to have a moustache. It is, however, simply selfish disregard for others, especially those these people so loosely call “loved ones” when the haired beasts attempt to kiss. They depose said bacteria into, or close enough to the orifices of their partner to cause extreme illness, occasionally hospitalization, and even death. Perish the filth!

### III.

Moustaches are a sign of obvious vanity. A moustache requires grooming, doting, and daily (or for the hairier men and women, sometimes tri-daily) upkeep.<sup>1</sup> Consumer reports have shown that employees with moustaches are 18.3 times more likely to arrive late to work than their clean-shaven counterparts. This setback in productivity caused by individual selfishness has detracted from overall economic efficiency and in some years (depending on style) contributed directly to national deficits, not to mention the increase in voluntary blindness.

### IV.

In light of current 20th century events, moustaches have become an offensive, pro-communist, pro-fascist, anti-Semitic, homophobic, anti-democratic, extremist symbol. The list of ruthless mustached dictators is simply staggering: Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Adolph Hitler of Germany, Colonel Hugo Banzer of Bolivia, General Jorge Rafael Videla of Argentina, Francisco Franco of Spain, Oliver Cromwell of England, General Augusto Pinoche of Chile, Joseph Stalin of Russia, Chian Kai-Shek of China and Taiwan, Porfirio Diaz of Mexico and Captain Hook of the Jolly Roger, to name a few.

#### OUR DEMANDS:

1. Point out your brothers, your neighbors, your fathers, your mothers, sisters, cousins, friends... let no one stay afflicted by this plague. Let them see the light! Let them be saved! Every moustache must be eliminated, eradicated, ANNIHILATED.
2. For those that resist the purge, let them first be known as vain, unsanitary, selfish, rude, disgusting fascists/communists/terrorists/sociopaths who are dim, dense, slow, thick and deluded enough to think their ugly repulsive faces attractive.

3. For those who continue to support the facial monster, let their moustaches be forcibly shaved, cut, waxed, burned, or otherwise purged. Mere elimination of the moustache is not, however, enough. The punishment must in nature, befit the crime. It must be as revolting, sickening, ghastly, filthy, horrible, nauseating, repellent and creepy as the offense. Before the elimination, the person in question may be dunked in a tank of mucous, tarred and feathered, hung naked by the ankles, or made even to drink sour milk. We must be creative to crush even the thought of whiskers.

This dirt, this filth, this health-hazard, this eyesore, this blatant mark of selfishness and disrespect, this stain upon humanity must be destroyed now, once and for all. To arms, beautifully bald-faced brethren! Let no one go unnoticed!

We must Free the Face!

We must Liberate the Lip!

We Must Hash the Moustache!

*Instructor: John Connor, Writing Seminar in English*

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<sup>1</sup> We must here address the critique that a full-fledged disregard for any shaving could be the least vain option. This argument merits very little attention. Not shaving at all is statistically 86 percent more unsanitary than having just a moustache. A beard, especially one never kempt (that is, the smelly, dreadlocked, oil-infested lice heap), is the documented cause of the bubonic plague. Though assumed to be started on rats, historian Frederico Fernando and his colleagues at Cambridge University have proven without a doubt that the rats were helpless scapegoats, created by the pernicious bearded male political leader at the time, who had realized the error of his ways: the cause of the infestation was the filthy tangled mop on his face. We shall turn our attention back to the less obvious, yet equally egregious growth, moustache.

## Contributors

**David Ashkenazi** is from Los Angeles, California, and is honored to be published in *3808*. David is pursuing a dual degree in Finance and Political Science. He is a member of the Tau Epsilon Phi fraternity and the Nominations and Elections Committee.

**Kristin Bagnoli** is from Madison, Connecticut, and is a graduate of Daniel Hand High School. She plans to major either in English or in history in the College of Arts and Sciences. Her interests include writing, traveling, and listening to music. *Pride and Prejudice* is her favorite book.

**Nicky Berman** is a junior from Boston, currently studying Political Science, Psychology and Spanish. Although she loves Penn to bits, she's spending an entire year away from campus, participating in the Penn in Washington Program and interning on Capital Hill in the fall, and studying abroad in Barcelona in the spring. She loves traveling, running, discovering new music, and having a good laugh as often as possible.

**Carrie Biemer** is from Haddonfield, New Jersey, and is a graduate of Haddonfield Memorial High School. She is a philosophy, politics, and economics major in the College of Arts and Sciences, and she enjoys sports, music, and hanging out with her friends. She is a member of the Varsity Women's Basketball team at Penn.

**Amira Burns** is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is majoring in English, with a concentration in Medieval and Renaissance literature. She is also studying for double minors in French studies and History. Amira has been playing the violin for over twelve years, and is an active member of the College House Music Program and Penn Chamber. She hopes to parlay her Penn education into a career that will allow her to write and travel the world.

**Amy Chang** is currently a sophomore in Wharton and hopes to one day become a lawyer. She hails from the exotic land of Kansas but regrets reporting that she has never gone cow-tipping, nor does she have any desire to ever do so. Her favorite author at the moment is Toni Morrison, although J.K. Rowling may become a contender when the next *Harry Potter* installment arrives. In her spare time, she enjoys making arts & crafts and watching dance performances. She is also a little obsessed with food.

**Alexander Chernyak**, a sophomore in the Wharton School, was born in Russia and grew up in Detroit, Michigan. His passion for the artistic and the creative intersects with his business passions in technology. Alexander's inspiration for this work comes from his entrepreneurial ambitions and the prospect of a changing society he must face in his endeavors.

**Julie Cohn** is currently a sophomore in the college. She grew up in Palo Alto, CA, and is still undecided on her major. She recommends the "Just Do It" Writing Seminar to every freshman. It was a party and a half. Where else can you write a manifesto about facial hair AND get noticeably better at writing? Exactly.

**Shannon Dwyer** is from Howell, New Jersey, and is a graduate of Freehold Township High School. She is a sophomore in the Wharton School. On campus, Shannon works as a team advisor for Wharton freshmen in Management 100. She is also very involved in the on-campus organization Wharton Women, serving as the club's chair of the Freshman Buddies Program.

**Sally Elbaum** is from Essex Fells, NJ and is a graduate of the Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union. A sophomore, Sally plans to study history, communications, and Jewish studies during her next three years at Penn. She is a member of the Sigma Delta Tau sorority and was elected Philanthropy Chair for the 2006-2007 academic year. Sally enjoys playing volleyball and tennis, baking cakes and cookies, and taking long, relaxing walks in her flip-flops.

**Yonah Esterson** hails from Baltimore, Maryland and is a graduate of Yeshivat Rambam High School. Entering his junior year in the College of Arts and Sciences, Yonah is a prospective Chemistry major. "Like a Pile of Bricks" is Yonah's first published work, for which he was awarded honorable mention in the Henry LaBarre Jayne Essay Contest.

**Abigail Fine** is a sophomore from Denver, Colorado. She is a student of classical piano and hopes to study music and German in the College of Arts and Sciences. In her free time, Abigail enjoys cooking, watching foreign films, and playing pool (despite an unfortunate lack of improvement).

**Brian Flanagan** is from Armonk, New York and is as undecided about a major as a rising sophomore can be. He loves to read comic books and hopes the genre becomes more accepted by academics. He plans to play Sprint Football for the Quakers this fall.

**Rajasekhar Ghanta** hails from Freehold, New Jersey. Currently, he plans to major in operations and finance and aspires one day to become the tournament director at Wimbledon. His interests include tennis, the Boston Red Sox, Dzine2Show, and aspiring to follow his two heroes in life: Kim Clijsters and his mother.

**Amanda Herald** is a member of the Wharton Class of 2009. She was born and raised in Miami, Florida, where she has three older siblings, a puppie, and a horse. Here at Penn, she is concentrating in Marketing and Communications. She hopes to work in the fashion industry and is a member of Kappa Alpha Theta. She also loves chocolate ice cream.

**Evan Jeshka Horlacher** grew up in suburban Michigan with two dogs, two parents, and one little brother. Her main interest is poetry, but s/he also likes figure drawing, listening to music, eating with chopsticks, and economic models of human decision making. S/he works as a fitness monitor at Pottruck gym and for the PPE department. EJ is majoring in PPE and will graduate in Spring 2009.

**Chin Isradisaikul** was born in Phitsanulok, Thailand, and attended Triam Udom Suksa School, a famous high school in Bangkok. He received a full ten-year scholarship from the Royal Thai Government as a Thai Scholar to study computer science in the United States. Before coming to Penn, Chin graduated from Westtown School in Pennsylvania. He participates in the Thai Scholars Orientation Program at Brewster Academy in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, for the new Thai Scholars every summer.

Born in the small town of Nantong, China, **Kelly Xiayu Jin** immigrated to the States when she was just three. She traveled a fair share before making her latest move from Belmont, Massachusetts to Philadelphia. A sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences majoring in economics, she also serves on the Residential Advisory Board and tutors local high school students.

**James Kania** grew up in northeastern Pennsylvania. After he graduated from high school, his National Guard unit was deployed to Iraq. His twelve-month tour took him in and around Baghdad, serving as a gunner on a Humvee team attached to a military police battalion. Since returning home, he has spent his summers as the program director at a Boy Scout summer camp. At Penn, he is a walk-on member of the rowing team and is pursuing mathematics.

**Brian Kelly** is a junior in the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania. He is double majoring in International Relations and Arabic/Islamic Studies, with a minor in Political Science. Brian's foreign language interests include Arabic, Farsi, and French. During his time at Penn, Brian worked at the State Department and the Foreign Policy Research Institute. He spent the Spring 2007 semester studying abroad at Cambridge University, England.

**Mark Leung** is a sophomore from Hong Kong and graduated from South Island School. He plans to major in linguistics and minor in French and psychology in the college. Outside classes, he works at the Institute for Research in Cognitive Science and is a member of the Hong Kong Students Association. He is an avid sports fan and cinephile.

**Alexandra Milin** is a Biological Basis of Behavior major in the College of Arts and Sciences. In her spare time, she takes photographs for the newspaper, plays sports, and does cancer research. A longtime resident of Los Angeles, she enjoys traveling and anything that has to do with the beach. She hopes to become a doctor someday.

**Brad Murtha**, a graduate of LaSalle College High School, is a junior concentrating in finance and marketing at the Wharton School. Brad lives in Worcester, Pennsylvania, with his parents and two brothers.

**Jody Pollock** is a rising sophomore in the College studying Spanish, Psychology and Urban Studies. Originally from Takoma Park, MD, she is a graduate of the Communication Arts Program at Montgomery Blair High School. Jody has earned several awards and distinctions for her writing, including being named the 2006 Maryland-Delaware-DC High School Journalist of the Year. Jody has continued her work in journalism, the performing arts and community service at Penn.

**Morgan Rogers** is currently a junior in the College of Arts & Sciences who intends to major in Africana Studies and English. She is a Philadelphia resident of seven years, but also proudly represents Columbus, Ohio as her hometown. You may encounter Morgan on campus singing with the New Spirit of Penn Gospel Choir or with the UMOJA Board, on which she acts as corresponding secretary.

**Jessica Rosenbaum** is double-majoring in French and Political Science. As a member of the Class of 2008, Jessica is a Benjamin Franklin Scholar, a member of the Dean's Advisory Board, and on the executive committee for the Fox Leadership Program. Jessica's passions run the gamut from baking to politics, and she especially treasures her role as treasurer of the Sigma Delta Tau sorority.

**Maggie Rusch** is from New Orleans, Louisiana, and is a graduate of St. Martin's Episcopal High School. She plans to major in cognitive science in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is a member of Penn's varsity volleyball team and enjoys white-water kayaking in the summer.

**Marcus Stuhr** is a student in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Wharton School, hailing from Oregon. He plans to major in finance, statistics, and mathematics with a minor in Chinese. He enjoys art, computers, foreign languages, watching movies, pursuing unusual hobbies, and spending time with his girlfriend.

**Joshua Sun** comes to Penn from San Marino, California, and is a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy. A business and math major, he is currently pursuing a dual degree from the Wharton School and the College of Arts and Sciences. On campus, he is involved with the Student Federal Credit Union, PEER Mentoring, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity.

**Catherine Villeneuve-Tang** is a student in the College, graduating in 2007 and majoring in Biological Basis of Behavior. Although her future plans consist of applying to medical school, she has never neglected her passion for the liberal arts. The English minor she is completing concurrently provides her with a healthy dose of the English literature that she adores. Villeneuve-Tang calls Montreal, Quebec home and comes from a French and Chinese background.

**Ariel Tichnor** is currently a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences, majoring in American history with an English minor. Having grown up in Boston, she loves traveling, anything outdoors, and sports, both playing and watching. At Penn, she plays for the women's club lacrosse team and is an editor for the campus journal F-Word.

**Nicholas Watson** will be a junior in the School of Arts and Sciences, majoring in International Relations and Spanish. A native Coloradan, he has spent the last 3 summers traveling through South America, Spain and Mexico. He is a proud member of the Mask & Wig Band playing keyboard and piano. With an interest in Latin American cultural politics, his current (though always changing) post-graduate aspirations include ambassador and volunteer work in South America.

**Alexander Yen** is from Northridge, California, and is a graduate of North Hollywood High School. He is pursuing degrees from both the School of Engineering and Applied Science and the Wharton School. As a member of Penn Engineers Without Borders, Alex completed an implementation project to Honduras, where he and his team built pour-flush latrines in the rural village of Terreritos. He is also an active member at the Weiss Tech House.

**Irene Yiu** is a sophomore from Lynnwood, Washington, and a graduate of Edmonds-Woodway High School. As a linguistics major in the College of Arts and Sciences, Irene enjoys learning foreign languages, especially through literature and foreign films. At Penn, she is involved in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and Penn Latin and Ballroom Dance, and she dances flamenco.

**Heidi Zhang** spent her early childhood in Shanghai, China, the fast growing metropolis that lures her back almost every summer. She lives with her parents in South Pasadena, CA, but currently attends the Wharton School at Penn. She loves learning about the sciences and also hopes that her profound interest in Chinese culture will never fade despite the Old Navy visors and *Cosmogirl* magazines lying across her room.

**David Zhuo** is a rising sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences. He plans to pursue a major in Biology with a concentration in Molecular Biology. In his spare time, David participates in the Penn Cricket Club and works in a diabetes and endocrinology lab at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He also plans to volunteer at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, beginning in the fall.

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