

# 3808

a journal of critical writing

## *Executive Editor*

Valerie Ross, Director, Critical Writing Program

## *Editor*

Susanna Fry, Assistant Director, Critical Writing Program

## *Business Manager*

Mingo Reynolds

## *Assistant to Editor*

R.J. Bernocco

## *Editorial Assistants*

James La Marre

Joan Larbi

Ashley Takacs

## *Faculty Editorial Board*

Michael Burri, *Cinema Studies*

Sara Byala, *History*

Jo Ann Caplin, *Journalism & Publishing*

Thomas Devaney, Jr., *English*

Sarah Dowling, *English*

Shoshana Enelow, *Comparative Literature & Theory*

Jamie Fader, *Sociology*

David Faris, *Political Science*

Jennifer Jahner, *English*

Jane Kauer, *Anthropology*

Rodger LeGrand, *Business & Professional Writing*

Adam Mohr, *Anthropology*

Mera Moore Lafferty, *Global English*

Christen Mucher, *English*

Jacqueline Sadashige, *Cinema Studies*

Arnout Schurmans, *Anthropology*

## *Student Editorial Board*

Andrea Anastasi

Jessica Bell

Alli Blum

Eli Bobo

Sarah Brown

Philip Cawkwell

Monisha Chakravarthy

Clare Foran

Neel Lalchandani

Kristen Martin

Bennett Meier

Brittany Mullings

Katie Siegmann

Riley Tagtmeyer

*Cover design and photo by Bryan Lathrop.*

A publication of the  
Critical Writing Program  
The University of Pennsylvania  
3808 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6221

Additional copies of *3808* are available for \$7.50. Checks, money orders, or bank drafts should be made payable to The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

© 2009 Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania  
Printed in the United States of America

# CONTENTS

- 6 From the Editors

## ESSAYS

- 8 “Spooooo!”: Krapp and the Truncation  
of Self-Documentation  
Max McKenna
- 11 Getting Too Personal  
Darina Shtrakhman
- 14 Pavlova: My Story Behind an Aussie Treat  
Nicole Duddy
- 19 Spider-goats and the Road to Pigs that Fly  
Nick Hogan
- 22 Master of Revisions  
Freddy Wexler
- 24 In Praise of the Unhindered Voice  
Gregory Rose
- 27 Clarity over Correctness  
Chloe Ho
- 30 A Symbol Against Colonialism  
Aaron Ross
- 32 Genucation: On the Benefits of Genetic Engineering  
Danish Saleh
- 35 Huxley and the Decline of Intellectual Literature  
Cassandra Turcotte
- 38 Staged Photographs: Poor Representations of Reality

Meg Krasne

- 41      Saving the Economy: One Television Appearance  
         at a Time

Gloria Herbert

- 44      Why Penn(e)

Raquel Finkelstein

- 46      Machi

Jayme Chen

- 50      Long-Lasting Happiness

Jin Guan

- 52      Discovering a New Life

Evgeny Volkov

- 54      Fat: The Scapegoat of Change

Chen Yue Lin

- 57      The Power of the Public

Penny Metchev

- 60      “Marat/Sade and Brechtian Theater.”

Joel Tee

- 64      Women’s Work

Sam Bieler

- 67      Chicken or Chicken of the Sea

Adina Weinblatt

- 69      “The Cuckoo and the Canary”:  
         A Personal Narrative of Deviance

Wiktorina Parysek

- 71      The Persistence of Old Ideas

Callie Taylor

77	Concepts of Fat John Bang
80	The Disturbed Male Psyche in Kubrick's Films Sierra Park-Chavar
85	Rewriting the Script: Theatrical Politics in the New Post-September 11th World Yu Chen
88	The Sound of Silence Elisheva Goldberg
91	Marat/Sade's Play-Within-a-Play and Brecht's Epic Theater Melissa Goodman
94	The Damage of the Documentary Devon Anderson
96	Contributors

## From the editors

This fourth volume of 3808: A Journal of Critical Writing offers another collection of outstanding writing by Penn students 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.

Max McKenna

## “Spooooo!”: Krapp and the Truncation of Self-Documentation

Today it seems our lives exist to be documented. With recent advances in technology creating a proliferation of recording devices, many of us, between our iPods, cell phones, cameras, and laptops, might be carrying at least two or three video and sound recorders during the day. The last decade's expansion of the internet has in turn given us an outlet for this constant, spontaneous documentation: we are always uploading photos to Facebook, recording vlogs on Youtube, or publicly outlining our lives by “Twittering” everything we do. But documentation and self-documentation in particular can be problematic: no matter how many photographs, videos, or recordings we put on our internet profiles, and no matter how spontaneously we may blog, we can never fully recreate ourselves. In other words, in our self-documentation, we can never give others the same experience they might have meeting us in person. Samuel Beckett's play, *Krapp's Last Tape*, considers the problems of self-documentation. In it, we see an elderly, degenerative Krapp reviewing the audio-recordings he makes each year on his birthday, and then finally creating a new one. While at times Krapp appears to be recovering memories of his past, we ultimately see his self-documentation as detrimental to his remembering and ultimately to



his self. Indeed, self-documentation does not revivify but rather destroys Krapp.

This reading seems somewhat extreme given the play's complexity. Though he appears clownish—a silly, Chaplinesque old man subject to his impulses and to his disintegrating mind—Krapp regains some of his youth in revisiting his tapes. The early pantomime with the bananas suggests a recovery of sexual prowess and potency. Locked in his tape cabinet is an infinite stock of large bananas. He eats one, then places another “in his waistcoat pocket, the end emerging,” before rushing backstage for thirty seconds (11-12). The stage direction does not specify what happens to the banana afterward, and it is not unreasonable to imagine Krapp, throughout his whole listening session, equipped with a large, colorful phallus. His phallus, his masculinity, is recovered when he unlocks the cabinet to access the tapes, when he uses his self-documentation as a means for recollection. The tape-listening restores not only his sexual prowess, but his verbal prowess as well. Only when recording the new tape, when conversing with the old tapes, is Krapp's speech ability evident. Before, his moments of speech are fractured, illogical, or childish, dwelling on sounds like “Spooool!” (12,13). When recording, he speaks in complete sentences and displays enough reason and awareness to reflect and comment on his infatuation with “Spooool!”.

While it is true Krapp undergoes a process of invigoration when listening to the tapes, a symbolic “remasculation” and recovery of verbal skills, the greater reality is that self-documentation has fractured and fragmented Krapp. In repeatedly segmenting his life by documenting it, he has truncated himself. Since paper, tape, film, and memory cards are finite, a period of documentation is episodic and cannot capture all that happens outside of its process, when reels are changed, or pens are dipped in ink. By remembering himself only in closed-off spools, completed in single expelled recollections once a year, Krapp fails to have a continuous narrative of himself. Indeed, he does not associate his past voices with his own, referring to them with third-person instead of first-person pronouns. “Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago [...],” he says at the start of his new tape. “Ah well, maybe he was right” (24). Additionally, he fails to remember words he used instinctively as a young man: “viduity,” present in the recording from his thirty-ninth birthday, escapes him completely and he looks

up its definition in an “enormous dictionary” (18). Autonomous spools instead of ever-expanding thread make up his life: each birthday, Krapp winds the year up on its bobbin, stores it away, and then starts anew. In this way, Krapp is destroyed because it is impossible for him to have a history or a historical “I”. Krapp’s self exists only in the present—he cannot see himself in the past, nor can he project himself into the future, and so the normally boundless self becomes considerably constrained.

Beckett’s view of self-documentation, then, is pessimistic. When we become preoccupied with trying to document ourselves, we inevitably close-off and segment the greater narratives of our existence. When we produce, on our Facebook and MySpace profiles, pictures of ourselves in hopes of portraying who we are, we are flattening into one representation the infinite ways we might appear and seem to others. We truncate our infinite selves, break them into finite fragments that can be observed, presented, documented. No matter how spontaneously or how often we hope to record our lives, we can only ever hope to record it episodically or retroactively, and thus fail to capture its fullness. Documentation as a source of memory is illusory. Though, in reviewing documents of our lives, we may get the sense of communing with and thus recovering our past selves, it is only a simulacrum, just as Krapp cannot recover his former potency but only its ridiculous if pathetic banana stand-in.

### Work Cited

Samuel, Beckett. *Krapp’s Last Tape and Other Dramatic Pieces*. New York: Grove P, 1994.

*Instructor: Sarah Dowling, Writing Seminar: Losing and Finding Our Voices*

# Darina Shtrakhman

## Getting Too Personal

Americans are obsessed with celebrities. Whether it's how they look, where they shop, or with whom they associate, consumers want to be in the know about the rich and famous. During the course of his campaign, Barack Obama became a celebrity in his own right, and that has translated to his presidency. He is such a symbol and a cultural icon that he now blurs the line between celebrity and public servant, something no other president has ever achieved. Obama is known for being very open with the public, often speaking quite candidly with reporters. Recently, however, he has placed too much emphasis on being in the press. Furthermore, he has crossed a line, shifting his focus from the professional to the personal in his interviews. In this time of economic turmoil, the President must understand what the public needs to hear about: policies. Obama should not speak to the press about personal matters.

Proponents of all kinds of public appearances argue that by cooperating with the media, Obama makes himself seem more relatable and honest. He has consciously put himself in the spotlight in the first few months of his presidency. By appearing on shows such as *Jay Leno*, Obama aimed to foster connections with Americans by speaking about his own life and family. People love getting to know their leader, and Obama's advisors hope this translates into popular support for his policies. Although these appearances mean he is not focusing on legislation all the time, some experts say this is not a problem. *Time*

*Magazine* writer James Poniewozik (2009) contends, “No serious person believes the wheels of government are actually grinding to a halt while the President agonizes over whether North Carolina can take Duke.” Arguably, Obama knows how to separate the personal from the professional, so when it is necessary, he concentrates on the political issues. He welcomed discussion about the federal stimulus package in primetime press conferences, for example, and granted interviews to major newspapers that focused solely on his political agenda. He has gained popularity by coming across in the press as a relatable individual but one who is also honest about his policies.

In fact, those who support endless public appearances do present a valid argument for the importance of likeability. A president’s media popularity can sometimes translate into support for his agenda. Yet high visibility in the press is not always the best strategy. Being in the spotlight is only good for a president when it relates to his job. As Stuart Ewen (1996) notes, Franklin Delano Roosevelt understood the value of being open with the media: “Never before [his presidency] had correspondents had such unrestricted access to a president” (p. 248). Roosevelt “forged a lasting and intimate bond” (p. 253) through his fireside chats, yet he was ultimately using them “to carry the government’s message” (p. 252) during difficult economic times. He welcomed debate about the New Deal, but Roosevelt never discussed his personal life. As long as Obama is in a press conference and answering pertinent political questions, the attention serves him well. He has not, however, stopped at that. In the past two weeks alone, he picked his NCAA bracket on ESPN, made an inappropriate joke on *Jay Leno*, and actually stuttered during a few questions in a *60 Minutes* interview. Poniewozik himself concedes that Obama “may actually do better in tough Q&As, like his press conferences, than in soft ones like Leno’s. He gaffes more when he feels he’s on friendly turf.” Instead of concentrating on the economy, the war in Iraq, or any of the other issues facing his administration, the President was cracking jokes. Suddenly, the worldly, intelligent leader came across as being unsympathetic and out of touch with the needs of his people. Perhaps being personable and beloved are priorities in some circumstances, but during a time of economic turmoil and war, appearing strong and confident is the key. According to an article in the *Los Angeles Times* (2009), “Many find the act of hanging

out on Leno's couch or showing up on ESPN less than presidential." This does not bode well for Obama's image.

There is no doubt that being in the public eye is part of being president. Relatability, popularity, and honesty are certainly vital for success in the Oval Office. Roosevelt knew this years ago, and Obama understands this today. Yet prolonged focus on personal matters in the press can be detrimental to a public figure. Obama must learn to understand his audience — a country filled with nervous followers looking for decisive leadership in difficult times. He needs to balance being a celebrity with being the leader of the free world, fusing Kennedy's charm with Roosevelt's determination to serve the people. By concentrating on politics and legislation rather than making excessive public appearances, he would send a message about making real changes. Above all, he would stop campaigning and finally start being president.

### Work Cited

- Ewen, S. (1996). *PR! A social history of spin*. New York: Basic Books.
- McNamara, M. (2009, March 25). Obama's TV push jolts presidential tradition. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved April 15, 2009, from <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-obama-tv25-2009mar25,0,3482682.story>
- Poniewozik, J. (2009, March 26). Obamathon: Is the President overexposed? *Time Magazine*. Retrieved April 20, 2009, from <http://www.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1887831-2,00.html>

*Instructor: Rodger LeGrand, Writing Seminar: Perspectives on Public Relations Writing*

## Nicole Duddy

### Pavlova: My Story Behind an Aussie Treat

It's wonderful how the smell of fresh meringue and cinnamon sugar can make any mouth water. It's beautiful how the greens of the kiwis, yellows of the bananas, and reds of the strawberries form vibrant patterns on top of the soft, white roll of pillowy eggs whites and cream. And it's so satisfying knowing that I produced the most popular dessert for my mother's book group. Normally, I bake pavlovas for holiday dinners, birthdays, or family barbeques, but this dessert has a certain "wow" factor that my mother and I just can't help showing off whenever we get the chance. Its ingredients and baking process are fairly simple, yet I consider it my secret culinary weapon that makes a lasting impression amongst all who try it. Because pavlova is an Australian dessert, no one else will probably bring one or even be familiar with it in the first place. Australian cuisine doesn't have a huge presence in American culinary culture—or even the world's—but no one fails to appreciate the taste of my grandmother's signature take on a traditional Australian dessert. Pavlova lets me show my culinary side, is always sure to please a crowd, and is very fun to make. But above all, pavlova is the most prevalent cultural connection to my obscure yet wonderful Australian heritage.

A customary dish from "down under" doesn't fit the popular perception of "ethnic food." China, France, Italy, India, and many more countries are remarkably known for their cuisine, but what has Australia brought to the table? Literally. From the beginning, Australia has had a lot of influence from England, importing salted meats, flour, sugar and

tea so early settlers could have the taste of home (Symons, 1982, p. 24). Nowadays, food in Australia is a *mélange* of world cuisines, especially from Southern Asia, and the typical supermarket produce like here in the States. Personally, my special finds are the jams, candies, and Arnott's cookies. Everyone affectionately knows "bush tucker", or barbeques, and—hate it or love it—Vegemite. And in Perth, 1934, straight from the kitchen of the Hotel Esplanade, chef Herbert Sachse produced a cake that was "as light as [Anna] Pavlova." The cake is dainty, light, and beautiful like that of the Russian ballerina's tutu, and the kiwis resemble the buds attached to the costume she wore during her Australian/New Zealand tour in 1926 (Robards, 2008). Michael Symons (1982) comments how "the pavlova went on to catch the popular imagination. Explicitly acclaimed as a national dish by the 1960s, it distilled the Australian concept of sweet living" (p. 175). So, Australia has at least one national dish.

I've had the pleasure of devouring this national dish because of my Australian grandmother. While growing up in Adelaide, South Australia, my grandmother's family friend taught her to make traditional meringues and desserts, noting that her mother was more of a "main course kinda gal" (Wadsworth, 2009). Sachse's pavlova has a crispy, crunchy crust but within is the wonderful marshmallow center. To bake the perfect cake, a traditional pavlova must be put in the oven at low heat for an hour, and remain inside while the oven cools down. My grandmother has always been very exploratory when it comes to cooking, so about twenty years ago she welcomed her sister's suggestion of a simpler way of making a pavlova, the pavlova roulade. She's since adopted this version, which does away with ingredients like vinegar, *crème tartar*, and cornstarch, and takes less time to bake. "Passion fruit is very popular in pavlovas because it grows all over Australia, but I just love the colors of bananas, kiwis and strawberries!" Nana told me (Wadsworth, 2009). I would have to agree, because before I made the pavlovas myself, my mother gave me the job of fruit-cutter and designer (I always tried to place the reds, greens, and yellows in the most intricate designs on top). My mother was quick to acquire the recipe from Nana because she too wanted to have a simple and interesting dessert that she could make for my father's side of the family, a mixture of Irish and Italians. I recall having an international food fair at my elementary school, and so as to be different from all the

zeppoles and Irish soda breads, I brought a pavlova. It was gone within minutes.

I revel in the fact that pavlova is not only distinctive because of where it comes from, but in how it's made. First, I have to separate four egg whites, which can sometimes be more challenging than it sounds. I have to make sure no yolk gets into the mixer so as to produce the fluffiest pavlova possible. It's fascinating to then see how whipping room temperature egg whites at high speeds can turn a gooey, sticky mess into stiff, yet fluffy, foam. After slowly stirring in  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of sugar, I have the basis of the meringue. Meanwhile, the oven heats up to 350 degrees Fahrenheit and I move on to buttering and flouring two sheets of wax paper about a foot and a half long. As I spread the mixture into a rectangle onto one sheet of wax paper, I think of how I used to be mystified by the whole process; it's odd how things seem more impressive and complicated when their secrets aren't revealed. A little sprinkle of cinnamon sugar and the cake and wax paper go onto a baking sheet and into the oven for ten minutes.

After I clean the mixer, I begin whipping a pint of heavy whipping cream and slicing my fruits. This way, when the cake comes out to cool, everything will be ready to come together in no time. After it's out of the oven and cooled down, I flip the cake onto the second sheet of wax paper. As much as we pride the pavlova roulade for being quick, this part should not be rushed. At one end of the cake, I use a knife to begin gently separating the first sheet wax paper from the egg whites. Sometimes it comes up easily, other times the layer will tear. Tearing isn't disastrous—nothing a little whipped cream can't cover—but it makes rolling the cake a little more difficult. After a layer of whipped cream and various fruits, I begin rolling up the cake at one end and pulling the second sheet of wax paper out from underneath it simultaneously. As I get towards the end, I roll the cake onto the serving plate and add some finishing touches. The rest of the whipped cream is used to entirely cover the white log shape, and I sprinkle cinnamon sugar on top of the mosaic design I've created with the remaining slices of fruit.

Pavlova has taught me about my background and how I can use food to share a part of who I am with others. Whenever I mention I'm Australian, I feel the need to explain what that entails. I'd begin, "Well, my grandparents grew up in Australia and moved here permanently



about forty-five years ago. They still have the accents of course. Most of my mom's side of the family still lives there," and ramble on. However, I'd use other people's experiences and identities when in fact I was supposed to be defending my own. Instead, with baking I use food to express my own identity. Pavlova is something concrete that I can touch, smell, and taste. It's something I can create and use as evidence to my knowledge of a foreign culture and to put into existence so it can be experienced and remembered for lifetimes. If not my daughters, or me, then perhaps my sister and her daughters can pass along what my mother and grandmother have affectionately passed on to me. Pavlova is my opportunity to preserve my grandmother's memories and culture in our present day lives. One simply can't serve a pavlova, the baking process is a personal connection with other Australian women and the cake itself provides the opportunity to tell people who I am. The dish is important to help identify me as an Australian-American versus only talking about relatives; I know how to make pavlova, therefore I have the right to classify myself as such.

Beyond my experiences, food in general is used as a tool of identification. A person can identify with cultures around the world simply by cooking and consuming ethnic food. Americans today in the second and third generation are not entirely one ethnicity; I myself am also part Irish, Italian, and French. These Americans don't have a lot of concrete connections to their families' countries of origin. Bell and Valentine (1997, p. 2) state, "We all read food consumption as a practice which impacts on our sense of place." Recipes and native cuisine provide the concrete ties the second and third generations need to obtain this sense of place. Pavlova helps make me feel Australian, and I'm a sure an American daughter feels the same way about shrimp vindaloo or son about Swedish meatballs. Ethnic dishes are the physical evidence which help us prove that we have a special certain connection to a country we didn't grow up in but which is a great part of our being.

### Works Cited

- Bell, David, and Gill Valentine. *Consuming geographies we are where we eat*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Robards, Sharon. "Pavlova- Australian or New Zealand?". *Australian Flavour*. 16 Feb. 2008. <[http://australianflavour.net/index2.php?option=com\\_content&do\\_pdf=1&id=28](http://australianflavour.net/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=28)>

Symons, Michael. *One Continuous Picnic: A gastronomic history of Australia*. Calton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1982.

Wadsworth, Deidre. Telephone interview. 29 Mar. 2009.

## Recipe

4 egg whites, room temp.	1 pint of heavy whipping cream	bananas
¾ cup of granulated sugar	1 tbsp of granulated sugar	strawberries
cinnamon sugar	1 teaspoon vanilla extract	kiwis

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

Beat the eggs whites until fluffy and foamy (should form peaks), slowly stir in ¾ cup of granulated sugar

Butter two wax sheets of paper and lightly flour. Spread egg whites onto one sheet into a rectangle, about ¾ inch thick and sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Bake the layer for 10 minutes or until slightly golden.

Meanwhile, cut up various fruits (i.e. bananas, strawberries, kiwis, blueberries, raspberries), enough to layer inside the cake and decorate on top.

Also, whip up 1 pint of heavy cream and incorporate one tablespoon of sugar slowly while mixing. (I personally add some vanilla extract during this time as well).

When the cake is done and cooled for about five minutes, place the other greased waxed sheet on top of the cake. Flip the cake and the sheets over and then gently start peeling the wax paper off of the cake. Do this by carefully separating the eggs whites from the wax paper with a knife. Take your time; depending on the greasiness of the paper and the thickness of the layer, some cakes peel better than others.

Now cover the cake with about half the whipped cream and lay down one layer of various fruit. Sprinkle heavily with cinnamon sugar. Gently pick up one end of the wax paper and start to roll up the egg whites and fruit like a scroll. Roll the entire “log” onto the serving plate and discard the wax paper.

Use the rest of the whipped cream to completely cover the Pavlova and use fruit and cinnamon sugar to decorate the cake any way you please.

*Instructor: Jane Kauer, Writing Seminar: Eating Culture*

# Nick Hogan

## Spider-goats and the Road to Pigs that Fly

The stuff of fantasy a few decades ago, the age of mainstream genetic engineering has arrived. With advances in genetic manipulation and cloning technology, it has become possible for mankind to bend nature's own replication recipe, DNA, to its own devices. With this technology, better crops can be engineered, more advanced medical procedures made possible and whole new industries born. Just the other day, Stephen Colbert did a segment on a designer baby clinic opening in Los Angeles... and therein lies the problem. What's next? Could build-your-own pet species clinics be in our future (or better yet, combined baby and pet centers so I could have a centaur)? Yet what appear as miracles of technology to some may be viewed by others as gateways to grotesque violations of mankind's role in this world. Some traditional viewpoints may categorize genetic engineering as completely taboo, its benefits simply forbidden fruit. Both sides of this issue present valid points, and it is clear that for society to best reap the benefits of genetic engineering, a compromise is necessary. Only thoughtful regulation based on a uniform ethical standard will allow society to best benefit from genetic engineering.

Regulation based on the formation of a common ethic would first allow society to benefit due to the nature of creating such an ethic. This process of forming a clear compromise on the regulatory bounds of genetic engineering would quiet fears of potential misuse of the technology, making it more acceptable. Through consensus and

cost-benefit analysis, society could define the limits of acceptability concerning genetic modification. In providing a common ethical standard, this would prevent the emergence of genetic projects—flying pigs perhaps—that would be either revolting or useless to the average person. Moderate and unambiguous regulation could reassure those with initial misgivings regarding the use of genetic technology, allowing genetic advancement to run more smoothly. Assuaging moral qualms through such regulation could provide ancillary benefits as well. For example, regulation through compromise would benefit society by eliminating frivolous or scientifically purposeless genetic engineering. This would free up resources which could be put to use for more useful ends. Jeffrey D. Turner, CEO of Nexia Biotechnologies, a former biotech company involved in genetics, summed this point up simply saying of certain genetic engineering ventures “What the hell’s the use of millions of cloned sheep? Dolly was a scientific stunt.” Regulation has the potential to encourage purposeful genetic engineering. And of course, the regulating process would also benefit society by halting true abuse of technology. After all, the pigs may not appreciate being made to fly.

While thoughtful regulation would quell controversy and curtail any abuse of genetic engineering by mankind, its greatest merit lies in that it would still grant access to the great prize at stake—societal enhancement through technological growth. Regulating genetic engineering is advantageous because it would still allow humanity to benefit by bounding forward without becoming mired in a state of moral hand-wringing. And indeed, the benefits of this are many. An effective compromise could leave room for truly revolutionary agricultural, medical and industrial advancements that might be lost were an extreme position taken on genetic engineering. Nexia Biotechnologies’ use of genetically modified goats perfectly exemplifies this. Simply put, the company attempted to mass produce spiders’ silk from goats’ milk by using goats modified with a single spider’s gene as the means of production. Due to its great strength and elasticity, the silk could then be used to create a host of items from body armor to fishing line, and would outperform all available synthetic materials at these tasks. However, the mere mention of such “spider-goats” is enough to make some cringe. This is where a regulatory compromise would play a key role. This particular case offers a great practical benefit, and additionally, the

goats in question are perfectly normal goats aside from their ability to produce silk. A well-constructed regulatory system would allow for such beneficial ventures, and thus encourage the effective harnessing genetic engineering technology.

Creating a regulatory code accepted by the majority of society that balances ethical considerations with societal profit is no small task. Indeed creating any unified ethical standard is a challenge as old as organized society itself. Yet the purpose here is not to address that challenge, but rather to point out that it is an issue mankind must face should it wish to effectively benefit from the recent developments in genetic engineering. And that issue is clear. Constructing a regulatory process for genetic engineering is the hurdle humanity must clear to best benefit from this technology. Without undergoing such a trial, we will not reach our full potential in this modern age.

*Instructor: Jo Ann Caplin, Writing Seminar: The Gene Factor*

## Freddy Wexler

### Master of Revisions

*“We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal and independant [sic], that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable, among which are the preservation of life & liberty & the pursuit of happiness.” (Draft One, Declaration of Independence)*

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”  
(Draft 86, Declaration of Independence)*

When we compare the original first sentence of the “Declaration of Independence” to the penultimate version, several differences emerge, including significant changes in diction and style. After eighty-six painstaking revisions, Jefferson likely understood the power of seemingly “minor” changes. Contrasting these two sentences reveals how Jefferson’s revisions led to a far more persuasive document.

The modified diction of these opening lines is striking. The first change is the replacement of “sacred and undeniable” with “self-evident.” This replacement mitigates the problem of an important government document being too heavily seeped in religious innuendo, foreshadowing, perhaps, inclusions of clauses such as “Separation of Church and State” in the American Constitution. Specific elimination of words produces more than concision, however; the removal of

“preservation of” in the phrase “preservation of life,” for example, intimates that while birth is a right, “life” (or living) is a privilege. We might consider the slave-run plantation of this global advocate of liberty as we consider his editorial agenda. A change as subtle as this is authorial protection yet not at the expense of rhetorical perfection—that is to say, with this quick fix Jefferson likely deemed himself safe from accusations of hypocrisy. Finally, his keen focus on diction ensures greater clarity. For instance, the elimination of the word “derive,” which denotes something that is not innate, directly adjacent to the word “inherent,” is a wise editorial choice; for the avoidance of doubt, the original sentence is not incorrect but might have led to some confusion that is precluded by the revision.

Another instantly recognizable distinction between both versions is the use of style. And with regard to trenchant persuasion, these revisions are seminal. The revised version of the Declaration’s opening sentence contains a captivating sort of musicality; the use of rhythmic punctuation coupled with selective capitalization is a heightened display of rhetorical prowess. In pure musical terms, the first draft employs staccato rhythms (semicolons, brackets, and redundant uses of “and”) while the final draft lives in a chamber of legato rhythms (commas, uses of “that” instead of “and” to enhance the list-like flow). In addition, capitalization is governed by traditional rules of grammar in the first draft but by poetry and persuasion in the final one. Specifically, in the first draft only the first letter of the sentence is capitalized, while in the second draft, letters of words that Jefferson deems powerful (essentially those related to religion and freedom) receive special treatment (e.g., “Creator,” “Rights,” “Liberty,” “Life,” and “Happiness”). The stylistic changes effectively mold this sentence into a far more convincing piece of writing, which is captivating, musical, and easier to engage.

Michelle Lee, former pop culture icon, once said that while “[t]he first draft reveals the art, revision reveals the artist.” Lee’s words resonate in the context of Jefferson’s editorial monomania. His first draft was the mere material from which Jefferson sculpted his finest work. The juxtaposition of the two versions manifests the vast importance of revising, reshaping, and rewriting a rhetorical masterpiece.

*Instructor: Valerie Ross, Writing Seminar: Popular Culture and Human Rights*

## Gregory Rose

### In Praise of the Unhindered Voice

It is difficult to conceive of a topic for which there does not exist a blog. These electronic platforms have enabled readers to identify others who share their interests and wish to participate in dialogue. The blogosphere's function as a nucleus of debate and idea exchange is particularly evident in the coverage of news. Blogs help to bridge the gap between authors and their audiences, allowing the two parties to interact more frequently and openly than ever before. As tools that enable reader commentary, blogs challenge writers to produce accurate, comprehensive accounts of what are often multifaceted current events. Whereas professional journalists can be punished for failing to report the facts about a story, bloggers are not bound to this same fate. *In Here Comes Everybody*, Clay Shirky asserts, "mass amateurization has created a filtering problem vastly larger than we had with traditional media." In truth, blogs are not subjected to the same scrutiny as professionally published articles, but therein lies their most crucial feature. The lack of strict oversight in blog-based news coverage is ultimately more rewarding to the reader.

Many people consider blogs an unreliable source of reporting. Critics maintain that these forums lack a structured mechanism to eliminate fallacious reporting. Unlike their professional counterparts, bloggers are not blocked from publishing distorted rumor as fact. For instance, a September 2008 article in *The Huffington Post* reported that, in a "Spanish radio" interview, Senator John McCain openly stated



he would not agree to meet with Spanish President Jose Zapatero. A *New York Times* article on the same topic clarified that the interview really took place on a Spanish-language radio station in Miami, thereby resolving any ambiguity about the location of the interview and revealing a careless error in the *Huffington* report. The lack of formal language in blogs is also a basis on which critics condemn amateur publishing. A *Huffington Post* article about Governor Sarah Palin's "trooper scandal" referred to the governor as a "rising Republican star with a clean-hands reputation who has the most to lose." Critics would label the author's colloquial language as inappropriate and biased, failing to allow readers to draw their own conclusions about the involved parties. In the absence of designated editors that can ensure professional quality, they argue, blogs cannot provide readers with the well-researched, well-articulated articles they deserve.

Many of these critiques undoubtedly hold true. Editors are pivotal in correcting the errors in grammar, tone and organization that may be distracting to readers. However, unregulated blog content gives the average citizen greater access to news reporting. In the absence of an overarching filter, blogs are really channels through which an audience is free to engage the author, challenge his assumptions, and perhaps introduce new information into the coverage of a given story. Regulation of online publishing could prevent readers from blowing the whistle on erroneous reporting or from arguing the opposing case in a one-sided story. When an article in the September issue of the *Huffington Post* reported that McCain refused to release his health records to the public, a reader quickly commented on the falsity of the information and included link to site that featured the recently released records. It is also true that inaccurate information published online can deceive readers who look to blogs for their news. However, when people must cross-reference reports to weed out the truth about a particular story, they become more active readers. Through a simple search on Google, a skeptic of the aforementioned *Huffington* article on Senator McCain's health would have come across the blog for the *Denver Post* that also included excerpts from his released record. Given that bloggers often reference well-established newspapers and newswires in their reporting, it is unfair to assert that these forums are completely divorced from mainstream media. Online reporting transforms the blog into a tool for

the dissection of professionally published articles, allowing the reader to consume stories in smaller doses.

There is no doubt that blogs have emerged as key competitors and, in some cases, alternatives to the mainstream media. Despite the inevitable risks of informal or even false reporting that arise amidst user-generated content, blogs are critical in ensuring that readers play an active role in shaping the information that they consume. Rather than demonizing blogs as innately flawed social platforms, critics should instead push for greater embrace of blogging on the part of the traditional media. Readers of any political or ideological persuasion will admit that some news outlets tend to spin stories in favor of a given interest group, be it a liberal political party or a conservative lobbying group. By incorporating blogs into their online presence, mainstream periodicals can establish a reputation for transparency and a willingness to allow readers to engage in intellectual dialogue with their writers. In fact, several mainstream periodicals such as the *New York Times* allow for and even encourage reader commentary. Blogs will continue to play a fundamental role in welcoming readers to the table of journalism, breaking the glass ceiling of one-way news coverage.

*Instructor: David Faris, Writing Seminar: Mobiles and Mobilization*

# Chloe Ho

## Clarity over Correctness

Public outrage erupted following Barack Obama's gaffe on the popular late-night program *The Tonight Show*. In a casual conversation with host Jay Leno, the President of the United States discussed his incompetence in bowling, comparing his skill (or lack thereof) to those of the players in the Special Olympics. Obama's careless comment was widely seen as offensive to people with developmental disabilities, deemed to be reinforcing attitudes of misunderstanding and prejudice that the President should be working to eradicate. In the furor that arose in response to his insensitive slip, Obama's original intention – of light-heartedly relating his ineptitude at bowling (and thus endearing himself to the masses) – was lost. This controversy clearly demonstrates the ambiguous significance of political correctness in effectively reaching an audience. The modern era has brought with it faster developments in technology and more widespread sharing of information; as a result, there has been an increasing awareness of political sensibilities (such as those regarding race and gender) on the part of the public. This awareness has become so prevalent in society that some argue that preserving political correctness is imperative if one wishes to connect with their audience. As will be seen, however, it is not necessary for one to be politically correct in order to communicate clearly to an audience.

Some contend that political correctness is crucial in reaching an audience. When writers and speakers employ inflammatory and potentially offensive language in their communication, these opponents

argue, alarm bells are set off in the minds of their readers and listeners. From the outset, the audience is on guard and become particularly sensitive to weak or further provocative points in the communicator's ideas. This attitude of cautious resistance in receiving the message precludes balanced and sincere consideration of the thoughts expressed. Thus, by employing politically appropriate terms and concepts, communicators can evade arousing society's wrath. Without the initial attitude of reservation described previously, the audience will be able to approach and consider proposed theories unemotionally and open-mindedly, and this enhances the communication and comprehension of one's ideas. Additionally, as politically correct terms have become so based on society's widespread approval and acceptance of them, they have come to adopt meanings universally understood by everyone. There is therefore a common understanding of certain terms and phrases; and using such terms, some argue, would guarantee more convergent interpretations of ideas between communicator and audience, ensuring lucidity in communication.

However, this view fails to realize that by adhering to demands of political correctness, we constrain the forms of our expression to a narrow spectrum of words and ideas, and this compromises the clarity of our communication. When we surrender the freedom to choose our vocabulary, we lose the chance to demonstrate the nuances in thinking and reasoning that led to our preference for a particular term. Our words are heavy with connotation, and our choice of them reveals the assumptions and values behind our statements. For example, when we say that a child is "naughty", we are suggesting that he or she engages in disruptive misbehavior. By relabeling the child as "energetic" to avoid offending the sensibilities of their parent, we lose the negative implications that explain why the child's actions have become a worrying issue. Thus, in rewording our messages under the pressure of political correctness, we lose opportunities to present the clues behind our thinking. Rephrasing for the sake of political appropriateness and acceptance obscures the original meaning of our statements, challenging the clarity and integrity of our communication.

With the contemporary emphasis on the maintenance of politically correct behavior, we have become hyper aware of the possible perceived slights in our speech and writing. As a result, we have retreated into the

comforting habit of coating our thoughts in polite, safe but meaningless language. By the very act of rewording our intentions to accommodate the political sensitivities of society, we obscure and compromise the lucidity of the messages that we convey. In doing so, we lose clarity, honesty and the power to accurately express our ideas and beliefs. In fact, by tempering our thoughts to appease mainstream society, we unfairly deprive our audience of the opportunity to hear our honest opinion. Our audiences expect to be presented with our original thoughts in exchange with their consideration, and burying our ideas in trite theories they have already heard cheats both their time and energy. Paying undue attention to the constraints of political correctness endangers the perspicuity and integrity of our expression, and this is counter-productive to the purpose of communication itself. If we cannot communicate our message clearly and understandably to our audience, we are in fact not communicating at all.

*Instructor: Rodger LeGrand, Writing Seminar: Perspectives on Public Relations Writing*

Aaron Ross

## A Symbol Against Colonialism

British colonization wrought a terrible toll on South Africa. Its people—descendants of a proud history and culture—were systematically oppressed by the British Empire. Black South Africans were subjected to archaic racial theories that rendered them second-class citizens in their own homeland. Nevertheless, South Africans found many ways to resist imperialist injustices. They constantly undermined the foundations of British supremacy and asserted their own role in society. Ironically, one of the most effective methods involved embracing the British sport of soccer. By adapting the game to reflect their own sporting heritage and political desires, they transformed this British invention into a weapon of their own. In colonial South Africa, soccer became a powerful symbol against British imperialism.

Some skeptics, however, argue that soccer represented just the opposite. After all, it was introduced to South Africa by the soldiers, sailors, traders, and missionaries who comprised Britain's imperial enterprise (Alegi, 15). These white colonists organized South Africa's first soccer games and founded its first clubs. Soon, soccer had all but supplanted traditional South African sports like stick-fighting and competitive dancing. Soccer, in this sense, represented the triumph of the British over the South African sporting culture. In addition, some point to the Brits' systematic exploitation of the game in order to tighten control over the black population. The colonial government, while fearing the unruly nature of informal street soccer, recognized

that African participation in an organized, structured form of the sport could lead to, as one official put it, “a diminution of vice, the elimination of discontent, and a healthier native community both from a physical standpoint and a better mental outlook” (Alegi, 30). The government assumed a major regulatory role, establishing offices to manage African sporting facilities and administer municipal sports programs. As a result, some would argue, the autonomy of African soccer—and African leisure, in general—was severely undermined (Alegi, 31). In other words, soccer constituted an integral instrument in subordinating black South Africans to Britain’s imperial ambitions.

In reality, though, soccer in South Africa was consistently antithetical to British culture and imperial interests. It symbolized a rejection of British supremacy in favor of African autonomy. South Africans quickly developed a distinct style of play that broke sharply with that of their colonizers. Rejecting the direct, kick-and-run tactics of the British, they embraced creativity and flair. This style reflected the indigenous traditions of sports like stick-fighting and dancing, with their emphasis on individual prowess and improvisation (Alegi, 9). But the Africanization of soccer represented more than just a difference in two sporting heritages; it also signified a larger rejection of British political oppression. According to Peter Alegi, author of *Laduma!: Soccer, Politics, and Society in South Africa*, the style of the African game “symbolised the cultural importance of knowing how to get around difficulties and dangerous opponents in an oppressive society with creativity, deception, and skill” (Alegi, 61). Soccer fostered more concrete rejections of colonialism as well. Although British officials did attempt to exert greater control over the game, South African organizations ultimately succeeded in protecting their autonomy. In fact, British attempts to intrude into the realm of African leisure stimulated a surge in “African political consciousness” that led to the dropping of the derogatory word “Native” from the title of the Durban soccer association (Alegi, 31). All the while, the success of these organizations in regulating domestic soccer discredited paternalistic arguments about Africa’s need for European civilization. Through soccer, South Africa’s blacks showed that they could self-govern without white administration.

*Instructor: Sara Byala, Writing Seminar: How Soccer Explains Africa*

## Danish Saleh

### Genucation: On the Benefits of Genetic Engineering

No practical or conscionable human being would argue against the use of genetic engineering. Yet numerous populations worldwide stand in opposition to the science; Europeans have banned genetically modified foods from their consumer markets. Unfortunately, people lack an understanding of the processes and benefits of genetic engineering. Their lack of education has promoted a society in which the signifier, “genetic engineering,” has become taboo – not the actual process. Genetic engineering involves the purpose-driven manipulation of living organisms’ genes. The process includes five steps: isolating a gene of interest from one organism, pairing the gene with a transportation element, transferring the gene-bound-element into a second organism, and incorporating the gene into a new organism’s genome. Contrary to laymen’s beliefs, genetic engineering occurs completely naturally; human beings only facilitate suitable conditions for each step. More importantly, the innovation of genetic engineering has improved human quality of life.

Techniques of genetic engineering have alleviated sickness through the development of new medical treatments. Human quality of life is enriched as medical treatments improve the health of the general population. As an example, consider diabetics: people who lack the ability to synthesize the protein insulin and are thus unable to control their blood-glucose levels – a fatal condition. Since the early 1980s, human insulin has been produced in genetically engineered bacteria in



large enough quantities to supplement the insulin-deprived population. Before the innovation of genetic engineering, insulin was harvested from farm animals to treat human beings. This resulted in a limited supply of the hormone and caused other complications arising from incompatibility of farm-animal-insulin with the human body. In diminishing medical complications and accommodating higher demands for drugs, genetic engineering has raised the general health of society and improved human quality of life. Moreover, medical research labs across the country experiment on genetically engineered animals to fashion therapies for human beings. For example, in attempting to cure Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), special *mdx* mice are used for experimentation. *Mdx* mice have been engineered without the gene for the dystrophin protein complex causing them to display symptoms similar to DMD patients. By identifying an effective therapy for these *mdx* mice, scientists have crafted preliminary treatments for DMD in human beings. Genetic engineering facilitates the remedy of human disease, thus improving human health.

In addition to its uses on the medical front, genetic engineering has protected and improved agricultural growth yields. Trends in human quality of life correlate directly with agricultural health. In the mid-1990s, a research team based at Cornell University spearheaded a triumphant effort to protect Hawaii's papaya crop against the papaya ring spot virus (PRSV). At the time, the papaya was the second largest crop produced and consumed in the region and was vital to the state's economy (American Phytopathological Society, 2000). To solve the problem, the scientists incorporated a gene into the plant that immunized the crop from future virus attack. As a result, the engineered papaya continues to feed people and sustain the economy in Hawaii. By protecting agricultural growth, genetic engineering can reverse a deteriorating quality of life for those who depend on agriculture for livelihood – money and food. Furthermore, engineered crops resistant to pesticides, bacteria, and viruses promise a greater supply of food as fewer plants are compromised by infection. Also, crops engineered to grow in harsh climates allow farms to use barren lands productively to produce more food. Genetic engineering makes such phenomenon feasible. For example, Dr. Ray Wu, also of Cornell University, recently engineered rice plants tolerant of drought conditions, salty soil, and cold

climates. Decreased infection in crops and more farmable land increases agricultural health. Ultimately, as crops flourish, society benefits; food is made more readily available at lower costs and human quality of life improves thanks to the benefits afforded by genetic engineering.

Through the mediums of medicine and agriculture, genetic engineering has already significantly improved human quality of life. Nevertheless, this progress will be dwarfed in the near future as techniques of genetic engineering are made more efficient and accessible. Science will one day engineer human beings upon conception to be resistant to diseases such as HIV and cancer. Already, geneticists are able to select for healthier embryos over those likened to illnesses. In the agrarian world, fruits and plants will be engineered to freight increased concentrations of vitamins, nutrients, and vaccines to common viruses. Such anticipated advancement will drastically reduce healthcare costs and bolster human quality of life. With regard to the uninformed people who fail to recognize such an ornate future, one must remember that there is no more powerful means of persuasion than education.

## Works Cited

- “Transgenic Virus Resistant Papaya: New Hope for Controlling Papaya Ringspot Virus in Hawaii.” *American Phytopathological Society*. 21 June 2000. 20 June 2009. <<http://www.apsnet.org/education/feature/papaya/>>.

*Instructor: Jo Ann Caplin, Writing Seminar: The Gene Factor*

# Cassandra Turcotte

## Huxley and the Decline of Intellectual Literature

As the history of the United States and its literature show, the stories that a nation produces reflect its concerns and interest. As Puritan writing exhibited a preoccupation with religion, the literature of the Twentieth Century reveals a society struggling to define itself and to secure its future. Archetypal of the latter era, acclaimed author Aldous Huxley obsessed over the decline of humanity into dystopia in his novel *Brave New World*, which follows the story of John the Savage, a young man from an Indian reservation beyond the border of civilization, as he becomes acquainted with the modern world. During his journey, John encounters a eugenically-bred society infatuated with sex and drugs, unexpected aspects of contemporary life that leave John disillusioned and lonely. With such common themes, clearly representative of the science-phobic times, it's little wonder that *Brave New World* consistently appears on "must-read" booklists across the world. Unfortunately, the quality of Huxley's work does not match up to its popularity. Aldous Huxley is, in actuality, an inept writer whose works are void of literary merit.

Fans of *Brave New World* repulse from this conclusion, lauding Huxley as a social revolutionary prescient of the pitfalls of a scientifically advanced society. To them, *Brave New World* presents thought-provoking ideas and warnings about the evolution of human behavior as a product of artificial selection, drug use, and hypersexualization. And, through time, these various themes are

actually manifesting in direct relation to modern society's technological advancements. It's really too bad for these devout followers, however, that Huxley never truly accomplished an effective portrayal of these themes in his novel. Huxley's attempt at dystopia fails for several reasons. Among the foremost of these is his lack of cohesion. While it is true that the novel covers the themes of artificial selection, drug use, and sex, the disconnected manner in which they were presented ruins the point. The main plot falls stagnant as Huxley switches narration, jumps settings, and throws in descriptions of children sodomizing each other. These are all elements of *Brave New World* that detract from the themes and ultimately obliterate its own literary value.

Huxley's worst flaw, however, was his penchant for outlandish descriptions. He is a literary Marilyn Manson, although even the infamous singer's offensive and often lewd actions have more of a purpose than the entirety of Huxley's *Brave New World*. The aforementioned scene of children engaged in sexual play, for example, is a completely unnecessary aspect of the story. Huxley included the scene purely for shock value; the theme of hypersexualization was more than covered in his various descriptions of orgies, porn theaters, and male body hair. It's no surprise that the novel's protagonist kills himself in the end; bombarded with the "Feelies", pneumatic body parts, and other tasteless devices that Huxley employed one finds it difficult to realize how he lasted so long. The elements of the novel are incredibly overdone to the point of ridiculous cliché. It is often said that *Brave New World* functions as a literary beacon for the pseudo-intellectual entirely because its devices are so blatant and simple that anyone could grasp them. This might have been advantageous for writers such as Thomas Paine, laymen's terms writer of the *Common Sense* pamphlet, but true noteworthy literature requires a certain amount of subtlety and taste. Such are the traits that Aldous Huxley seems completely incapable of producing.

Given Huxley's inability to craft an engaging, articulate story, one might wonder how he ever managed to gain such an entourage of devoted fans. In truth, Aldous Huxley was just another product of the nascence of the Information Age and the tremendous anxiety caused by a rapidly changing world. He wrote about topics derived from fear and desire, which are the basest and most human of feelings. It never really

mattered that Huxley couldn't string two sentences together cohesively; what was in that single sentence appealed to the lowest rung of Maslow's Hierarchy. For this reason, it's clear that Huxley's fans never truly cared about the literary value of *Brave New World* and they were never meant to. For them, the novel acted merely to legitimize their own concerns over both the technological and moral progressions of society, which have been perennial themes throughout the history of literature. Unfortunately, this also means that fans are likely to treat *Brave New World* as an icon of twentieth century literature well into the future.

*Instructor: Arnout Schurmans, Writing Seminar: Prehistoric Human Migrations*

## Meg Krasne

### Staged Photographs: Poor Representations of Reality

In the early twentieth century, scientists believed that the Native American population would disappear in the forthcoming decades. Photographers rushed to capture images of this community and its lifestyle so that pictures could be displayed in museums along with other Native American belongings; scientists and sociologists wanted society to remember Native American characteristics accurately after the population vanished. One photographer who captured images of Native Americans was Edwin S. Curtis. He photographed Native American communities in the early 1900s, attempting to immortalize the Native American reality. Although his photographs were meant to portray Native Americans realistically, Curtis's pictures do not accurately reflect the reality of Native American life in the early 1900s.

One might disagree with this statement and argue instead that the pictures are an exact representation of reality. Photographs are essentially a two-dimensional replication of the physical structures at which the camera is pointed. When people use cameras to take pictures in any setting, the photographs produced almost exactly represent the view of the naked eye at the moment the shutter was snapped. People take photographs to depict the physical situation at a certain time in an attempt to capture an exact recollection of that moment. In this way, Curtis's photographs, and all unedited photos, are accurate

reflections of reality because they mirror it. No matter the subject that the photographer happens to be photographing, the picture taken will accurately represent the subject at that instant.

This argument for Curtis's pictures as a fair representation of reality is factual and valid; when reality is considered the exact physical actuality of a situation, his photographs flawlessly depict the real world. However, a more meaningful definition of Native American reality is the actual way in which Native Americans lived. When one considers this interpretation, Curtis's pictures prove to be a poor representation of reality. Although Curtis took pictures that mimic the reality of the moment, the pictures represent a reality that did not actually exist. In the early 1900s, most Native Americans no longer embodied the characteristics that the European-American population considered inherently Native American. People viewed the Native American population as wearing headdresses, animal skins, and braids in their hair. However, by the beginning of the 20th century, many Native American people had become more assimilated to European-American culture by wearing less traditional Native American clothing and accepting new technology. Edwin Curtis did not simply find Native Americans of whom he would take pictures in their natural surroundings. Curtis actually changed Native Americans' environments to appear more authentic according to society's faulty view of Native Americans. Curtis brought his own props and arranged the set to fit the Native American stereotypes that had developed in the United States. For example, in Curtis's "Piegan Lodge" photograph, he removed a clock sitting between two Native Americans because Americans tended to think of Native Americans as lacking technology of any kind. Because Curtis purposefully manipulated his subjects, his pictures of Native Americans are not an accurate portrayal of the reality that these people experienced. Curtis' pictures suggest that Native Americans in the early 1900s lived in a way that they did not.

Curtis's pictures and those of other similar photographers have implications that affect people's views today. Although the Native American population continued to dwindle into the twentieth century, groups of Native Americans continue to exist in the United States today. The Native American population, however, is extremely small, and most Native American groups live on reservations and in other isolated

communities. The majority of Americans do not interact with these insular Native American communities. Therefore, pictures like those of Curtis are very influential in the way that Americans and the rest of the world view Native Americans. These factually inaccurate pictures have caused people who view Curtis' photographs to experience a false Native American reality, one in which Native Americans are depicted in the way they lived long before the early 1900s.

*Instructor: Christen Mucher, Writing Seminar: The Real World?*



# Gloria Herbert

## Saving the Economy: One Television Appearance at a Time

Obama's message of change in the 2008 Presidential Campaign has carried over to his presidency, most notably, in his policy on media presence. While the general public worries at home about making ends meet, Obama's façade remains that of the campaigning politician, handling his image with an abundance of casual media stunts. In just a two-week time frame the President has made three television-show appearances in addition to the regular abundance of press the President receives in print media and news. Obama has even made his mark by being the first President to sit in on a late-night talk show. In comparison to previous presidents' policies on media presence, President Obama's policy consists of heightened exposure to the American public; but as times change, so must policy. In order to stabilize the economy, President Obama needs this strong media presence.

Some argue that in spending so much time working on a strong media presence, President Obama is not accomplishing enough in office and that this inevitable consequence is too significant to overlook. President Obama has succeeded in passing some bills such as the Economic Stimulus Bill designed to help our economy. However, we are still in a major economic downturn. That being the case, more needs to be done in office to guide America through this crisis. At this point, the economy is beyond the control of consumers; the nation's major

corporations need to first be rehabilitated in order for our economy to be saved. For example, major companies in the auto industry such as General Motors and Chrysler are still failing despite the extravagant amount of money they have each received. Obama's answer to this problem is to stop giving these industries money. Instead of simply quitting the funds, President Obama needs to design a new plan. To do this requires Obama to actually spend some time at the White House instead of making jokes on Jay Leno.

It is true that President Obama may not be producing as many bills as some would argue is necessary, but this is not to say President Obama's strong media presence is not accomplishing anything. In order to turn this economy around, President Obama knows that consumers need to start spending again. However, the American public is anxious and worried about issues such as their jobs, education, and healthcare. Given the multitude of concerns running through consumers' minds, consumers need to be motivated and comforted in order to start spending again. Overall, these consumers need to know that there is hope for a better economic climate soon. By making jokes on Jay Leno and filling out his bracket for March Madness on ESPN, President Obama is able to convey that his concerns for the issues at hand are not overwhelming, and this, in turn, calms the public. Consumers also have a lot of questions, and they want these questions answered promptly. According to the White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, "There have been greater audiences for the shows he has been on to answer these questions, because these are the questions that the American people are asking around their kitchen tables" (qtd. in "Emanuel"). By having such a strong media presence, President Obama is able to answer these questions, whether it is through press conferences or television shows such as "60 Minutes." This, in turn, further comforts consumers.

In order to stimulate this economy, we need consumers to spend. According to Obama in his most recent press conference, "There is no doubt that times are still tough. But by no means are we out of the woods just yet. But from where we stand, for the very first time, we are beginning to see glimmers of hope" (qtd. in Collinson). Exactly how much of this hope is a direct result of Obama's heightened media presence is hard to say. However, what Obama is doing to lift the spirits of consumers must be succeeding because the economy is improving.

Obama's active role, whether legislative or not, is helping to lead the economy out of those metaphorical woods. For this reason, the American economy needs Obama to continue to comfort the American public through his strong media presence.

### **Work Cited**

- Collinson, Stephen. "Glimmers' of Hope, but US Not Out of Woods: Obama." *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 15 April 2009. 22 April 2009 < <http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/glimmers-of-hope-but-us-not-out-of-woods-obama-20090415-a6eg.html>>.
- "Emanuel Dismisses Obama Overexposure Concerns. *CNN.com*. 24 March 2009. 26 March 2009 <<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/03/24/lkl.emanuel/> March 24, 2009>.

*Instructor: Rodger LeGrand, Writing Seminar: Perspectives on Public Relations Writing*

## Raquel Finkelstein

### Why Penn(e)

Walk into any major supermarket and you encounter miles of aisles that spread off in all directions, with hundreds of different cereal options and dozens of flavors of yogurt laid out in tidy rows for your perusal. This plethora of options can sometimes be overwhelming, particularly for a customer as indecisive as myself. Trips to the grocery store without a detailed shopping list can go on for hours before I decide what to purchase. There is one aisle, however, in which I never have a problem making up my mind: the pasta aisle. Before I have a chance to admire the different packaging innovations or to analyze the various nutritional claims emblazoned on each box, I know which type of pasta I will buy. Penne's physical structure ensures that it is always the perfect choice.

Penne's proportionate length proves very beneficial to the eater. Each noodle is long enough to supply a substantive mouthful but short enough to be conveniently bite-sized. Penne's medium length means that an entire noodle can fit into the average person's mouth with ease. As an added benefit, this intermediate size helps the eater to conserve energy, as penne's relative bulk enables him to lift fork to mouth fewer times than he would if consuming a less considerable provision. This greatly minimizes the occurrence of unfortunately sloppy eating attempts and enables one to order pasta even when on a first date.

Not only is penne's size beneficial, its shape proves helpful as well. Regardless of how you choose to garnish it, penne's configuration makes it the ideal base for any intricate pasta dish. Its cylindrical

structure provides a roomy central area in which sauces and seasonings can congregate, and its ridged surface supplies numerous additional locations to which these embellishments can attach. Despite the benefits automatically provided by penne's physical engineering, the consumer has ample leeway in terms of how he utilizes the noodles. The eater has the option of cleverly manipulating a penne noodle's angular ends in order to scoop more sauce into the noodle's interior. However, those with less voracious appetites need not fear – penne noodles are generally not excessively laden with trimmings unless this additional scooping effort is applied. Additionally, the attentive consumer can make full use of penne noodles' diagonal ends by peeking inside each bite to ensure that there are no unwelcome surprises lurking in the shadows. This guarantees that no objectionable additions are able to latch on to a pasta dish without the eater's consent. And, of course, the carbohydrate avoiders among us can relax knowing that, while pasta is indeed a carbohydrate, the volume of each penne noodle consists mostly of air.

*Instructor: Arnout Schurmans, Writing Seminar: No Child Left Behind*

## Jayme Chen

### Machi

For the past few years in Taiwan, mandopop and bubblegum pop bands have dominated the popular music culture. Artists such as Jay Chou and Wang Lee-Hom also blended traditional Chinese instruments into their mainstream melodies. Unlike the innocuous pop songs and Chinese musical elements, exotic hip-hop/rap music, with its Western roots and controversial topics, would seem to attract those wanting a different flavor of music. The Taiwanese people, however, rejected the import, all except for one hip-hop/rap group called Machi. In 2003, Machi released their debut album, and their successive albums in the following years topped the charts. Whether on a small stage in the Ximending shopping district or a huge platform on Fulong beach, their performances always pump up the massive crowds. In fact, Machi is so incredibly popular that the head of the group, Jeffrey Huang, established Machi Entertainment, Machi's own record label. The Machi phenomenon struck the island like a tropical typhoon, but instead of destructive consequences, it built the people's confidence for their nation. Machi owe their immense success to their creativity in morphing the Western style of hip-hop/rap into something that is uniquely Taiwanese.

By choosing to rap in Taiwanese, Machi redefined hip-hop/rap as part of Taiwanese culture. Other hip-hop/rap artists have tried to break into the Taiwanese music industry but failed because the songs relied heavily on English. When the songs did include Chinese, the choruses, which people tend remember most, were in English. For instance,

Witness, a young American-born Taiwanese, rapped about how his experiences in the hood made him value life and loved ones. The most poignant parts of his songs were in English – “I was blind but now I can see (I believe) there’s a heaven.” Critics lauded his song; radio DJs played them repeatedly. The Taiwanese population, however, remained unaffected. Instead of rapping in English or even Chinese, the official language in Taiwan, Machi utilizes the exaggerated intonations of the Taiwanese dialect to spice up their rap. Taiwanese is a dialect particular to Taiwan, a slight variation of Min Nan dialect from Fujian in China, where many of Taiwan’s inhabitants’ ancestors emigrated. The Taiwanese dialect sets the people in Taiwan apart from the other 1.136 billion Chinese-speaking population. By presenting Taiwanese in a refreshing, never-heard-before form, Machi revolutionized the dialect, bringing the coolness factor to the Taiwanese roots and created a hip-hop/rap language only Taiwanese people can fully appreciate.

Machi transformed the hip-hop/rap genre to a Taiwanese anthem, captivating the people. Coming from the West, hip-hop/rap generally glamorized underground activities, such as drugs and crime. Another Taiwanese hip-hop/rap group, Iron Bamboo, based their album, *Dolume One*, on such subjects. *Dolume One* consists of songs like “For our Brother,” “In Da Club,” and “Money! Money!” as well as English choruses such as:

THIS IS 4 MY THUGZ WORLDWIDE; MY HOMIEZ READY  
2 RIDE U KNOW WE CAME TO REPREZENT BOTH DA EAST  
AND WEST SIDE 4 THE HUSTLERS ON MY BLOK WE MAKE UR  
ENEMIES DROP SMOKIN CHRONIK ON THEIR SPOT LIKE WE  
DON’T GIVE A FUCK [sic]

Their music attempted to shed light on the gangster life, which is still frowned upon in Taiwanese society. Unsurprisingly, there was no *Dolume Two*. Instead of discussing underground activities, Machi chanted their love for Taiwan in their songs. Although the members were American-born Taiwanese, they had a strong pride for Taiwan because living in a foreign land taught them to embrace their cultural heritage. This can be seen in their song “Son of Taiwan” where they declared:

Though I was born in America  
Taiwanese blood flow in my veins  
I can speak English and Chinese

But my first words were in Taiwanese

Machi unabashedly profess their love for their homeland in “Diao” where they prefer cheap Taiwanese goods over foreign high-class ones. The lyrics go:

Eiffel Tower diao, Taipei 101 is more diao

Caviar and foie gras diao, stewed pork rice is more diao

Remy Martin diao, Jin Men sorghum liquor is more diao...

Fuji Mountains diao, Ali Mountains are more diao

Phuket and Bali diao, Hawaii and Tahiti are more diao, yo my treasure island is the most diao

“Diao” is a term Taiwanese teenagers use to compliment something as very cool, although in Cantonese it means “fuck” and in Mandarin means “penis.” Therefore, only Taiwanese people understand Machi’s message. Yet, their link to Taiwan can most simply be expressed through the repeated line in “Son of Taiwan,” which in the end they sing, “I am Taiwanese.” This is something only people who identify themselves as Taiwanese can truly sing along.

By infusing Taiwanese dialect and pride into their songs, Machi redefined hip-hop/rap as part of the Taiwanese culture and emerged as the frontier group of hip-hop/rap artists not just locally in Taiwan but also globally. Their music at first may seem limited to only Taiwan, but music as a media transcends any barriers of language or culture, intriguing other people’s interest in this tiny island. They have toured around Asia and performed at major international events, such as MTV Asia Music Video Awards. They have also collaborated with many prominent hip-hop artists, such as revolutionary Korean music writer and producer Jae Chong, producer Floss P from Dr Dre’s Aftermath music label, and famous rapper Missy Elliott, who was so impressed by Machi’s rap that she remixed her well-known song “Work it” with Machi’s “Jump 2003.” Machi has marked Taiwan’s name on the map of hip-hop music , and there is still more yet to come from this group of eccentric artists.



### **Works Cited**

Huang, Witness. "Heaven." *Witness*. Guts(Rock Record), 2005.

Iron Bamboo. "For My Brothers." *Dolume One*. Alfa Music, 2003.

Machi. "Diao." *Superman*. Machi Entertainment, 2005.

Machi. "Son of Taiwan." *Machi*. Machi Entertainment, 2003.

*Instructor: Jacqueline Sadashige, Writing Seminar: Race and Popular Cinema*

## Jin Guan

### Long-Lasting Happiness

I was born in a small town called Changle, near Fuzhou, China. The word change means “long-lasting happiness,” and this is what I experienced growing up in a three-generation household. We resided in “the Old Headquarters.” My relatives gave my grandparents’ house this name because this was where our extended family frequently gathered, sharing meals and spending time together. Grandmother Wang was in charge of my upbringing since my parents’ jobs often required them to travel to other places. From my grandmother, I learned that a woman’s role could be much more than that of a traditional housewife. To both me and to our entire neighborhood, Grandmother Wang has served as a prevailing symbol of courage and persistence.

Grandmother Wang’s caring and creativity deeply impacted my childhood. Until I was ten years old, my parents and I lived in the Old Headquarters. During that time, my grandmother was my daily lunch companion as she prepared a different meal every day. As I grew older, she invited me to help her make the meals and educated me about Chinese cuisine. She also entertained me and, told me an exciting story before my daily nap each afternoon. I still remember how she narrated the dramatic tales with vivid gestures and facial expressions. Her unconditional love and positive outlook has inspired my optimistic view of life. This learned optimism even came in the face of tragedy. After my grandfather passed away, a melancholy atmosphere pervaded the

Old Headquarters. However, Grandmother Wang helped us overcome our sorrow with her selfless determination to support our family and community. She took charge of everything affecting the family, from miscellaneous happenings to critical events.

The Old Headquarters shares Grandmother Wang's resilience and strength. While I was just a baby, our section of Changle endured a horrific fire. On a windy winter evening, some mischievous teenagers were celebrating Chinese New Year with fireworks, which got out of control and set fire to several houses. The fire spread quickly due to high winds. Fortunately, the heroic local firefighters arrived and put out the fire. During the aftermath, our family united to rebuild the Old Headquarters. Sadly, as a Chinese proverb states, "Tragedy often comes in pairs." Two years later, a severe earthquake took place in Taiwan, which is located not too far across the ocean from Changle. The earthquake tumbled some neighboring houses, but the sturdy Old Headquarters sustained no major damage. Grandmother Wang reached out to help our devastated neighbors, offering them food and shelter.

My grandmother is a model of determination. When I was nearly eleven years old, in order to widen the road, the municipal government decided to demolish the houses along the road on which the Old Headquarters is located. Some of my family argued to take the official compensation and relocate; some insisted on protesting to the county government. Grandmother Wang firmly came down on the side of resistance. She united all of the neighbors who did not wish to move, and they hired a lawyer to defend their case. As time passed, the government demolished many of the neighbors' houses; however, the Old Headquarters, along with three other homes, still stands firmly today. My grandmother's persistence in defense of our neighborhood brought honor to the town of Changle. In 2003, Grandmother Wang worked hard and made many sacrifices to renovate the Old Headquarters, which remains as an enduring symbol of persistence, strength, and inspiration.

*Instructor: Mera Moore Lafferty, Writing Seminar: Global English*

## Evgeny Volkov

### Discovering a New Life

Gregory Djanikian, a poet and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, was born on August 15, 1949, in Egypt, to parents of Armenian descent. His family immigrated to the United States when he was eight years old. Currently, Djanikian is the Director of the Creative Writing program at the University of Pennsylvania, where he has been teaching since 1983 (“Gregory”). His autobiographical poem “At American Customs” portrays an immigrant family just as they have arrived at an airport in the U.S., where they wait for customs officers to approve their documents and grant them permission to enter the U.S. Although his mother holds his hand, the young son of the family feels intimidated.

This is a frightening experience for the boy due to the unfamiliar environment. He is eager to “inhale a scent of something new,” yet the customs area scares him, which is why he takes only “the smallest breath” (47). The sterile odor emanating from the plush carpeting and plastic furniture startles him. The time is November; thus, the weather outside is cold and gloomy. Back in Egypt, the climate is hot all year round. The impending snowstorm frightens him. He calls the snow clouds “gray,” suggesting that he finds the prospect of snow depressing rather than exciting (47). Except for his family, the boy does not know anyone around him. He looks up at his mother to see if she will explain to him what is going on. Unfortunately, she is too tired to comfort him.

The boy also feels apprehensive as a result of his missing people he

loves who have remained back in Egypt, but an encounter with a customs officer causes him to view his situation more positively. The boy yearns for his uncle, who used to squeeze his cheek. He also affectionately remembers his aunt, who used to call him “cheri” (47). The boy misses the lullabies his grandfather used to sing to him. The loss of these relatives adds to his anxiety. Just then, a customs officer asks him his age. Frozen, he says nothing, but feels his mother squeezing his hand, urging him to speak up. The boy finds courage to reply to an unfamiliar person, even though he does it in his “quietest voice” (48). This small event leads him to a more positive attitude towards his situation. Suddenly, the glass doors of the customs room seem like wings to him, swinging back and forth whenever someone passes through them. He imagines that he hears the “whoosh of great wings” every time people exit the room (48). The boy imagines this sound wrapping around his body as he pictures his family moving forward and out through the doors into their new lives as Americans.

## Works Cited

Djanikian, Gregory. “At American Customs.” *So I Will Till the Ground*. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon UP, 2007. 47-48.

“Gregory Djanikian.” *Online NewsHour*. 2007. PBS. 21 September 2008  
 <[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth\\_coverage/entertainment/poetry/profiles/poet\\_djanikian.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/entertainment/poetry/profiles/poet_djanikian.html)>.

*Instructor: Mera Moore Lafferty, Writing Seminar: Global English*

## Chen Yue Lin

### Fat: The Scapegoat of Change

I first encountered fat six years ago as a young foreigner in America. It was a hot September morning. I was putting on my favorite pair of jeans as usual when suddenly the pulling became arduous. After a few minutes of trying, I had to stop the futile squeezing. I saw a big bulge between my lower rib cage and upper hip bone and a desperate expression emerged my face as I looked at myself in the mirror next to my bed. What was happening to me? After what seemed to be a century of pondering, I was surprised to find the word “fat” flashed through my mind. I was devastated since fatness was not my problem three months ago.

I was born and raised in a small southern town on the coast of mainland China, near Taiwan. I was always the thin child who my parents tried hopelessly to fatten up. As the only child, my parents and grandparents treated me like a princess. In school, I was the confident model student admired by classmates and praised by teachers. I was happy.

However, this all changed when I came to America. After a childhood spent in the small Chinese town of my birth and years of schooling at my local school, an accident of fate sent me to school thousands of miles away, where all my classmates were white. At the age of eleven, I left the familiar faces and comfortable acquaintances of Chang-Le, China for the distant land of Queens, New York with a goal to improve my academic life and future. But I had no background in

English, no knowledge of American culture, and no guidance on how to become an American. School was no longer the fun place where I could learn from teachers and interact with friends. It had become the source of my vague anxiety. A profound sense of loneliness always washed over me as I walked through a school with strange faces surrounding me. No one knew me. I knew no one. I would have to start all over again.

The huge cultural and social differences between my homeland and my new country made my acculturation process very difficult. I soon found myself making up for my lack of understanding of the mainstream American culture by consuming popular American foods. Pizzas, French fries, hot dogs, and chips were all my new exotic favorites. After three months in America, I was still a cultural foreigner, and yet I had become a true American eater. My taste buds adjusted faster than my mental set and I was enjoying all the genuine American foods to compensate for my lack of American knowledge. This sudden craze for food changed me, physically. I ignored this physical change until my too-small jeans and shirts forced me into realization. I could no longer be in denial about my enlarging body and I felt the need to do something. I forced myself into a strict diet in which I could only eat three pieces of fruit a day: one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one at night. This unhealthy diet worked like magic at first as I was slimming down quickly. But as time went on, it backfired on me. Because it was impossible to adhere to the diet, my weight fluctuated like a roller coaster as I tortured myself about fat.

Years later, I realize that fat was merely a scapegoat for the changes and associated stress I underwent in this country. I foolishly believed that fixing my fat problem would fix other problems too. Deep self-reflection now reveals that my frustration then was not directed at fat but my inability to establish myself as the confident person that I had been in China. Fat was just a convenient target that I could attribute my problems to. By blaming fat, I didn't have to doubt my intellectual ability to assimilate and adjust to my new country.

My experience is reflective of a greater societal problem, as fat often serves as the scapegoat for other frustrations in our society. Fat is a popular victim not only because it is physical and visible, but also because our society has given fat a bad reputation. Fat is an easy target because it is a socially acceptable way to redirect our anger. Blaming fat

protects us from being consciously aware of a thought or feeling which we cannot tolerate. It allows the unconscious thought or feeling to be expressed indirectly in a disguised form. For instance, fat often serves as a “problem” in marriages. A spouse might complain and obsess over fat because she thinks it is the cause of the increase arguments or the lack of romance and passion between her husband and herself. Blaming fat might be her way of avoiding real issues like personality conflicts or conflicts of different life values. Those problems involve judging oneself and questioning one’s principles. Most people do not want to admit those internal struggles and choose the easy route of blaming fat to express the frustration. In my case, I blamed fat to avoid facing my inability to adapt to American culture, which would ultimately involve questioning my intrinsic worth.

But is blaming fat and avoiding the real problem helpful at all? No, it actually worsens the problem. The avoidance of real problems and inability to correct them impedes progress and eventually cause the problem to explode. In a marital relationship, the husband may find the whining about fat increasingly annoying. The wife may find the lack of comfort from her husband more and more intolerable. The lack of communication on real issues that caused the fading passion would eventually harm, or even end, the relationship. As for me, not addressing my insecurities in a new country impeded progress and I remained a cultural foreigner and a mute for half a year. Then my mom told me that I didn’t always have to be perfect and confident. Personal doubts were normal and I had the right to express them instead of hiding them. Realization unblocked my progress and helped me assimilate to the American society quickly. Fat can be a problem in and of itself. But it is important to realize that it can also be a mask for an even greater problem.

*Instructor: Jane Kauer, Writing Seminar: Concept of Fat*



# Penny Metchev

## The Power of the Public

What does \$165 million represent? In the context of the \$11.5 trillion that the US government used for bailouts, it is but a microscopic percentage. And yet when you attach the words “AIG Bonus Payout,” this sum takes on an outrageous connotation within the credit crisis. As the economic downturn continues to engulf the country, politicians and the public are reacting in surprising ways. Consumers no longer want to spend, and politicians must decide whether to prioritize people over the prosperity of the nation. The American International Group scandal, when analyzed in greater detail, is a testament that the public will not remain a voiceless victim in the economic slump. In fact, the AIG bonus controversy demonstrates the power of the American public.

The AIG bonus scandal is controversial not only due to the staggering amount but moreover because of the lack of accountability shown to the public. American taxpayers were shocked and stunned to learn on March 16<sup>th</sup> that officials of the controversial AIG Financial Product Division were set to receive \$165 million in bonuses. People could not fathom that the company, which received \$170 billion from the government in order to avert catastrophic bankruptcy, was going to reward the executives of the very department in charge of the credit-default swaps at the center of the credit crisis. Critics, such as Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, claim that the democratic voice of America has been lost, as millions of taxpayer-funded dollars were to head right back to Wall Street from Main Street.

It is hard to believe that the American public can exert any influence on the financial industry, which suddenly buckled under the failure of the sub-prime mortgage sector. The American people felt as if they were being swept with the tide, as the government, under both the Bush and Obama administrations, tried to salvage sinking credit institutions. AIG was rescued on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008 by the Federal Reserve, and bailed out another three times. And yet the outrage only arose at the announcement of the payouts in March. It is clear that the American people were fed up and any degree of faith that the financial system would rebound evaporated. Hence, the AIG scandal shows the relative passivity of the public in the months before the publication of the bonuses.

Despite the perceived compliance of the public, the American people wield overwhelming influence. Critics and angry activists, who claimed that the American people had been betrayed, fail to understand the details of the situation. In fact, the swift political action and proposition of reactionary laws after the scandal confirm that public still has power. In reaction to the mass hysteria expressed on the news, internet, and radio, politicians began proposing legislation stating that any bonus paid by a firm accepting bailout money would be subject to a 90% income tax. President Barack Obama shared indignation, "For top executives to award themselves these kinds of compensation packages in the midst of this economic crisis are not only in bad taste - it's a bad strategy - and I will not tolerate it as President." (Interestingly, AIG had disclosed its bonus program more than a year ago to both the Republican and Democratic parties.) Is the political reaction warranted or does it draw on popular sentiment? This outrageous policy comes from politicians sensing the public's growing resentment to Wall Street and aims to abate the public anger. So influential was the public's anger that unconstitutional legislation was being proposed in Congress. Legally limiting the AIG bonuses is unconstitutional, because under the US Constitution, "no Bill of Attainder or ex post facto Law will be passed." In other words, no law can be created that is aimed at a single group of people or is applied after an event to punish people. Such laws shatter all faith in American contract law, deter future investors and propagate a culture of disunity amongst corporations and government. Nevertheless, on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2009, the Treasury symbolically deducted \$165 million

from AIG's latest \$30 billion assistance package. The interests of the public trumped the interests of corporate power.

As America continues to plunge into a deeper recession, every part of society will continue to feel the ripples. Nevertheless, despite the dire economic conditions, the American public still has the power of free speech and persuasion. The public's influence, regardless of the fundamental legal and business implications, quelled the AIG uproar. It is voice of the people, sometimes livid and illogical and at other times united and passionate, which sustains democracy in America. During the AIG scandal it was all these things.

*Instructor: Rodger LeGrand, Writing Seminar: Perspectives on Public Relations Writing*

Joel Tee

“Marat/Sade and Brechtian Theater.”

In his seminal essay *The Epic Theater and its difficulties*, Brecht argues for a radically new approach to the theater, positing the idea of a theater with an inherently political and social function, in which the “culinary” nature of dramatic theater anchored in superficial principles of spectator pleasure and entertainment is replaced with a form of theater that “turns the spectator into an observer, but arouses his capacity for action...[forcing] him to take decisions” (37). As a means of achieving this, Brecht proposes a theater built along the principles of *alienation* or *distantiation*, in which an audience is deliberately separated and emotionally distanced from the world of the play, thereby forcing an intellectual and confrontational response beyond a simple and unquestioning emotional participation in the dramatic action. In Peter Weiss’ play *Marat/Sade*, we arguably see a strong infusion of Brechtian techniques and elements, as Weiss clearly attempts to force us into a confrontational engagement with the world of his play and its politics through these various elements. However, at the same time, I would also argue that even as *Marat/Sade* employs Brechtian elements, these elements are also simultaneously and subtly undermined, as the Brechtian vision of the theater is revealed to be unsustainable.

On one level, the use of numerous devices that generate distantiation between the spectator and the actor while impelling an intellectual response clearly places the play within a Brechtian mode. At the level of form, the structuring of *Marat/Sade* as a debate between two

characters representing two antithetical ideologies establishes the play as an intellectual and dialectical battle of extreme ideas, as opposed to one centering on emotive and dramatic action. Unlike the participatory logic of dramatic theater, in *Marat/Sade* we are called on primarily as witnesses, in order to judge, analyze and rank arguments, rather than gain access to an experience. At the end of the play, the herald informs us that “Our play’s chief aim has been- to take to bits great propositions and their opposites, see how they work, then let them fight it out,” establishing the primacy of the intellectual/philosophical conflict over the ostensibly more immediate plotline of Corday’s murder of Marat (109-110). In addition to form, the use of a chorus and the herald to narrate the play reinforces the play’s Brechtian nature, by emphasizing the mediated and artificial nature of the world on the stage. Unlike a dramatic theater that strives toward the illusion of realism by “implicating the spectator”, the use of the chorus and herald reminds the audience that the world on the stage is ultimately simply another performance and another form of representation (Brecht 37). This reminder ultimately helps to create a sense of objective distance between audience and stage, turning the audience into a spectator who is as a result able to interpret the play as an outsider.

Therefore, *Marat/Sade* can be seen as a play that largely conforms to a Brechtian analytic. However, certain elements appear to problematize this reading of the play by introducing an obvious tension within the play’s Brechtian structure. In particular, there are certain moments in the play where the play’s Brechtian form appears to be subverted and replaced by an Artaudian model, which conceives of theater as an exteriorization and expression of man’s inner repressions and latent instincts, and in which the Brechtian sense of distance collapses. For example, the frequent moments where the ‘play within the play’ breaks down and where Coulmier has to step in to systemically restore order seem to suggest a kind of deeper, repressed, and uncontrollable vitality at odds with the play’s highly stylized Brechtian construction. This is most clearly seen in the ending, where the Herald’s proclamation of the intellectual and ideological nature of the play is almost immediately contrasted with a complete loss of order, as the inmates start advancing spontaneously against Coulmier and the Nurses in an orgy of violence and chaos. Here, the final stage direction, Weiss describes to us,

“The Herald is now in front of the orchestra, leaping about in time to the music. SADE stands upright on his chair, laughing triumphantly. In desperation COULMIER gives the signal to close the curtain”, suggesting a complete collapse of the stable Brechtian form of the theater and its replacement with an aggressive and hedonistic Artaudian energy, which Coulmier tries to forestall and suppress from us by drawing the curtains (113). Also, by implying that the chaos on stage has to be literally shut and contained to prevent it from spreading to the audience, Weiss dramatically undermines the separation between the stage and the audience on which Brechtian theater is predicated on and built. Finally, to the extent that we consider the outbreak of violence and the concomitant overthrowing of the institutional authority of the asylum at the end of the play a significant act of rebellion with political implications, Brechtian theater is also undermined on a more vital level, since it is precisely the breakdown of the Brechtian framework that creates the very capacity and consciousness for political action which Brecht so aims to engender. Hence, Brechtian theater is revealed here to be counterproductive at worst, and ineffectual at best.

Therefore, even as *Marat/Sade* employs Brechtian techniques, these techniques are also simultaneously undermined and critiqued. One might speculate an innate skepticism and disillusionment on Weiss’ part toward a Brechtian conception of theater that necessarily sees and treats theater as well as the human experience it putatively depicts within the hegemonic framework of a politicized discourse centering around its role as a tool solely for formenting revolutionary consciousness and activism.. As the moments of breakdown in *Marat/Sade* and their replacement with an Artaudian form of theater seem to suggest, Weiss sees an instinctual and almost animalistic violence as being a central aspect of the human condition; a violence which ultimately threaten the stable notions of Brecht’s politicized view of human relations, as well as the stable foundations of the epic theater created to reflect that view. In this sense, we might even see Brechtian theater as the formal corollary of and counterpart to Marat’s character, who is similarly critiqued by Sade for ignoring the importance of passion as a fundamental “truth of experience” in his politicized ideology of radical intervention (Weiss 36). Therefore, one can see the undermining of Brechtian theater as part of the central clash of ideologies in *Marat/Sade*, through which the

Maratian position is formally interrogated and critiqued, and ultimately revealed to be untenable.

### **Works Cited**

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. John Willett.  
New York:  
Hill and Wang, 1992.

*Instructor: Shoshana Enelow, Writing Seminar: Deviance In Modern Drama*

## Sam Bieler

### Women's Work

Few women are as confusing to other women as Phyllis Schlafly. When the Equal Rights Amendment of the 1970s stating that rights could not be denied on the basis of sex was only eight states away from ratification, feminists probably expected opposition from male chauvinists, but they were certainly not expecting the person who would rally public opinion against the bill to be a woman. Yet Phyllis Schlafly would be that woman; her work would ultimately lead to the defeat and abandonment of the ERA. Schlafly argued that women enjoyed certain special rights and privileges in society that came from their traditional role and felt that these would be lost if women and men were set equal. Though Schlafly is unique for her achievements her mindset is representative of a social group. Study of textile workers from Germany's Weimar years can provide valuable insight into the a woman like Phyllis Schlafly's mindset. Feminism in the 1970s had been a radical and vibrant force since the turn of the century and it would be reasonable to expect significant changes in women's behavior; yet traditional views of domestic life held significant sway over many women in the 1930s, 1970s, and even today.



Many women of the era had no higher aspiration than to be good housewives, though they were heavily invested in being such. A female factory worker interviewed in the 1930s stated her personal goals in her working life: "My view is that if a housewife and mother could be at home, than the household and the children would be better served." This woman worked in a factory, but considered her home life to be her primary concern. More importantly than this however, she was dismissive of women with less busy schedules than her own: "If a co-worker tells you any differently [about the stress of the duress of a woman's life], then she is at best still young and dumb. Or maybe she lets some things go that should be done." Not only did this woman ascribe to the traditional role of womanhood, but she was aggressively dismissive of women she believed fell short of this standard. Clearly she was invested heavily in this code, willing to denigrate others to defend it.

In addition, traditional views held such sway that women abided by them even to their significant detriment, demonstrating the zealotry with which these women adhered to their apportioned roles. The same woman who mocked her less scheduled colleague described a work time table that would put the most devoted modern workaholic to shame, starting at 4:45 am and ending, housework included, at about 9 pm. This by way of information, simply a normal day, discounting washing days, or "vacations" when she cleans the entire house and the apartment is repainted. Strangely and glaringly absent from this whirlwind of domestic activity: the woman's husband, who does not receive a single mention in the entire work, save to say that they go to work and return at the exact same time. This mystery man receives mention in no household chores, leaving the reader with the impression that he either works the night shift as a secret agent but simply hasn't bothered to tell his wife, or that the reader has just been introduced to the grand national champion of work avoidance. Given her commitment to a job outside the home it does not seem unreasonable that the husband should take on some household responsibilities. Yet given that housework is the province of "women," his desertion in the field comes as no surprise. Nor is it surprising that the interviewed workers did not criticize or even question the failure of

their husbands to aid them. The traditional woman supports her family, even if she has to do conventional work in addition to housework.

Women have come a long way since the 1930s, but the cult of domesticity has a tighter hold on its devotees than any mystic cult. While the tenets of domestic devotion have changed, many women's adherence to the idea of specific, limited roles for women is alive and well. Feminists of the 1970s learned this when Phyllis Schlafly mobilized conservative opinion to halt the ERA in its tracks. Her arguments were entirely of the traditionalist bent: women would lose "dependant" tax benefits and face possible draft if the ERA passed. If feminists of today hope to ever achieve full equality, this is the doctrine with which they will have to contend.

### Works Cited

Textile Workers. "My Workday, My Weekend." *The Weimar Republic Source book*. Ed.

Anton Kaes. Berkeley: University of California P, 1994. 208-10.

Textile Workers, 209.

Textile Workers, 208.

*Instructor: Mara Taylor, Writing Seminar: The New Women in European Literature*

# Adina Weinblatt

## Chicken or Chicken of the Sea

“Excuse me, Miss, chicken or fish?” This question, debatably the most anxiety inducing question of the twenty-first century, plagues every party guest. Many confess that they find it a surprisingly stressful query. After all, peoples’ food choice has a huge effect on the ambiance and overall atmosphere of a party. To add more stress to the issue, it is commonly accepted that “you are what you eat.” Who wants that kind of pressure in their life? So, what is the answer to this question that leaves countless people awake, tossing and turning in the middle of the night? Those of you who have been worrying about whether someone would finally step up and address this major, modern problem, worry no more. Here I am! Now take a deep breath and relax as I tell you the obvious answer: chicken should always be chosen over fish.

People of the opposing view are passionate about their cause. They claim that fish is light and refreshing. They find that there is more variety in the actual flavor of the fish. They quote the American Heart Association, saying that people should eat at least two seafood meals a week for a healthy heart. The mantra, “there are other fish in the sea” governs their lives, and they believe that fish are so numerous, so it is less evil to eat them. Even more so, they say that by ordering that juicy piece of fillet of flounder, and, thereby, decreasing the large amount of fish in the environment, they are gallantly engaging in population control and saving the world, one fish at a time.

And then there are those of us who know better. When we are

prompted with the ever-dreaded question, we have the answer on the tip of our tongue, literally and figuratively. We love chicken. Why, you ask? Well, to start, chicken is obviously superior in taste. When biting into a piece of delicious and succulent grilled chicken, one can understand what the Greek gods must have felt like when feasting on their ambrosia. Additionally, while there have been countless incidents of badly cooked fish, it takes a lot more talent to mess up a good piece of poultry. For the health-conscious among us, it also makes a lot more sense to favor our friend, the fowl. By steering clear of the high levels of mercury found in fish, which has been proven to damage our coordination and sensory skills, we maintain our abilities to catch the chicken we so dearly love to eat. The last and most persuasive argument appeals to another one of our five senses: smell. While walking past a fish store, any ordinary human being instinctively holds his or her nose so as not to gag. Fish is one of the most malodorous sources of nourishment around. Do you really want to be “that person who smells like fish?” I didn’t think so.

*Instructor: Adam Mohr, Writing Seminar: Health and Healing in Africa*

# Wiktor Parysek

## “The Cuckoo and the Canary”: A Personal Narrative of Deviance

I stepped in, breathed the musky smell of the supply closet, and flipped the light switch, filling the room with a quiet but constant buzz. I could smell the stale cheese, rotting on the mousetrap in the corner. The closet—a mix between office supplies and cadaverous computers—was cramped and poorly lit. The door closed silently as I listened for footsteps outside. You will all need a lab notebook, the professor said. No exceptions, he said. It seemed like the easiest thing in the world; I came here for extra supplies all the time. This time my backpack needed a notebook. I stared at the bright-yellow, lined paper and was shocked to find it glaring back. You don’t use notebooks for work, it said, suspiciously. My shaking hands clasped the canary paper, which twittered on with increasing inquisition. Will the others notice? Will they say, just like the bright paper did, that I don’t even take notes? I grabbed a few pens, which, strangely enough, screamed that I already had ten of them and therefore didn’t need any more. As I scampered back to my cubicle, shushing the stationery, I felt my co-workers eyes following my every step. They knew.

Back in my cramped cubicle, I attempted to silence the now squawking and flapping paper by hastily shoving it in my backpack, generally adding to its disgruntlement. The squawking died down to a muffled tweet as I zipped it up and covered it with my jacket. My

hands were covered in ink; it must have been those brawling pens. I scrubbed my foul fingers, attempting to stay sane. My boss appeared by my cubicle, intent on interrogating me. How's it going, she asked. So this is what being caught red-handed really meant. I could tell she knew instantly; she could hear the tell-tale twitter stealing from my bag. Fine, I answered, feigning a busy expression and shuffling through empty files. My voice cracked. That must have been the sign she was waiting for. She lingered a second longer than necessary and in that second of hesitation I was sure she could hear the pens protesting from the darkest corner of my desk. This was it.

What's the punishment for office theft? Public humiliation, for one. Did you hear about the girl who stole a notebook, they'll whisper. It wasn't even worth a dollar, they'll laugh. I'll lose my job no doubt. There goes nine dollars an hour I'll never see again. Maybe I'll even have to serve jail time; I can already hear the cops streaming down the street. What have I done? Stop, I can still take them back. I don't really need the notebook. My boss looked on idly as I frantically tugged at the zipper of my backpack. I battled with the jammed opening as the ink spread from my fingertips to the crevices by my nails. It crawled up my fingers and tattooed my palm. I forced open an inch through which I salvaged a corner of the now screeching notebook. I clawed hopelessly at it, shredding and staining it with my guilty fingers. The pens and paper had joined together to form a crying chorus. My lips moved soundlessly as I attempted to explain my aberration. I should have listened to the canary.

*Instructor: Jamie Fader, Writing Seminar: Crime and Conformity*

# Callie Taylor

## The Persistence of Old Ideas

At the end of the 1800s and at the start of the 1900s, society began to witness a change in women's social ideals and behavior. The fin-de-siècle marked the beginning of a new age of modernism where women were no longer defined solely by the domestic roles they fulfilled in society. The idea of the "new woman" developed and more opportunities in the public sphere of society opened up for women. They began to integrate themselves into the workforce and the education system as well as demand more equality among the social roles and privileges between men and women. This period of change occurred at approximately the same time that *The Lady's Realm* started to become a popular magazine among female readers. However, it is interesting to note that despite the presence of new ideas about changing the social roles of women, the magazine retained old ideals of womanhood that stressed the importance of domestic duties. In both the columns "The Cuisine" and "The Home Beautiful," the authors instilled traditional values in the female readers by preserving customary ideas of the female social role even when new ideas of feminism were emerging in society.

Access to traditional schooling was one privilege that women were beginning to gain at the turn of the century. However, in both "The Cuisine" and "The Home Beautiful," the authors frame domestic skill as an essential field of study, therefore urging women to keep their place in the home instead of seeking higher education. Both articles focus on two

different aspects of the home: cooking for the family as well as decorating the home in a comfortable and beautiful manner. The authors of these articles believe that to acquire both of these skills, the “art” of each needs to be observed. Firstly, in “The Cuisine,” the author recommends that the women learn cooking because it can be “considered a fine art, as well as an economic science...” (De Salis 112). Referring to a skill like cooking as a credible field of study like science or art amplifies the importance and makes it seem more worthy of learning. After all, it is subjects like economics that women would learn in a university. In addition to this discreet form of persuasion, the article also explicitly states the importance of acquiring a skill in cooking. One excerpt quotes, “If ladies could be persuaded to make cookery a study, and have the knowledge of it made part of their daughters’ education, we should not find our cooks so ignorant or so wasteful as they are at present” (De Salis 112). Women are thought to be “ignorant and wasteful” because they have not been taught the fine art of cooking and have not yet achieved the domestic skills thought to be so important. However, with study and the passing along of knowledge, women can become educated and well informed with the art of cooking. Therefore, in the eyes of Mrs. De Salis, it is necessary for this process of learning to occur. When the ideas of women attending universities and attaining a higher education were just emerging, connecting domestic skill to knowledge persuaded women that domestic skills were also worth studying and that they did not need to attend university to become knowledgeable. Instead, women could stay where they were, in the home, and keep fulfilling the role that was defined acceptable for women by traditional ideals.

“The Home Beautiful” also uses phrasing pertaining to education to achieve the same purpose: to encourage women to stay in the home. Mrs. Haweis, the author of this column, associates studying domestic skills and decorating techniques with being moral, therefore informing women that studying this material is essential. The column quotes, “The connection between art and morals is at once obvious; and a new dignity is given to art, the study of it becomes infinitely more interesting and more worthy when we remember this” (Haweis 96-8). Again, we see a domestic skill referred to as an “art” and something that is worthy of being studied. Home decorating is considered a skill, like cooking, and every skill needs to be taught and learned. This message



is emphasized in the passage, “it is impossible to produce a really good effect in the aspect of a room or of a house unless the law of fitness be studied” (Haweis 525). This excerpt promotes the same message and therefore produces the same effect as those from “The Cuisine.” Urging women to study domestic skills as a form of education keeps them in the home and drives them further into their domestic role.

In addition to using language of education and knowledge, both columns stress the importance of domestic skills in modern society. The first example of this appears in “The Cuisine.” In the beginning lines of the first published issue, food and cookery are said to now be “two of the great questions of the day, and not only of the day, but of all time, and considerably agitate the minds of men and women, from the poor artisan to the very highest in the land” (De Salis 112). The author is sending a very effective and direct message to women through this passage. Conveying how important cooking is in society and showing how prevalent it is in daily life justifies the necessity of making it a part of women’s own daily lives by putting time and effort into preparing the food. This excerpt also creates a sense of equality among all of the readers, because no matter what class the women came from, food was still a major aspect of everyone’s lives and, as a result, an essential subject to study.

“The Home Beautiful” also emphasizes the importance of domestic skills to encourage women to retain this societal role. It quotes, “As we must of necessity devote a good portion of our lives to sleep, the question of bedroom furniture assumes an importance which cannot be ignored” (Haweis 115-8). The furniture in a home is given a sense of significance in daily life; one that means that women need to pay attention and put effort into making sure it is done correctly. As we already know, this requires study and effort. By stressing the importance of these domestic skills, the authors of these two columns are again trying to instill traditional values in women and keep them in the home. This counteracts with the new opportunities to integrate into the workforce that were finally becoming possible for women at the time. The author of “The Home Beautiful” even goes so far to say that “...a woman’s world is, or ought to be, her home and its inmates...” (Haweis pg. 229). Women were constantly bombarded with the message that the home was incredibly important and could not be left unattended in their

quest for new rights and privileges in society.

Another way that columns like “The Cuisine” drive women into the domestic role is through the use of complicated instructions that require previous knowledge. Domestic skills like decorating the home and cooking require both skill and knowledge, new and old. The columns may highlight the need for studying these skills, but they also require background knowledge in order to be fully understood. For example, the instructions for the recipes in “The Cuisine” are quite minimal, yet the food itself is quite complex. This is a published recipe for Consommé a la Monte Carlo: “Make a good clear, soup, flavoured with trimmings from game, and put into little custards made in four colors- white, green, pink, and yellow. Cut out into the shape of diamonds, hearts, spades and clubs. The yellow are made with the yolk of an egg only, the white with the white, and the pink and green with the white of an egg, coloured with cochineal and sap-green coloring” (De Salis 112). This recipe has no measurements, no step-by-step directions to follow. Instead, women need to already know how to complete each step in order to follow the recipe. Women are also supposed to make the food sophisticated and colorful, fitting for a large party. However, the 7-course meal with a fancy set-up is only for a simple dinner. Therefore, the readers need to be able to follow very general directions in order to set up an ornate feast, all for a daily supper. This contrasts the new ideas of the time greatly; if women wanted to go to school or get a job, they did not have enough time to do both this and cook flamboyant meals that took hours to prepare in the kitchen. Instead, cooking and the overall home life was thought to be a full time job in and of itself, a job women were obligated to fulfill. By only supplying the readers with these types of recipes, women were forced to spend time in the kitchen, honing their cooking skills and playing the domestic role once again.

The last way that “The Cuisine” and “The Home Beautiful” encouraged women to stay in the home and play the domestic role was by trying to persuade women that old ideas could also be considered *novel*. In a time when new ideas were prolific, these two columns tried to keep up by showing their old, traditional ideas as new and desirable. For example, in “The Cuisine,” the author claims, “The following recipes are certain to be found very novel and delicious” (De Salis 452). Even though the following recipes are not anything new for the time and use

the same foods and sauces, referring to the ideas and recipes expressed in the column as “novel” make them seem more era-appropriate. This idea is repeated in a later publication by saying, “As old furniture, old curios, and all old things are so eagerly sought for nowadays, perhaps these real old-time recipes, gathered from ancient tomes, may be approved and tried at some of the forthcoming dinners as novelties” (De Salis 656). This passage clearly shows that the women authors of these columns are deliberately trying to reintegrate tradition and fight the new ideas by showing old ideas as new ones.

The author of “The Home Beautiful” uses the same trick. Traditional furniture and antiques are thought to be the new trend and “... [as] the novelties of our time are but seldom original; we fall back on the creations of long ago and adapt them to the needs of today” (Haweis 651). The “new” creations are said to be unoriginal, and therefore, undesirable. Instead, traditional creations are what are in demand. If one took these passages and applied the ideas expressed within them to the social changes of the time, it seems that the authors are trying to persuade women that traditional views and roles were more fitting for females than the more recent ideas of the “new woman.” Thus, the authors drive women into their domestic role by emphasizing traditional values and ideas in their columns.

Women were being bombarded with many messages about what role they should play at the turn of the century. Although many women were pushing for more social equality, other women such as the authors of “The Cuisine” and “The Home Beautiful” were trying to keep women in the home and refine their domestic skills. Therefore, each woman was left with a choice as to whom they were going to listen to. Some chose to assert more independence and follow the new ideas and opportunities to become “new women,” and some were against the new ideas of feminism and embraced the familiar domestic role. In any case, the lines drawn between the social roles of each gender were blurring at the turn of the century, and even the efforts of influential authors of a popular women’s magazine couldn’t stop it from happening.

## Works Cited

Mrs. De Salis. “The Cuisine.” *The Lady’s Realm*. Vol. I (Nov 1886 - Apr 1897): 112, 452.

Mrs. De Salis. "The Cuisine." *The Lady's Realm*. Vol. IX (Nov 1900 - Oct 1901): 656.

Mrs. Haweis. "The Home Beautiful." *The Lady's Realm*. Vol. I (Nov 1886 - Apr 1897): 96-98.

Mrs. Haweis. "The Home Beautiful." *The Lady's Realm*. Vol. IV (May - Oct 1898): 229, 525.

Mrs. Haweis. "The Home Beautiful." *The Lady's Realm*. Vol. IX (Nov 1900 - Oct 1901): 115-118, 651.

*Instructor: Mara Taylor, Writing Seminar: The New Women in European Literature*

# John Bang

## Concepts of Fat

I put down the empty bowl of rice, the result of eating voraciously for half an hour. My stomach, feeling as though it might burst, has consumed half a dozen types of *kimchi* (fermented cabbage), bean-paste stew, deep-fried pork, and rice. Yet, as I rise from the table to put my dishes in the sink, my mother stares at me with concern. She says, “I wish you would eat more. You are so skinny.” Although I wish I could eat more to please my mother, I am unable to because I am *so* full. To my mother, my skinniness represents a tacit failure to “fatten” me up. In Korea, it seems, in order to be a “proper” mother, one’s son must be plump. Yet, from my sister, my mother expects the opposite. This explains why my mother treats my sister differently. Concepts of fat, particularly those in Korean culture, marry the two worlds of gender roles and ideal body images.

Although eating more would make me “fatter,” and therefore more pleasing to my mother, I am seldom tempted to follow that line of thinking. A tennis player in high school, I had a fast metabolism and felt I was at a healthy weight (which my doctor corroborated). Still, my mother would urge me to copious amounts of food at the dinner table to gain weight. I suspected my gaining weight would not only validate her culinary skills, but also affirm her adequacy as a homemaker. A fat son, to a Korean mother, symbolizes the spoiling of her favorite offspring; he reflects the wealth of the family. Often, my mother would remark, “people will think I don’t feed you well” on my way out of the house. However,

I feel she is picking on me for trivial reasons because she does not say the same things to my sister. From my sister, she expects the opposite: a slimmer figure. This led her to make such comments as, “I wish I could take some of your sister’s fat and put it on you.” It is at these moments I feel sorry for my sister and angry at the cultural expectations that surround body image. It is after all, not my sister’s fault. In my view, the problem is more societal than individual. What truly is to blame is society for creating a single ideal body image. Human beings, after all, come in different shapes and sizes. This inability to be “perfect” is responded with reprimand, exemplified by my mother’s comments. My mother, raised in a traditional Korean household, has an idea of what she wants her children to look like because this is the image that is deemed as positive.

I feel an emphasis of gender roles is particularly present in Korean culture. Males are compelled into becoming the breadwinners, and the women, although they have the freedom to take on a profession, are encouraged to stay at home, take care of the kids, and cook well. This reliance on gender for the division of labor is also reflected in subtle ways; while I would go outside to complete my chores (water and garden our yard), my mother and sister would do housework. Gender determines what we can and cannot do. This is why I have never taken my mother seriously when she claims I am too skinny. Rather than promoting freedom, gender and body image both constrict my sister and me, especially in a Korean cultural context.

I am saddened that the pressure on my sister is doubled: not only is she expected to fulfill an ideal body image, she is also expected to take on the role of Korean female. I enjoy the freedom of being expected to join the workforce—I am able to choose my role. I learned much from witnessing inequality in my household—it provided me with a window through which I can pinpoint areas of inequity with Western culture as well. The key to undoing our preconceived concepts of fat and body image lies also in undoing the cultural and social expectations that gender brings. A “fat” male for example, has a different societal meaning from a “fat” female; one is more vehemently ostracized in American society. The definite untangling of “fat” and “gender” is not as easy as it

sounds. Both must be tackled simultaneously for both are consequences of a larger societal problem: the unwarranted assault on a person's character based on their physical appearance.

*Instructor: Jane Kauer, Writing Seminar: Concept of Fat*

## Sierra Park-Chavar

### The Disturbed Male Psyche in Kubrick's Films

Kubrick once defined his graphic film, *A Clockwork Orange*, as the “true picture...of the brutal and violent nature of man.” Through cinema, the director created worlds in which violent passions always prevail over reason, suggesting the ignoble nature of man and a doomed humanity. However, he went further than commenting on humankind as a whole. As evidenced through recurring themes in his films, Kubrick emphasized on the true cause of the problem: the destructive workings of the male mind. Whether murdering their own children or singing a costume-clad rendition of “Singing in the Rain” while raping a woman in front of her husband, his films often center on the transgressions of psychologically disturbed men. Kubrick’s films reveal how truly disturbed the male ego is.

Of course, a simple analysis suggests that Kubrick suggests that women, not men, are fundamentally disturbed. While he rarely used leading ladies, the portrayals of the few female characters he does use carry overt negative tones. In Kubrick’s films, women serve as the insufferably dim-witted barrier between men and their desires, whether those desires are a young girl or finishing a novel. For example, Wendy in *The Shining* (1980) stifles her husband’s creativity, interrupting him to bring him lunch or suggesting that good ideas are simply a “matter of getting back in the old habit” of sitting down and writing regularly. This inability to understand the creative mind’s mental stress causes Jack to further distance himself from his family. As a result, Kubrick



says that these simple-minded, petty creatures ultimately plague men and inevitably doom humanity. In an earlier work, 1962's *Lolita*, Mrs. Haze's name describes her plight perfectly: the attention-starved cougar is oblivious to her husband's true infatuation until she reads his diary. However, when she finally realizes Humbert's obsession, she threatens that he will never see his muse, *Lolita*, again. Therefore, one mode of interpretation shows that men are victims of this fundamentally female flaw, as they are trapped at the mercy of such incompetent yet destructive creatures.

However, this view misinterprets Kubrick's message as he clearly wishes to portray men as the leading damaging force behind humanity. Women do not suffer from inherently flawed characters. Rather, the male ego upholds misogynistic views of how women should behave that unfairly causes the female sex to be seen as defective. For example, one of the few women in Kubrick's films not portrayed as a brainless barrier is ultimately murdered by a man. In *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), the fiercely independent deviant, the 'Cat Lady,' is then beaten to death by Alex. This murder sends the horrifying message of how men must discipline a bold woman such as this one: clearly an independent elderly woman that lives among phallic art structures and is not afraid to confront hoodlums cannot be allowed to live. Here, Kubrick makes an interesting note on women; they are punished for not attempting to understand the complexities of the male mind yet are then beaten into submission when they dare to challenge men as equals. Therefore, ultimately, it is the men's disturbed views that perpetuate such discord among humankind.

While it is evident that Kubrick's male characters antagonize women, they also aggressively overreact towards other men. How men handle these situations- whether the threat is real or imagined- is a testament to Kubrick's thematic staple: the insecure, disturbed male ego. These are particular evident when the protagonists sense other men encroaching upon or defaming the object of their desires. For instance, Humbert feels threatened that Lolita will be asked to "go steady" by her high school boyfriend, Kenny. To keep a close eye on her, Humbert chaperones the dance, watching Lolita and her date while hiding behind decorations. He even hints to her mother Charlotte that the blossoming Lolita is too young for such attention from boys. Such drastic measures

to keep the eponymous idol from this teenage boy- whom he has perceived as his ‘competition’- demonstrate extreme insecurities as a male around other men. In *A Clockwork Orange*, the lead male character also interacts with men with unexpected, uncontrollable emotion. In a testament to Alex’s overt obsession with Beethoven, Kubrick presents a highly eroticized scene in which Alex’s pet snake slithers in his lap while Alex lies on his bed listening to his favorite composer. In a seemingly unrelated scene, Alex quickly turns on his friend, Dim, when Dim interrupts a woman singing a section of the Ninth Symphony in the Milkbar. As a result of this interruption, Alex overreacts to the threat of a barrier between him and his beloved Beethoven, viciously striking Dim until he bleeds. This aggressive reaction reflects that Alex’s insecurities of other men coming between him and his desires.

While Kubrick’s men often overreact towards other males, they also engage in a contradictory same-sex relationship. Kubrick interjects this strange fascination with male characters to further reveal the disturbed imbalance of the male mind. Their willingness to reach out to other men instead of maintaining other loyalties- such as loyalty to family or even personal identity, as discussed later- suggests that men harbor insecurities with their own selves that they must turn to other men for guidance. For instance, in *The Shining*, the wedge between Jack and his family quickly grows when he befriends the spirit of the Overlook’s ghostly bartender, Lloyd. Lloyd convinces Jack to shed his past identity, seducing him to become a part of the hotel’s ghastly legacy. When Jack is offered a drink on the house, he states that he is “the kind of man that likes to know who’s buying [his] drinks.” To this, Lloyd merely responds that this matter does not concern him. Instantly, Jack submits to this response, vowing to follow “anything you say, Lloyd. Anything you say.” This quick transition from stating a facet of his identity- what “kind of man” he is- to surrendering to the insufficient, ambiguous answers of the bartender shows Jack’s misplaced value on the approval of other men. Later in the movie, Kubrick is making a clear thematic and visual parallel between Jack hunting down his wife and son and Lloyd having murdered his own family in the hotel decades earlier. The sheer inversion of identity and loyalty to his own family is Kubrick’s horrifying testament to men’s willingness to seek the approval of other men as they engage in emotionally unbalanced ‘friendships.’

While the men in Kubrick's films struggle externally with other humans, whether they are attacking women, perceiving men as threats, or following blindly in the footsteps of other disturbed male egos, they also suffer internally from conflicting factions within their own character. Struggling with their dual personalities, Kubrick's characters have an inherent inability to survive daily life, ultimately leading to self destruction. In *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex must undergo severe psychiatric treatment as a result of his violent crimes. The experimental treatment leaves Alex a new, cooperative man, one that quickly submits to a beating from homeless people on the street. However, this passive model citizen can never fully quell his inherently violent identity. As a result, Alex recognizes that he is finally "cured" when a second set of treatments allows him to revert back to his original sadistic ways. In *The Shining*, Kubrick uses well-placed mirrors to represent the evolution of Jack's dual personalities. For example, Jack talks to Grady, the former caretaker, in the bathroom but never actually faces him. Instead, the men both speak to the other's reflection in the mirror. In another chilling instance, Kubrick manipulates the camera to starkly demonstrate how Jack has been integrated into the Overlook. When Wendy brings Jack breakfast in bed, the camera zooms out to show that the viewers have been watching Jack through the mirror without realizing. The camera zooms back in and continues shooting the scene, showing only Jack's reflection juxtaposed with the real Wendy. Moreover, while mirrors foreshadow Jack losing his sense of self, they also directly warn of his impending rampage in store for his family. The nonsensical mantra "redrum," when seen straightforward as it is written on the door, recalls Jack's former alcohol abuse. However, in the mirror ("murder") it foreshadows his sinister killing spree. This symbolism of reflection is Kubrick's visual message that his male characters often lose their identities in a conflict of duality.

In addition to this struggle with a twofold character, it is interesting to note that the disturbed male ego is often highlighted by a ubiquitous male 'code of honor.' These inverted morals attest to men's sheer delusion and inability to function according to society's accepted morality. The unrepentant Alex, whose idea of a "real horrorshow [good] night" involves rape and torture, reacts interesting when his friend Dim blows a raspberry at a woman singing a section of the Ninth Symphony.

Alex strikes him, scolding his friend for being a “bastard with no manners.” To the leader, physical violence is an appropriate punishment for a nonviolent, albeit impolite, gesture. Meanwhile, in *The Shining*, Jack takes his paternal obligation to a horrifying level, repeating Grady’s mantra that, as patriarch of the family, he must “correct” Wendy and Danny for misbehaving. Of course, this entails hunting them down with an axe while shouting such as “Honey, I’m home” and the infamous “Here’s Johnny!” His use of lines often associated with sitcom fathers further reflects his distorted moral code that compels him as a father to “take care of” his family. As a result of a troubled psyche, men grossly misinterpret these self-inflicted, ‘mandatory’ codes, allowing one small infraction to be punished by a much greater offense.

Kubrick does not linger on the concurrent issue of whether men are undeserving victims of their own perversions. Rather, he focuses on the inevitable result of demolition as the male characters condemn themselves while destroying the world around them. In contrast with the stark survival instinct that drives most of his female characters, the men’s lifestyles and final moments are marked by physical destruction and psychological imbalances. Kubrick does not grapple with the question of willpower and overcoming one’s impulses as his films suggest simply that men lack the vital component of rationality. Ultimately, it is the mere question of how long before each man will collapse unto himself, finally poisoned by his own venom.

*Instructor: Michael Burri, Writing Seminar: Cinema of Paranoia*

Yu Chen

## Rewriting the Script: Theatrical Politics in the New Post-September 11<sup>th</sup> World

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players,” claimed the discontent Jaques from *As You Like It*. It is a truism that applies not only for Shakespeare’s 16th century trage-comedies but in the contemporary arena of international politics. As Americans, we tend to perceive ourselves as the world’s protagonists, with a supporting cast of rival nations and outlaw leaders to confront. Indeed, America’s post 9/11 political rhetoric is a clear manifestation of the “theatrical dramatization” of our foreign relations; the United States casts itself as being at the vanguard of the “Free World,” confronted by a band of stubbornly “rogue nations” led by hostile, egomaniacal dictators. That being said, those infamous leaders often garner a significant amount of admiration from many, particularly those in predominantly Muslim or Third World countries. By portraying these leaders as rogue outlaws and their countries as pariah nations, Washington has actually only provided them with the very political livelihood they need to both rise to and remain in power.

This is because America’s inimitable status as the world’s remaining superpower has given dictators and aspiring tyrants alike a window of opportunity to exploit American foreign policy missteps, tap into a culture of victimization, and compensate for their own countries’ domestic failures. The United States embargo on Cuba, for example, has

provided Fidel Castro with a convenient scapegoat for Cuba's lackluster economic development. In reality Cuba can work around the embargo by importing the vast majority of its requisite goods and services from Europe, Canada, and China. However the Cuban government- in a bid to mask the true extent of its centrally planned economy's failures- often heaps blame upon the 1996 Cuban Democracy Act and other trade sanctions imposed against Castro's regime. In essence, Washington's policy of isolating the island nation has released Castro from true political accountability. Pressing issues such as institutionalized *sociolismo* corruption, an unequal and inadequate public rationing program, and a woefully inefficient state-run agricultural sector that is forced to import up to 80% of its own food are written off as the inevitable byproducts of "cruel" imperialist legislation. And while the average American might see the embargo as a means of isolating an oppressive government in Havana, a Third-World citizen would most likely see a contemporary Goliath bullying another David into submission on account of antiquated Cold-War political differences.

Indeed, well-publicized admonitions by the White House have become a warped badge of merit leaders can brandish to jumpstart or reinvigorate their political careers. America's cultural and economic dominance abroad has inevitably created a niche for the archetypal outspoken "anti-imperialist." Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been more than willing to step on stage and play the role, although his first term in office was shaky at best. Iran currently faces a 24% inflation rate, a \$44 billion budget deficit, and billions missing in fuel imports and oil revenue, despite the fact that Ahmadinejad himself once campaigned on a platform of "putting the petroleum income on people's tables." His opponents have charged that these missing funds are linked to cronyism and nepotism at the highest levels of office; Ahmadinejad's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, for instance, are frequently awarded billion-dollar government contracts despite an apparent absence of suitable qualifications or merit. That being said, Ahmadinejad was also the overwhelming favorite to win the June presidential elections throughout the spring. Many religious conservatives perceived him as a "Persian Nixon going to China," reasoning that the flood of condemnation and criticism he has received from the Bush Administration was a sign that he would be the most capable of bargaining for and asserting Iranian and

Islamic interests in the face of the West.

Of course, many will argue that beginning a genuine dialogue with these regimes entails an implicit legitimization of their leaders and policies. There is likewise a belief that mutual cooperation or coexistence is the first step in a slippery slope that ends with appeasement- the image of Neville Chamberlain brandishing his fanciful 1938 “peace for our time” agreement invariably comes to mind. The trick, however, is to walk a fine line between spineless appeasement and outright confrontation by recognizing that Washington often plays a central role in creating the very political villains and demagogues that it opposes. Consider this: the most significant variable introduced in the weeks prior to the Iranian presidential elections (which was fashioned to be a relative cakewalk for Ahmadinejad) was President Obama’s promise of a fresh “clean-slate” relationship between the US and the Muslim world. Indeed, a few kind words videotaped for the Persian New Year had done wonders in obligating Iranian voters to confront Ahmadinejad’s own executive missteps instead of simply being cowed into fixating upon a perceived looming threat of the West. “False face must hide what the false heart doth know,” Shakespeare once claimed in *Macbeth*. Let us take off the stage masks and see if these regimes have any true substance behind them, or if they are simply failed governments seeking refuge behind the specter of anti-Americanism.

### Works Cited

- Morgan Neill, “Cuban Leader Looks to Boost Food Production,” CNN.com, 17, April 2008 <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/americas/04/16/cuba.farming/index.html>.
- Iqbal Latif, “Core members of Iran’s council of Economic Governance”, *Global Politician*, 4, July 2007. <http://www.globalpolitician.com/23036-iran>.
- Ken Ballen and Patrick Doherty, “The Iranian People Speak”, *The Washington Post*, 15 June 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/14/AR2009061401757.html>.

*Instructor: Jennifer Jahner, Writing Seminar: Inventing the Outlaw*

## Elisheva Goldberg

### The Sound of Silence

Dr. Jones teaches the value of silence. A bombastic personality by nature, I am what you might call the “talker” type. Dr. Jones is not. I am of an excitable nature. Dr. Jones is not. I have a happy-go-lucky attitude about just about everything. Dr. Jones does not. Dr. Jones is the sit-in-silence, wear-one-outfit-per-season, speak-only-when-spoken-to type. On the first day of tenth grade, Dr. Jones spoke to my language arts class. He explained the rules of the class in a Texan drawl (with such statements as: “Naow...you ca’ write wi’ a pencil, but ‘a won’t read it. Use a pen.”), handed out the schedule for the semester in weak blue folders, and told us to do all of the assignments listed in them based on the provided examples by the dates written in the provided calendar. Then he shut up. He sat down in his chair, nursed a cup of still steaming black coffee, put on his reading glasses, and ignored us. We were left to do whatever we wanted. Some kids put their heads down and went to sleep. Others ruffled through the schedule nonchalantly. I started to do my math homework. From that day forward, I did my math homework every day in Dr. Jones’ class, and I learned more from him that I have from almost any other teacher. It is Dr. Jones’ silence that allowed him to truly teach me.

Some of my classmates were upset after the first day of Dr. Jones’ class. They were upset that he stopped “teaching.” They claimed that they could not do the assignments he gave because he had never *told* them what to do. They felt that they could not learn given only the few meager examples from the blue folder. They grumbled that his class was



a waste of time, that their parents were paying for private school and that the teacher should at least *try* to teach something! They were used to teachers reaching out to them, but here was a teacher asking them to reach out to him —I and they did not like it. But I saw it differently then, and I still do. I see Dr. Jones as a man beyond the pettiness of the classroom, a man who can do things just because they are *good* that way, and not because norms dictate them. He drinks his coffee black, brewing it right in the classroom because that's what works for him. He plays softball in the JCC league, the most intense shortstop I've ever seen. A serious-looking man whose rare smile makes you proud to have brought it to his face, Dr. Jones was able to teach through his students' need to make him happy. Behind the deep lines and peppery brows of that face are the shadows of a devoted reader, a loyal teammate, an inspired actor, and a caring teacher. I found those shadows in his silence, and my respect for Dr. Jones grew with each passing class.

Dr. Jones requests, appeals, and demands outright that students take initiative. Dr. Jones tries to infuse a sense of responsibility, accountability, and self-motivation that cannot happen if he is to "teach" like every other teacher. He refuses to nestle students under his wing. His enigmatic classroom performances reflect his opinion that students need to jump out of the proverbial nest of their own volition so that each can independently learn to fly. Dr. Jones' silence forces his students us to come to him, and come to him I did. I came with my rough drafts. I would present them to him, and he would mark them up, sit me down, and go through them with me. No sentence he uttered was unnecessary. Each word he spoke was chosen precisely. I listened faithfully, hearing the pauses and the silences as closely as I did to the words, drinking in his advice. When I rewrote the drafts we would do the same thing over again, and eventually I understood that it was because he was so silent that I was so intent on being precise, perfecting my writing, and on understanding exactly what he wanted. It was through of Dr. Jones' silence that I learned about character development, novels' themes and, most importantly, about myself. I learned that, verbose as I might be by nature, silence is, in fact, golden.

The depth of the luster of Dr. Jones' silence only became fully evident this semester in college, when I had the privilege to go, every Monday, to Parkway West High School in West Philadelphia with my

service learning writing seminar. There, my classmates and I have been privileged to engage tenth grade Parkway students in productive tutor-tutee relationships. From day one, I brought Dr. Jones' lesson of silence into the classroom, and it has served me well. I allow awkward silences and long pauses between questions. I have found that those quite moments are often more important for individual intellectual growth than any illustrative, encouraging, or explanatory words I can use to fill that void. I know that when a Parkway student sits mute, he or she is thinking, thinking hard, and learning. I know because Dr. Jones showed me.

*Instructor: Arnout Schurmans, Writing Seminar: No Child Left Behind*

# Melissa Goodman

## Marat/Sade's Play-Within-a-Play and Brecht's Epic Theater

In Peter Weiss' play *Marat/Sade*, the characters exist in two distinct worlds, the world inside an insane asylum and the world of the French revolution at the time of Jean-Paul Marat's murder. The latter is in fact a second play world inside the former, created by one of Weiss' characters, Sade. The element of the play-within-a-play allows Weiss to have two audiences present during the action of *Marat/Sade*. The first is a chorus of actors Weiss creates to watch the play-within-the-play. The second is the real audience watching the piece as a whole. Written just a few years after Brecht published his manifesto, "The Modern Theater is the Epic Theater," *Marat/Sade* explores the tension between Brecht's definitions of dramatic theater and epic theater with the use of the two audiences. The play-within-a-play dramatic device is the distinguishing feature that makes Weiss' *Marat/Sade* an example of Brecht's epic theater.

Some may argue the play-within-a-play cannot make Weiss' work epic theater because it, in itself, is dramatic theater. The play-within-a-play demonstrates all the criteria of this genre of theater which Brecht delineates in his manifesto, including transmitting an emotional experience that the spectators directly relate to and feel (Brecht 37). Centered around plot with a steady course of rising action, the play-within-a-play heightens the emotions of the audience. In each scene,

Weiss targets the senses by creating a circus-like environment, with the use of singing, dancing, rhyming, and suspense. The play-within-a-play ends with the climatic murder of Marat, after which the inmates break out into chaotic violence on stage. In Peter Brook's film version of the *Marat/Sade*, Brook exaggerates the emotionally charged reaction of the actors watching Sade's play. Agitated, they try to stand up and leave in a dazed and confused manner. Sade's play successfully toys with the emotions of the audience, one of the main goals of dramatic theater.

The play-within-the-play may be dramatic theater, but the way it functions as a whole makes *Marat/Sade* epic theater. The spectators to Sade's play may have an extreme, emotional reaction, but this is Sade's audience, not Weiss'. In Coulmier's prologue, he addresses a "you" that Brook interprets as the characters watching Sade's play in the asylum. The true audience of Brook's production, however, is of course those watching the movie. Therefore, from the beginning, Weiss distinctly separates his viewers from Sade's. The chorus of actors always remains in front of the true audience to absorb the initial emotional impact of whatever is happening on stage. By shielding the true audience with one of actors, the former is put in a position so far removed from the action that even though they may empathize with the characters' emotions, they do not directly undergo the same emotional experience. This, Brecht argues, in "The Epic Theater and its Difficulties," is the defining characteristic of epic theater: "epic theater appeals less to the feeling than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with things" (Brecht 23). Brecht believed that once people could rationally observe and judge a social injustice on stage, they would feel compelled to take action outside the theater. As a result of the distance between the actors and the observers in *Marat/Sade*, the audience is better able to understand the social or political statement the playwright is trying to make, without being emotionally overwhelmed.

Because Weiss juxtaposes the epic theater of *Marat/Sade* with the dramatic theater of the play-within-a-play, one can infer that Weiss is not only trying to make a statement on society but on drama as well. In the play, the true audience witnesses the emotional impact of its play world counterpart. This emotional impact prevents the audience of actors from understanding the social implications of the Sade's play.

Consequently, those off stage or on the other side of the screen can see that indeed Sade's intention was to stir emotion and create chaos, not to leave any lasting social impact. By giving the true audience an example of another's reaction to dramatic theater, Weiss shows that when people are blinded with emotion, they cannot think rationally. In doing this, Weiss critiques dramatic theater while advocating epic theater. By choosing to present *Marat/Sade* with the criteria Brecht outlines, he reaffirms Brecht's notion that the modern theater is the epic theater.

### **Works Cited**

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theater: the Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed and Trans. John Willet. London: Hill and Wang, 1992.

Weiss, Peter. *Marat/Sade*. Trans. Geoffrey Skelton. Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2002.

*Instructor: Shoshana Enelow, Writing Seminar: Deviance In Modern Drama*

## Devon Anderson

### The Damage of the Documentary

Documentaries today carry more force with the public than ever before. The general consensus seems to be that such films help to inform the average person about important sociopolitical issues and thus create a more politically aware nation. When we look at the documentaries themselves, however, we find little to make us applaud the filmmakers. Modern documentaries, far from informing viewers, often promote biased political agendas and use manipulative, sensationalist tactics to sway them to the filmmaker's position. Rather than helping to open our eyes, such films work to bring down our collective IQ and further blur the already-fading distinctions between education and entertainment.

Without a doubt, the rise of documentaries has fundamentally changed America, and admittedly some of these changes have been for the better. These days it is actually cool to go see a film about the war in Iraq, gun control issues or the obesity problem, as would have been unimaginable only 10 years ago. Modern documentaries have helped urge Americans to greater political involvement and understanding of the hot-button topics of the time, spoon-feeding basic politics to the average Joe Shmoe who – let's be honest – would not otherwise take the time to learn about such things. In the world of iPods, the Internet and 900 channels, capturing people's attention is half the battle, so the public interest that documentaries have raised is nothing to scoff at. Less commendable, however, is the quality of the documentaries themselves.

Arguably, it was reality TV that spelled that beginning of the end for the documentary. *The Surreal Life* and its unholy brethren have radically transformed people's expectations of films depicting "real life," making the manipulation, exaggeration and sensationalization of reality the norm. The modern documentary, as pioneered by Michael Moore and his *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), was born at the height of the reality craze sparked by *Survivor* two years earlier. As reality TV whetted our appetites for cheap pseudo-realism, it also enabled the careers of directors such as Moore and Morgan Spurlock who, rather than producing true reflections of real life, create fun-house mirrors to further their own politics. It doesn't help matters, either, that the only skill needed to make a documentary is the ability to wield a camera. The incredible ease with which documentaries can be made, coupled with the power documentarists possess, is bound to attract every attention-starved hack this side of Hawaii. The severe limitations on the amount of material one can cram into a piece, furthermore, make the documentary the ideal form of expression for simple minds who can package their McDonald's politics into an easily-consumable package.

It is a woefully uninformed public that believes such things could educate the woefully uninformed. Far from opening the eyes of the populace, the bastard-child of reality TV and hackery can only contribute to the dumbing-down of America, exemplifying the truth that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" on a massive scale. Meaningful political knowledge can only be acquired through long effort and a sincere desire for understanding. The lazy belief that we can learn all we need to know through the medium of the popular movie only feeds into today's consumerist, quick-fix culture, the very machine against which Moore and his ilk would so like to rage. The passing-off of middle school politics as deep knowledge and the popular film as education can only lead to a more ignorant and soulless world – a future in which world issues are packaged and consumed like Big Macs.

*Instructor: Jo Ann Caplin, Writing Seminar: Television Criticism*

## Contributors

**Devon Andersen** is a senior in the College of Arts and Sciences.

**John Bang** is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences and hails from Pleasanton, California, where he has spent eight years growing up. He has lived in South Korea, Texas, Illinois, and finally New York. In his free time, he can be found reading incomprehensible tomes, playing tennis, or strumming on his guitar. His on-campus activities include writing for the Daily Pennsylvanian or volunteering with LIFT West Philly.

**Jayne Chen** is a sophomore from Taiwan and currently pursuing a dual degree in systems engineering and cinema studies. When she is not figuring out how the two majors can be combined, she likes to eat, sleep, watch movies, create awkward situations, and take part in Communitex activities.

**Sam Bieler** graduated from The Montclair Kimberly Academy in 2008, and is now a proud member of the University of Pennsylvania Class of 2012. He is pursuing a double major in history and criminology and spends much of his spare time working for the University of Pennsylvania Nominations and Elections Committee. In addition to writing non-fiction pieces he also writes humor articles for the *Punchbowl Magazine* and political pieces for the *Penn Democrats*.

**Yu Chen** was born in China and moved to the United States when he was five. Currently, he is a World History major and an Arabic and Islamic Studies minor. After graduation, he would like to serve on a Peace Corps mission, hopefully somewhere in Central Asia or the Middle East, and ultimately work as an independent journalist or in the military. Yu's hobbies include football, basketball, wrestling, playing the guitar, and gardening.

**Nicole Duddy** is currently a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences. She hails from Rumson, New Jersey although she spent four



years up north attending Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. She suggests that everyone come visit her on the Jersey Shore. At Penn, she is pursuing degrees in Communications and French while partaking in SPEC Concerts and Sigma Kappa Sorority. Nicole loves exercising, dancing, watching the Food Network, and eating downtown with her friends.

**Raquel Finkelstein** is from Teaneck, New Jersey, and is a graduate of the Frisch School in Paramus, of the same state. A sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences, Raquel plans to study some combination of Political Science, Economics and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. She treats food with the utmost seriousness and is honored to be published in *3808*.

**Wai-Lumn Foong** is a sophomore in Wharton and hails from the miniscule country of Singapore. She is a graduate of Hwa Chong Institution and has to regularly assure people that yes, they do speak English in Singapore. She is currently enjoying her education here in Penn and is perennially appreciative that various liberal arts courses count towards graduation. (Phew!) Wai Lumn enjoys reading, taking long walks and toying with the idea of an Anthropology major.

**Melissa Goodman** is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Elisheva Goldberg** is a sophomore in the college, hailing from Seattle, Washington. The co-Editor-In-Chief of *Kedma*, Penn's journal for Jewish thought, culture, and Israel, Elisheva is thrilled to be published in *3830*. Elisheva is majoring in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Elisheva is currently studying Arabic in Egypt for the summer and plans to study abroad in Morocco in the fall.

**Jin Guan** is from Fuzhou, China. He is fluent in both Chinese and English. Several years ago, his parents immigrated to the United States. Today, they reside in Northeast Philadelphia, working for Chinese restaurants. In his free time, Jin enjoys watching sports, shooting pool, watching action movies, and playing ping pong and basketball. At Penn, his majors are East Asian Languages and Civilizations and Political

Science.

**Gloria Herbert** is from Redlands, California and is a sophomore in the Wharton School. On campus, she is a member of Wharton Women and the Delta Delta Delta sorority. She enjoys playing beach volleyball, eating good food, and spending time with friends.

**Chloe Ho** is from the city of Hong Kong, and as such can barely ride a bike but can navigate crowds and jaywalk like nobody's business. She is hoping to study Philosophy, Politics and Economics in the College of Arts and Sciences. At Penn, she is very involved in the Assembly of International Students and Penn Social Entrepreneurship Mentoring.

**Nick Hogan** who resides in Northborough, Massachusetts, is a sophomore Bio-Engineering student. Nick also holds many other academic interests in areas such as economics, history, and political science. At Penn, Nick is a volunteer member of the UA and a member of SPEC Connaissance. He enjoys music of nearly all types, dry British humor, vacations on Cape Cod, and all food found at BoxLunch in Wellfleet, MA (and its nine other locations).

**Faizan Khan** is a sophomore at Wharton. He graduated from Connetquot High School in Bohemia, NY. He has lofty goals of using his degree to create economic changes in 3rd-world countries through business development. He currently enjoys giving tours to prospective students, and strives to enhance student life through the Undergraduate Assembly. The Public Relations writing seminar gave him a unique opportunity to improve his writing skills, critical for effective business communication.

**Meg Krasne** is a sophomore from Washington, D.C. and a graduate of the National Cathedral School for Girls. She has yet to decide on a major in the College of Arts and Sciences because, well, there are just too many compelling subjects from which to choose. She spends her time watching movies, reading the occasional book, and obsessing over the University of Kansas men's basketball games. She also can clap with one hand. Meg is a member of Penn's varsity softball team.

**Chen Yue (Jenny) Lin** was born and raised in Fujian, China. After eleven years spent in a small Chinese southern town, she moved to the U.S. in sixth grade not knowing any English. She is delighted to be published in *3808* and hopes to improve her writing during the remaining three years at Penn. Currently pursuing a dual-degree in the College and Wharton, she has not decided whether she wants to become a psychologist or a business woman.

**Max McKenna** is a senior English major concentrating on modernist literature. This coming year, he will be working on a thesis about James Joyce. He plans to attend graduate school sometime after graduating, but feels there is no hurry. He works at the Kelly Writers House and enjoys exploring Philadelphia.

**Penny Metchev** is a sophomore in the Huntsman Program and comes from Australia. She chose to study at Penn in order to combine her interest in business with her passion for languages and literature. On campus Penny is the Wharton Representative for the 2012 Class Board, a Management 100 Team Advisor and on the board for the Beyond the Bottom Line club. Always energetic, she loves to bring her Aussie enthusiasm to any group meeting.

**Sierra Park-Chavar** is from Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. Currently a sophomore in the College, she plans to major in PPE and continue to law school. But until the actual work starts, she enjoys playing field hockey, being a member of the Alpha Phi sorority, working with PennFEED and watching campy horror flicks.

**Wiktoria Parysek** is a junior from Berlin. Along with Germany and now the U.S., Wiktoria has also lived in Poland and England. The latter is the reason why she must patiently explain to everyone who asks exactly why it's a good idea to study abroad in London this fall (it is—she's an English major). Wiktoria loves to write—creatively and journalistically—and hopes to combine that passion with her rousing call to teach.

**Gregory Rose** is from Staten Island, New York and is a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. In addition to pursuing degrees in Economics and International Studies through Penn's Huntsman Program, he is also aiming for a minor in Psychology. Greg's number one passion in life is foreign languages (right now he speaks Spanish and Portuguese) and he wants to learn at least one more before he gets too old to keep going. So far, Greg has been to Costa Rica, Guatemala, Jamaica, Australia, Mexico and Brazil because he loves to travel. Fun fact: he is mainly Jamaican, but also part Scottish!

**Aaron Ross** is a junior history major from Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey. He is also a member of Penn's 2008 Ivy League championship-winning soccer team and a tutor for Penn athletes. Aaron recently founded an on-campus international service and policy magazine, *Ambassadors Quarterly*. Additionally, Aaron enjoys traveling, listening to Dave Matthews Band, and reading the New York Times.

**Danish Saleh** is a senior Biochemistry student in the College of Arts and Sciences. Passionate about the molecular-based sciences and the evolution of medicine, Danish works in a research lab, investigating the molecular-physiology of diabetes. Furthermore, as one who seeks to not only learn about health but also live healthily, Danish runs, plays basketball and works out in his free time. In 2006, Danish graduated from William P. Clements High School in his hometown, Sugar Land, Texas.

**Darina Shtrakhman** is a sophomore from Warren, New Jersey, and is a graduate of The Pingry School. She hopes to major in political science or communications. Outside of class, she is the Administration/Finance beat reporter for the *Daily Pennsylvanian*, a section editor of *34th Street Magazine*, and a sister in Chi Omega.

**Callie Taylor** is from Portland, Oregon. She is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences and so far, her major is still undeclared although she is leaning towards studying psychology. She enjoys all things creative: dancing, reading, art, and writing. Here at Penn, she is a member of Sparks Dance Company and is also a member of the

Sigma Kappa Sorority. Other favorite activities include traveling to new countries and running. In the future, she hopes to study abroad and get more involved at Penn.

**Joel Tee** is a rising sophomore from Singapore, and is currently in the College of Arts and Sciences. He doesn't know what he wants to major in yet, but plans to study economics, English or political science. He enjoys reading, backpacking to exotic countries, watching eclectic films, and playing the guitar in his spare time.

**Cassandra Turcotte** is a sophomore from the west. A major in physical anthropology, Ms. Turcotte frequents Penn's lovely museum for her studies and for work. Because of her determination to maintain a constant level of industry, she engages herself in diverse interests such as reading, painting, and the composition of poetry. Above all, however, as a quiet and shy woman, she spends most of her evenings at home in the company of tea and textbooks.

**Evgeny A. Volkov** is an international student from Chelyabinsk, Russia. After high school and before attending Penn, he spent a year studying in the English language program of Columbia University. Trilingual in Russian, German, and English, Evgeny seeks to concentrate in finance and operations management at the Wharton School. His goal is to work in private equity or venture capital industry in Russia. His interests include music, wakeboarding, soccer, ice hockey, and Formula One auto racing.

**Adina Weinblatt** grew up in Great Neck, NY and took a year off to study abroad in Israel before coming to Penn. She is a sophomore in the College, who is majoring in Psychology and minoring in NELC. She hopes her Penn education will help her achieve her goal of working with people with special needs.

**Freddy Wexler** is a New York songwriter signed to EMI Music Publishing where he has written for established artists such as Kelly Clarkson, Gwen Stefani, Marion Raven, and Tina Parol. At 19, Freddy signed to Virgin Records—allegedly the largest record deal for any artist

in 2006. With the merger of Capitol Records, Freddy bought back the rights to his music and established his own, groundbreaking company: Fan Records—a record label run by fans. Freddy returned to UPENN in Spring '09 to complete his BA in English. His most recent project is the creation of Broadway musical, an endeavor he started three years ago in Kathy Demarco's Screenwriting course.

## Student Editors

**Andrea Anastasi** is a writing tutor and a senior in the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Jessica Bell** is a College junior from Woodbridge, Connecticut. She is majoring in Art History and will be studying in London this semester. She had fun reading all of the submissions to *3808* and looks forward to continue working as a writing tutor when she returns.

**Alli Blum** just graduated from Penn where she majored in English and got her certificate in Mandarin Chinese. As this journal goes to press and she reflects on her college years, she is grateful not only to have taken many great courses in departments across the College curriculum, but also to have had the opportunity to work with her fellow students at the Writing Center. No other place, no other activity, no other environment has stirred quite the same enthusiasm for learning within her.

**Eli Bobo** is a writing tutor and a junior in the Wharton School of Business.

**Sarah Brown** is a Junior in the College of Arts and Sciences and the Wharton School of Business. At Penn, she works as a Peer Tutor for the Critical Writing Program and as a Critical Writing Program Advisor. She is a Benjamin Franklin Scholar and a Joseph Wharton Scholar. Originally from Fairbanks, Alaska, Sarah enjoys outdoors activities such as canoeing and skiing. After winning the Rosemary Mazzatenta fellowship last summer, Sarah returned home to Alaska to work on a

project to market Native Alaskan artwork on a national scale.

**Philip Cawkwell** is from Bedford, New York, and is a junior in the college of Arts and Sciences. Majoring in the Biological Basis of Behavior with minors in chemistry and psychology, he enjoys reading fiction, studying science, music, and creative writing. Philip is a member of the Varsity Men's Cross Country and Track teams at Penn.

**Monisha Chakravarthy** is a writing tutor and a senior in the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Clare Foran** is writing tutor and a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences.

**Neel Lalchandani** is a senior from Oakland, California, majoring in Political Science. After spending a semester and summer working for the Constitution Project in Washington D.C., he is excited to return to Penn this fall, where he will resume working at the Writing Center and serving as a Board Member for the West Philadelphia Tutoring Project. He one day hopes to pursue a career in public interest law.

**Bennett Meier** is a rising senior studying economics in the College of Arts and Sciences. In addition to his work at the writing center, Bennett divides his time between schoolwork, the Pennchants A Cappella group and an incurable cooking habit.

**Brittany Mullings** is a Junior in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is majoring in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics with a concentration in Distributive Justice. In addition to being a dedicated writing tutor, Brittany is a Big Sister, a Girl's basketball Coach, the Director of a Hip Hop dance team and the Publicity Chair of the Caribbean American Student Association.

**Katie Siegmann** is a senior English major from Northeast Philly. In addition to being a peer tutor and working at CPCW, she also serves as secretary of the Newman Council, writes for the sports section of the DP and is a member of Kite and Key. She loves the Phillies, the shore

and Rita's Water Ice. For the past three summers she has worked as the Research and Development intern at Rita's Franchise Company.

**Riley Tagtmeyer** is a writing tutor and a senior in the Wharton School of Business.



