The title is enclosed in a decorative Art Deco frame. The frame features a central white shield-like shape with a curved top and a base that tapers into two stylized, wing-like or fin-like structures. The entire frame is rendered in a light red or pink color with a subtle gradient and a slight shadow effect, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The background of the cover is a solid, slightly darker shade of red.

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From the Editor



Editing *Popular Culture Review* for the last 27 years has been a labor of love. I would like to acknowledge the support of UNLV's College of Liberal Arts and Department of English as well as PCA/ACA and, most recently Policy Studies Organization.

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Popular Culture Review
Volume x, no. 2

<i>Introduction</i>	i
<i>Spaces of Seduction and Desire: Temples of Pleasure</i>	1
Liza Hansen	
<i>The Trouble with Tourists: Authenticity and the Failure of Tourism</i>	9
Jeffrey Alan Melton	
<i>Rewriting Henry James's <u>The Aspern Papers</u>: A Study of Martin Gabel's <u>The Lost Moment</u></i>	21
Craig Frischkorn	
<i>Philip Glass's <u>Monsters of Grace</u></i>	35
Wheeler Winston Dixon	
<i>Interrogating the Representation of African American Female Identity in the Films <u>Waiting to Exhale</u> and <u>Set It Off</u></i>	47
Tina M. Harris	
<i>Jacques Tourneur's World War II Films: From Unity to Chaos</i>	59
Gwenda Young	
<i>Positionality, Film, and Asian American Literature</i>	71
Qun Wang	
<i>What Disney Teaches Our Children About Leadership</i>	85
Becky L. Smith	
<i>High and Low in the Himalayas: Jon Krakauer's <u>Into Thin Air</u></i>	95
John Trombold	
<i>Archetypal Metaphor and <u>The Shadow</u> Radio Show</i>	109
Ronald R. Roach	

<i>Bhakti as a Popular Religious and Cultural Movement in India</i>	119
Satish Sharma	
<i>“Reading with One Hand” Nicholson Baker’s <u>Vox</u> and <u>The Fermata</u> and the Play of Sexual Imagination</i>	131
William Petty	
<i>American Popular Culture and the Politics of Race in Dr. Seuss’ <u>The Sneetches</u></i>	139
Earnest N. Bracey	
<i>Tom T. Hall and Critical Junctions in Country Music</i>	147
Bill Thompson	

Spaces of Seduction and Desire: Temples of Pleasure

“There is no doubt that architecture has a sensual, an erotic component, like life itself and people inhabiting space. The last decades of contemporary, sterile conceptions of architecture have had the effect of negating what for us human beings is such an important aspect”¹

What if architecture was that which continually lured, tempted, seduced and transformed? What if architecture was not a building but a making, a sexy seduction into possible, dangerously delightful worlds? What if architecture could stimulate the imagination and offer the prospect of pleasure, thereby uniting the head and the belly, fantasy and reality.

For many generations any architect who aimed for, or attempted to experience pleasure in architecture, was considered decadent. Insisting on elementary forms, grids, and axis was a deliberate regression to a secure order. A male order.

When we walk through the clean, empty, official but soulless office buildings, shopping malls, parking garages or airports, we are in environments that are meant to reflect a science of efficiency that has determined that there should be only as much building as strictly needed to perform a particular task, instead of representing the possibility of places where we could build new relationships — places of contemplation, absorption or interaction.

The contemporary city with its sensory deprivation, dullness, monotony and tactile sterility, the world of the straight streets, proud erections and rational relationships is largely a man made world. Most of us, however, see our world as alien, uncomfortable, visually and physically depriving and even dangerous. There are grand structures, impressive palaces and skyscrapers displaying human ambition and power. They are cold, oppressive and inhuman. Women’s interior spaces are warm, sheltering, rich and comfortable, an almost scary contrast to logic and basic need from an intellectual point of view. However, from a psychological point of view, these spaces are so desperately desired and spiritually comforting. Louis Sullivan attached “feminine” qualities as inappropriate to public buildings, as well as for public life. True architecture was to be virile, forceful and straight forward. “Women have wombs and men have penises: ergo women protect and men project. Men rule the outside, women rule the inside...”² However, the danger or reality of female nature threatens to pervert, seduce or even destroy the clear-cut and clean structures that men create.

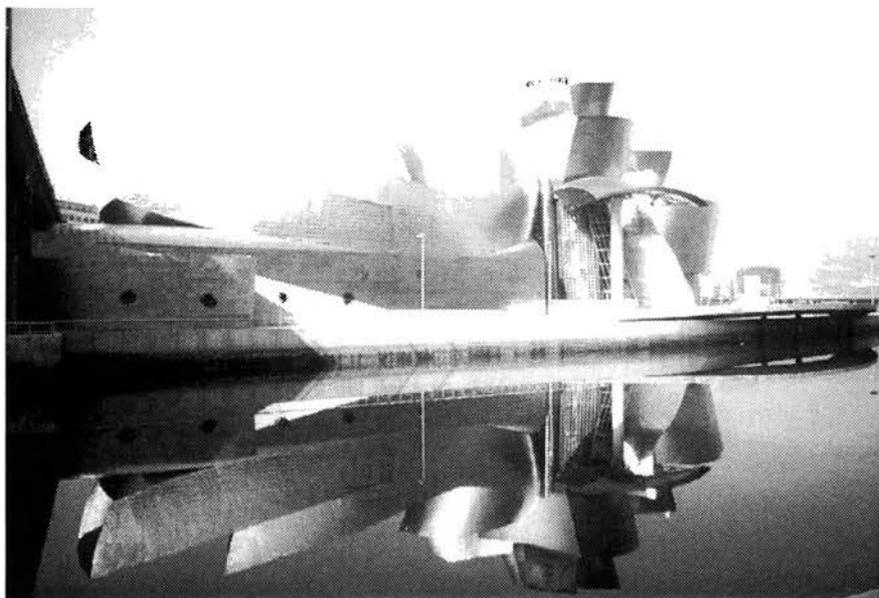
Male symbols in architecture are stereotypically phallic: lighthouses, watchtowers, observation towers, office towers, ivory towers, drilling rigs, television towers — symbols of power, potency, strength and beauty, success, ambition, fashion and outstanding achievement. This is architecture as a thing of the mind, a dematerialized or conceptual discipline with its typological and morphological variations.

According to Mary McLeod: “All that is mystical, dark, otherworldly” are examples of female symbols in architecture.³ Take caves, for example: mysterious, organic, asymmetrical, bizarre, orgiastic, suggesting warmth and security, coziness, a place to hide, embryonic life. This is architecture as an empirical event that concentrates on the senses, on the experience of space.

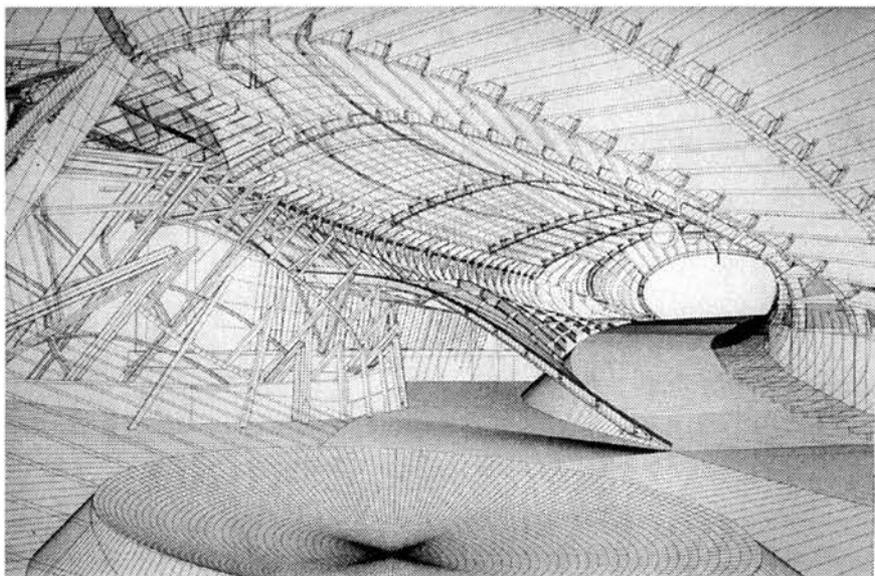
“Physicality and joy, play and pleasure, illusion and dream are the domain of Eros. Those are the wonderful dimensions beyond rationality and functionality, which we have largely lost in today’s architecture,”⁴ except for a few outstanding examples of architecture by, for example, Frank Gehry, Calatrava, Zaha Hadid, Philippe Starck, and Kas Oosterhuis.

Currently Oosterhuis and Le’na’rd exploit actual technologies, turning buildings into dynamic bodies. They envision that buildings will become fluid in form and behavior. In the hands of “keyboard cowboys,” design geometry becomes endlessly elastic. In the coming decades, buildings will evolve genetically and transform from mute platonic structures into responsive folded volumes absorbing, digesting and generating flows of information and energy. The new sensuous architecture fulfills its obligations in terms of functionality, but beyond that, fulfills multisensory qualities and increases the spiritual and physical wellbeing of its participants. Users are no longer just occupants, they are socially aware, critical and creative. Sensual buildings increase the spiritual and physical well-being of their occupants.

Philippe Starck’s architecture is at times metaphysical and surreal, at times enigmatic, but always full of role reversals and the negation of rules and established relationships. The only rules making up Starck’s own “rules” appear to be those of contradiction and transgression. The translation of this restless state does not take place in a merely literary/descriptive fashion, but occurs in terms of a strong emotional involvement, and relies on the empathy, the dynamic relationship that can exist between objects and people, and between people themselves. “We must correct ourselves with mysteries, absurdities, contradictions, hostilities, but also with the generosity that our environment offers us”(6). Starck does not want his architectural designs to possess autonomous values, but to be stimuli, “fertile surprises,” for the fulfillment of better living conditions. He sees his role as a dual one: to be didactic and provocative.



Guggenheim Museum at Bilbao, Spain by Frank O. Gehry.



Water Pavillion by Oosterhuis and Le'ha'rd.

Thus a building is not architectural because it seduces (i.e., the casino design), or because it fulfills some utilitarian function, (as does the office building). Rather, a building becomes architecture because it sets into motion the operations of the unconscious. It stirs emotions. Spaces of pleasure are irrational: hypnotic and unconscious, serious and sacred, frivolous and profane, forbidden and divine. Spaces of pleasure are rhythmic sequences of expansion and contraction, elegance, extravagance and exclusiveness. They are showy, theatrical, and/or mystical. They offer secrecy and a search for knowledge. They are bewildering and luring. Some of the best examples are sacred buildings, or places of consumption: resorts, retail stores, restaurants, cinemas, theaters or exhibition design. They attract and seduce, delivering what the heart desires. It is no wonder that the shopping mall became the female temple of the 1960's.

“One can dream of making the bodies of buildings as sensory as human bodies. Of making rooms—the spatial cavities within buildings—as intensely sensuous as one's own body cavities: an architecture to see, hear, feel, an architecture for the sensual imagination.”⁵

Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture sought to break down the distinction between order and nature, inside or outside, and the functions of separate rooms. Le Corbusier's cave-like rooms open up into sanctuaries of light hidden deep inside sculptural forms. Light undulates and creates spatial experiences, accentuated by intense colors. Antonio Gaudi's work displays all the elements of fluidity, mystery, joy, sensuality, and organic design that move you and make your spirit soar.

Frank Gehry's architecture uses the symbol of the fish, a slippery, asexual, yet sexually evocative element, as inspiration and metaphor for his luring and bewildering architecture. The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao is a sensational display of organic, flowing, rounded and austere geometrical shapes, anthropomorphic scale and technical abstraction, juxtaposing smooth, cool, glistening, soft, subtle or voluptuous surfaces. The building is accented by rhythmic sequences of expansion and contraction, elegance, extravagance, crudeness and exclusiveness. It conceals before it discloses, while revealing mythical, bewildering arrays of settings and encounters. It is showy, theatrical, cheerful, secretive. It moves the visitor to new spiritual discoveries.

Santiago Calatravas' structures are held in a magical state of suspense; the tension becomes visible, the movement is like a dance, while the structures are veiling and unveiling. Coop Himmelblau's architecture expresses an aggressive eroticism through violent confrontations and collisions. Just as eroticism is the pleasure of excess rather than the excess of pleasure, so the solution to sensory space is the imaginary blending of the rules of architecture and the experience of pleasure. Just as the sensual experience of space does not make architecture, the pure pleasure of the senses does not constitute eroticism. On the contrary, the plea-

sure of excess requires consciousness as well as voluptuousness.

“Transgression opens the door into what lies beyond the limits usually observed, but it maintains these limits. Transgression is complementary to the profane world, exceeding its limits, but not destroying it,” as George Bataille once said. Two issues that are rarely raised in architecture: taboo and transgression exceeding limits.

Architecture can host different forms of sensuous interaction between human beings, material and immaterial things: it can offer intimacy and openness, hide-outs, discoveries, disguise and revealing, insights, glimpses and vistas. Alfredo Arriba’s “Velvet Bar” is a game, a reaction. It is an amalgam of color and light. It is a baroque scheme, purposefully variegated, in which “functional style serves as an excuse for shaking off certain ties and entering less trodden paths” (6). All finishes are tactile and convey an aura of mystery: slate, teak, metals, enamels, sweeping sensual forms underlining the concept of skin.



The Blue Velvet Discoteque by Alfredo Arribas.

As any casino/resort or retail client will affirm in their design brief: “The design is to attract the crowds and seduce them to stay.”

Some of the defining characteristics of sensual architecture include:

- Imparts an aura of sensuousness, through the interaction of materials, forms and spatial exploration
- Fires imagination
- Sparks off encounters
- Sensitizes people to sensuality

If that is accomplished, people will buy, consume and most importantly: enjoy.

Additional elements of sensual design include:

- Variety: multi-sensory interplay of form and space, color, texture and light
- Eyecatching elements: symbols, playful ways of showing off
- Interplay of peeps, glimpses and vistas: ambiguity stirs imagination
- Concealment and revelation: secrecy, the contradictory interplay of veiling and unveiling, covering up and opening out, luring in and fending off. Ex: Christo’s wrapping of the Berlin Reichstag in 1995 — the cool sensuousness of the gigantic drapes touched everyone through its aura of mystery
- Gratify the tactile senses: trigger emotional and physical sensations
- Create possibilities to withdraw: nooks, niches, cozy corners, drapes: transcendence
- Variable lighting. People can be choreographed and lured like moths to the light. Light creates emotions and enhances spatial and physical sensations

Attractive spaces of movement include: corridors, staircases, ramps, thresholds. These are the spaces of the senses and the spaces of society, the dances and gestures that combine representation of space and the space of representation. Zaha Hadid’s Moonsoon Club expresses a visualization of seething passions: power, violence, fierceness, brutality, versus tenderness and devotion.⁷ Bodies not only move in, but generate spaces by and through their movements. Bodies carve all sorts of new and unexpected spaces through fluid or erratic motions. Architects always dream of channelling obedient bodies along predictable paths and occasionally along ramps that provide striking vistas, ritualizing the transgression of bodies in space.

However, space is not simply the 3-dimensional projection of a mental representation, it is something that is heard, felt and acted upon. The pervasive smells of rubber, concrete, the taste of dust; the discomforting rubbing of an elbow on an abrasive surface; the pleasure of fur-lined walls, the icy sensation of feet on

a cold wet granite floor; the echo of a hall. The architect designs the set, writes the script and directs the actors.

“We should dream of weaving together a new realm of male and female. A world in which interior and exterior spaces flow together, structures dissolve into surface, comfort and abstraction are intertwined.”⁸ There is another architecture, the architecture of weaving and trickling, the architecture of deceit, conceit, and seduction. An architecture of pleasure, full of secrets, contradictory interplays of veiling and unveiling, where spatial relationships trigger physical and emotional sensations.

Let’s create and request spaces that challenge the traditional distinctions between outside and inside, between the planned and the experienced, between artificial and natural and between the useful and pleasurable: spaces that seduce and arouse desire: temples of pleasure. “It is not we who have to change to live in Architecture, but architecture which has to react to our movements, our feelings, our moods, our emotions in such a way as to make us want to live in it...”⁹

Architecture is the ultimate erotic act. Carry it to excess and it will reveal both the traces of reason and the sensual experience of space.

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Liza Hansen

Notes

1. Wolfgang Meisenheimer, Ad, no.9: “Architektur und menschlicher Koerper,” Duesseldorf, 1982, p. 88.
2. Aaron Betsky, “Building Sex,” New York 1995, p.130.
3. Mary McLeod, “Architecture and Femininity.”
4. Gunter Feuerstein, “Eros - Architektur – Sexualitat,” in: *Der Architekt*, 2/1987, 91-96, quotation p. 91.
5. Wolfgang Meisenheimer, “Zur Einfuehrung in den Themenkreis,” in: *Architektur und Menschlicher Koerper*, Ad,no.9, Dusseldorf 1982, p.14.
6. Alfredo Arribas, “Architecture and Design. Arquitectura y Designo,” 1986-1992, text by George Bertsen, Tubingen, Berlin, 1993, p. 42.
7. Zaha Hadid, “Moonsoon Club in Sapporo, Japan,” in *Internationales Interior Design*, 1991/92
8. Aaron Betsky, “Building Sex,” New York, 1995, p. 9.
9. Coop Himmelblau, “Architektur ist jetzt. Projekte, (Un)bauten, Aktionen, Statements, Zeichnungen, Texte, 1968-1983,” Stuttgart / New York 1983, p. 173.

The Trouble with Tourists: Authenticity and the Failure of Tourism

On August 30, 1997, Diana, Princess of Wales, died along with her companion and their driver in a car accident resulting from their attempt to escape aggressive photographers, another tragic act in the theater of the absurd. In the days following the crash, its sadness dominated the media, hundreds of people placed flowers at the scene of the wreck (among other spots around the world), and many scoured the area hoping to find mementos and souvenirs to help them remember Diana.

This tragedy initially spawned much social commentary, some of it superficial, some of it profound. Momentarily, the press attacked itself and questioned its behavior; momentarily, the public joined in this criticism. Then, after a while, life for most people returned to the way it was before. The show must go on. Something, however, has changed for ever. It occurred to me when I first saw the blue flashing lights at the crash scene, again when I watched the crowds at the Pont de l'Alma tunnel crash site, then again when CNN provided a map detailing its location. In addition to marking the tunnel itself, this map also highlighted the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, and the Arc de Triomphe. If this map is any indication—and it is—then we have witnessed not only the sad and senseless death of a beloved public figure but also the birth of a tourist sight. The crash itself marked the spot, and within a few hours the cameras, the flowers, the tears, and CNN all helped to authenticate it.

A middle-aged Parisian was one of the first to tour the crash site, and his movements were captured by the CNN camera. He picked up a small piece of metal he assumed—he hoped—came from Diana's car. When a reporter asked him why, he could offer no explanation other than to say he just wanted *something*, a souvenir, a memory. Indeed, we have all wanted something, and as others—tomorrow, next month, next year, next millennium—visit this sight, they, too, will want something to take home with them, something to remember by. What, then, will be the expectations of these future tourists? How will they define their experiences at this new sight in Paris, and how many of those experiences have already been defined by CNN, that early souvenir hunter, and by the countless others who continue to follow?

In order to try answering these questions, we need to consider the nature of the tourist experience at large. Although this specific example reveals an especially poignant context for touristic behavior, it is simply a small part of our Tourist Age, an era wherein human experience increasingly derives from two ostensi-

bly opposing desires: our need for authenticity and our seemingly endless capacity to structure the world in order to avoid it.

“Don’t be a tourist,” reads a commercial for *The Travel Channel*, a popular cable television network that provides, as its name implies, travel documentaries, promotions, and information. The message has potentially two contexts: the direct one encourages viewers to tune into *The Travel Channel* to learn about foreign cultures and thereby avoid mistakes and embarrassing situations while traveling; the indirect one encourages viewers to stay at home and watch the rest of the world from the comfort of their armchairs. “Don’t be a tourist,” indeed. We need also to consider a third implication, a message that has been intertwined with tourist behavior since the beginning of the first boom in the mid-nineteenth century. The sub-text of the direct message reads: by learning of foreign cultures—by watching television in this case—one can transcend from “tourist” (a lowly creature) to “traveler” (an altogether likable creature). The promotion is a clever one; it easily taps into one of the most pervasive and powerful sentiments of the Age of Tourism: everybody wants to travel, but nobody wants to be a tourist, at least conceptually. And there is the rub—a great popular movement in which hordes of people want to participate but for which the same people refuse to admit their participation. As Dean MacCannell, in his seminal study *The Tourist* (1976), wryly notes, “tourists dislike tourists” (10).

Tourism is thriving; without question it continues to reshape the economic and social makeup of the world, and it shows no sign of abating. Our cultural ambivalence towards tourism—our embracing of its trappings in practice versus our denial of our complicity in theory—has engendered, then, a continuous battle between “travelers” and “tourists,” a struggle for identity that ultimately may exist only semantically. There is no resolution in the foreseeable future.

However, it is important to remember that this phenomenon is not a late-twentieth-century creation; the conflicts over travel identity were well in place by the time the tourist boom in America began in earnest after the Civil War. Moreover, the word “tourist” has been around for quite a while (The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the earliest reference at 1780), yet it did not begin to take on widespread negative connotations until the mid-nineteenth century, coinciding, it should come as no great surprise, with the increased numbers of tourists moving energetically around the globe. *Blackwood’s Magazine* in England, for example, provides one of the most aggressive attacks upon this supposedly new breed of traveler. In an article titled “Modern Tourism” (1848), the editors note that technological advances in travel have had beneficial effects but have also initiated a decidedly unfortunate one: “they have covered Europe with Tourists...” (185). The

article continues by noting that such mass traveling “spoils all rational travel; it disgusts all intelligent curiosity; it repels the student, the philosopher, and the manly investigator, from subjects which have been thus trampled into mire by the hoofs of a whole tribe of travelling bipeds, who might rejoice to exchange brains with the animals which they ride” (185). Such a vituperative assertion is not uncommon, and *Blackwood's* creates a metaphorical association that remains common in the late twentieth century: tourists are brutish, mindless “bipeds” with a powerful herd instinct and “hoofs” trample underfoot true thinking travelers. (So as not to be unfair to other herd animals, the editors generously imply that tourists are less intelligent than the quadrupeds upon whose backs they ride.) A generation later, as the tourist movement became firmly rooted in the United States after the Civil War, cultural critics echoed similar disgust. Henry James, in his “Americans Abroad,” regrets the tourist boom and how, in his view, it reflects poorly on the nation as a whole. He writes, “[a] very large proportion of the Americans who annually scatter themselves over Europe are by no means flattering to the national vanity. Their merits, whatever they are, are not of a sort that strikes the eye—still less the ear. They are ill-made, ill-mannered, ill-dressed” (209). Thus begins the notion of the “ugly American.” Interestingly, James goes on to note that the American tourist travels to Europe as “a provincial who is terribly bent upon taking, in the fulness of ages, his revenge” (209). Perhaps James is correct, and the American “revenge” upon Europe in the Age of Tourism continues well over a hundred years later and is best typified by Euro-Disney (but that belongs to another discussion). In any case, we have inherited the legacy of a touristic self-identity that, no matter our nationality, remains “ill-made, ill-mannered, and ill-dressed.”

The great movement itself has created its own self-loathing. Critics have long recognized this struggle and illustrate the deep abiding desire to distinguish between travelers and tourists, thereby revealing how fragile and perhaps even arbitrary such definitions of behavior may be when used to differentiate between the desirable and undesirable. Among twentieth-century cultural critics, Daniel Boorstin provides the most compelling and energetic discussion of the nature of tourism, and aggressively defends the separation of traveler and tourist identity. By emphasizing the historical connections between *travel* and *travail*, he states that to travel is to work, and thus he makes a crucial distinction, as he sees it: the traveler is active, the tourist passive. Travelers seek and earn experiences, while tourists sign up for programs and sit back to wait for experiences to come to them. For travelers, there is work to be done; it will not be easy, but it promises rewards worth the discomfort. This image is a powerful and attractive one; it is also a romantic one—the lone traveler enduring trials and tribulations because he or she *has* to, because “it’s there.” Many of us are up for the ideal, but few, really, are up to the actual physical and emotional challenge such a self-image requires in praxis.

The tourist identity, in the end, can only suffer in contrast to such a romantic ideal. For tourists, there is little work to be done; it will be easy, and it promises comfort. Though this image may attract our more hedonistic urges, it does, nonetheless, falter aesthetically in comparison to the romantic traveler. It is no wonder that many of us wish to distance ourselves from such a demarcation. But in so doing, we misrepresent what it is we do when we do indeed travel. Moreover, we deny the effects of those travels on ourselves and the world at large.

Jonathan Culler notes that, inadvertently, we thus become what we fear. He writes, "Ferocious denigration of tourists is in part an attempt to convince oneself that one is not a tourist. The desire to distinguish between tourists and real travelers is a part of tourism—integral to it rather than outside it or beyond it" (156). Culler makes a provocative connection between travelers and tourists, and reiterates MacCannell. Any tourist can always find someone with *more* touristic characteristics to hate. The back-packer looks down on the man in a rental car who looks down on the crowds in a tour bus, and these people, in turn, may look down on those who stay at home watching *The Travel Channel*. All of these people are travelers, and all are tourists; the words are synonymous. This need in many tourists to distance themselves from one another creates an interesting phenomenon: while partaking in a thoroughly communal activity—notions of the lone, romantic wanderer notwithstanding—the individual participants are encouraged to feel hostility toward their partners in the process and deny their connections wholly or partially.

No matter what term we choose to describe ourselves as we travel, all tourists in one form or another seek to escape from their daily lives, but it remains unclear what it is we escape *to*. The discussion above addresses the nature of the tourist, but a question remains: what is the nature of the tourist experience? How do the back-packing tourist, the automobile tourist, the bus tourist, and even the vicarious tourist at home respond to their travels? Though many critics have entered this debate and have responded to *The Tourist*, MacCannell's study remains invaluable in examining how we define the tourist experience. MacCannell refers to tourists as "sightseers" who spread throughout the world searching for experience which they consume voraciously. He notes, as well, that, despite the protestations from the good-old-days-of-travel camp, *all* tourists seek "deeper involvement" with the cultures they visit "to some degree" (10). The phrase "to some degree" is a crucial one, of course. For those who insist on a definitive and absolute distinction between traveler and tourist, MacCannell allows for some solace. Yes, everyone is a tourist, but there are variations on behavior within that definitive realm. One tourist's desire for "deeper involvement" with the Grand Canyon, for example, may be satisfied by a cursory glance over the edge, then a return to the gift shop; another's degree of interest may only be met by a ten-day hike into

the canyon itself. Nonetheless, the differences between the two versions of “deeper involvement” are in degree, not essence. We need also to recognize that another factor influences how we seek “deeper involvement”—the desire for comfort. Widespread tourism, after all, derives from a social structure that promotes leisure as a goal. Tourists balance the desire for experience with the desire for comfort, and this has *always* been the case, even well before the tourist explosion of the mid-nineteenth century. If these two impulses are not diametrically opposed, they are at least very often in practical conflict. As beautiful as much of the Grand Canyon landscape is, it is, after all, a desert. It is hot. It is dry. And the gift shops have air conditioning and ice cream. The tourist at the Grand Canyon who has little interest in moving beyond the ready-made, programmed sights from the rim prefers to remain always near comfort that closely resembles his or her home. The tourist who chooses to hike deeply into the canyon itself prefers to forego his or her normal comforts, momentarily, and escape the comforts of home. This example forces a question: which tourist to the Grand Canyon gains an authentic experience?

Henry David Thoreau can help us with this query. According to *Walden* (1854), one of the most provocative and challenging travel books ever written—even though he traveled only a couple of miles—Thoreau went to the woods to “live deliberately” and thus avoid coming to the end of his life only to realize, too late, that he “had not lived,” and by implication that he had remained too passive, too comfortable. By expressing his desire “to suck out all the marrow of life” (90-91), Thoreau perfectly encapsulates the ideal of the romantic traveler (which, as discussed above, can only be an ideal). Regardless of how short the physical journey, it would be work, and it would be hard. It would also be original. Still, it is important to remember that he had plenty of help and visitors, being only a few miles from Concord. In any case, is such an experience truly still available? We may appreciate Thoreau’s rather local traveling and his two-year-two-month experiment on Walden Pond, but few modern readers would opt for his brand of travel, even if they embraced his desire “to live deliberately.” Moreover, there are few ponds like his Walden around, and few of us, for that matter, are friends with someone, like Ralph Waldo Emerson, who owns lakefront property. Still, we crave—to some degree—to match at least Thoreau’s basic desire, and this craving manifests itself most often as a search for the authentic. Herein is the key to the ultimate and inescapable failure of tourism: no matter how often it promises the authentic, it can never deliver authenticity, and, moreover, it never did, even when tourists called themselves travelers, even when the trees grew thick and undisturbed on Walden Pond.

Walker Percy, in “The Loss of the Creature,” offers an interesting appraisal of the tourist’s dilemma. In referring to the Grand Canyon, he questions

whether any of us can approach the same sense of wonder—the authentic sense of discovery—that the first Spanish explorer, Garcia Lopez de Cardenas, felt upon his encounter. Using “P” to denote the value of the authentic discovery, Percy asserts, “if the place is seen by a million sightseers, a single sightseer does not receive value P but a millionth part of value P” (46). The primary reason for this devaluation is not the numbers of tourists, necessarily, but the amount of information that we unavoidably carry with us as we go to the canyon. We are burdened by a complex, deeply-rooted collection of data that creates in us expectations of “The Grand Canyon”—an image, an idea, not a physical phenomenon. We can see the canyon not for what it is but for what we have been told it is. The “symbolic machinery” that creates our expectations and informs us also causes a “loss of sovereignty.” We are, therefore, no longer in charge of our experience, and the more we travel, the more we lose the horizon. Though we should probably apply Percy’s value “P” not to a Spanish explorer but to an unknown native American, his example still illustrates intuitively that the trouble with tourism, in this sense, is the trouble with travel. It affects anyone who follows another, and, with very few exceptions, we are followers. Again, this frustration is not a new one. Mark Twain, in *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), the remarkable narrative of America’s first pleasure cruise, confronts the issue as he tours Rome:

What is it that confers the noblest delight? What is that which swells a man’s breast with pride above that which any other experience can bring to him? Discovery! To know that you are walking where none others have walked; that you are beholding what human eye has not seen before; that you are breathing a virgin atmosphere....To be the *first*—that is the idea. (266)

In celebrating the thrill of discovery, Twain also recognizes that for the tourist—even at the beginning of the Tourist Age—such a feeling is unavailable. He continues, “[w]hat is there in Rome for me to see that others have not seen before me? What is there for me to touch that others have not touched? What is there for me to feel, to learn, to hear, to know, that shall thrill me before it passes to others? What can I discover?—Nothing. Nothing whatsoever” (267).

So what is the tourist to do? To try to answer this question, we can begin by altering one of Shakespeare’s most memorable lines and applying it to the Tourist Age: all the world is a sight, and we are merely tourists. This petty theft may help illustrate an important point about the nature of the tourist experience, that, like Shakespeare’s original assertion, via the character Jacques, that the world is a “stage” and we are “players,” sights and tourists also require playacting. The search for authenticity in this late phase of the Age of Tourism relies on—for better or for

worse—careful staging and production design. Tour promoters and sight marketers, among others, have long recognized the drawing power of authenticity, and they have touted it accordingly—“see live alligators!” (in a cage); “buy pieces of Christ’s cross” (in Rome, in Naples, in Jerusalem, etc.); “watch a real Hawaiian luau” (in the hotel lobby). Authenticity is a commodity, and its presentation is a cultural production, always.

Consider, for a moment, a re-enactment of the April 18, 1775, battle between colonial minutemen and British regulars, a popular tourist production in Concord, Massachusetts. If this “play” is *real* enough, then the onlookers (tourists) have gained a typical tourist experience, and the cultural production is complete. Of course, different tourists may have different standards of authenticity, and their reactions could easily range from “I could feel the tension of the battle” to “I really doubt the minutemen wore watches.” In either case, the show must go on, and so must the tourists. The next “battle” will be in a few hours, and the next sight is just down the road at a pond called Walden. The Concord battle re-enactment may also garner another reaction from the tourist: “It is just as I had imagined the battle to be.” The expectations with which we visit a sight cannot help but influence our reaction to it. But it is difficult to separate our imagination from our concept of the *real*, especially when it comes to historical re-enactments. And until someone figures out time-travel, we simply cannot touch the original experience of the battle in Concord, and we can never hear the “shots heard around the world.” We can only try to gather as much information as we care to, then imagine. This battle re-enactment, what Boorstin would call a “pseudo-event,” is central to tourism, and although it is a staged production, a “play,” it nevertheless becomes associated with the authentic, not because of its accuracy so much as because people see it. The authenticity of any sight, then, increases with each tourist moving through the turnstiles. Sights gain weight and authority by being seen, and the masses over time thus help authenticate them. Sticking with the battle example, we can see that tourists do not simply travel to Concord to see the re-enactment and experience April 18, 1775. More significantly, they go because of all that has followed that original event—the starting of the Revolutionary War, the founding of a nation, *and* the founding of a tourist sight, the building of a touristic apparatus of which the re-enactment is but a part.

Any touristic production, in addition to asking for imaginative leaps from the audience, also asks for “a willing suspension of disbelief” (I am stealing from Coleridge now and his comments on poetic faith). Touristic faith implies that tourists ignore that they are watching a production, to pretend to believe, at least for the moment, that they are gaining an authentic experience. Erik Cohen notes that tourists’ enjoyment level “is contingent on their willingness to accept the make believe or half-seriously to delude themselves. In a sense, they are accomplices of

the tourist establishment in the production of their own deception” (184). In this context, tourism is ritualized behavior, a series of obligatory acts derived from devotion—however reluctant—to established conventions. Some tourists may alter the form and diverge from the masses, but they are part of the ritual nonetheless. If a few tourists seek to reject the cultural production, they are put in a difficult position; there are few sights off the beaten path. What are their options? Should they avoid the battle re-enactment in Concord, the Statue of Liberty in New York, the Sphinx in Egypt—all highly ritualized sights? Even if these tourists avoid such well-marked sights, the question remains: why? Are they rebelling against programmed travel? If so, the program, nonetheless, shapes their itinerary as they consciously (desperately) try to avoid it. Or there may be another way to avoid the program. For example, a tourist may live with a family in the Yucatan—eat, sleep, and work with them. She may be like a chameleon and change—she feels—from tourist to guest to friend, in the process coming much closer to an authentic Yucatan experience, but one day—two weeks, two months, two years—she will return home. She knows this all along the way, and so do her hosts. This knowledge alone alters the experience, differentiates her from everyone else. Because tourists, by definition, are outsiders, they can never meet pure authenticity. The recognition of the essence of any touristic experience—that it is ultimately a temporary condition—will inevitably re-enter her consciousness, and the illusion of authenticity, however strengthened by extended personal contact, will be and must be shattered.

Although Percy is optimistic about our innate ability to escape the beaten path and find our own moments of pure discovery, we should acknowledge that the “symbolic machinery” of the Tourist Age is comprehensive and overwhelming, and our only refuge is in the play and in our touristic faith. Fortunately, rarely do we have authenticity as our only goal. If we do, however, we will always meet with disappointment and failure, and that failure will be absolute. We have forever enjoyed travel as a metaphor for life, one in which we move through an often strange landscape and in the process we see, hear, smell, and touch new experiences. We learn and grow wiser. Ostensibly, that is why we want to travel, whether we move across oceans or ponds. We all want, at least aesthetically, to suck the marrow from life. Implicit in this desire is the false assumption that all experiences, due to the nature of this symbolic travel, are authentic. Perhaps it is time to review this “life” metaphor for travel in order to reflect the Age of Tourism and then, at last, admit its failures.

Tourism is a cultural production, staged in varying forms around the globe, that promises authenticity but at the same time remains unable to provide it. Whether outfitted with Thoreau and knapsack or camcorder and MasterCard, we all search

in vain for the *real* in our travels. Because of this paradox, promoters of any tourist sight, writers of any travel book, and producers of any filmed travelogue must structure experience to convince us that we are experiencing the authentic, and we must comply faithfully if we care to enjoy the illusion.

The street map of Paris featured by CNN after Lady Diana's death highlighted the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, and the Arc de Triomphe. Why? The vast majority of CNN viewers have never been to Paris. Therefore, most viewers could never gain a meaningful understanding of the exact geographical location of the crash sight; a street map was thus meaningless if its goal was to offer a helpful spatial point of reference. Moreover, the landmarks themselves bore no pertinent connection to the crash itself (the tunnel was not in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower; Diana was not traveling from Notre Dame to the Arc de Triomphe), so the map had no relevance whatsoever, since viewers could learn nothing practical from it to enhance their understanding of exactly where Diana's car crashed. How were we to respond? Perhaps the map was simply another flashy graphic definitive of CNN, but it may represent much more, no matter its initial intention: this map had a substantive touristic value. Yes, most of us have never been to Paris, but most know what is "important" about it—its tourist sights—and we define the city accordingly; we know it as a place to visit, especially in April. CNN, then, has accurately placed the tragic tunnel in its logical context for us and future generations. With Diana's death, this relatively obscure tunnel has become significant, and a new line has been added to the Parisian tourist's itinerary. Where is it? It is somewhere between a stop at the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, or maybe right after the Arc de Triomphe on the way to the Louvre. There is little doubt that, right now, travel writers are capturing how the tunnel affects them; right now, many publishers are updating their guidebooks on Paris, adding a landmark. And for those of us who will someday travel to Paris either as actual tourists or virtual ones, we have one more stop to make—that is if we seek a full and authentic experience. Will we want something, a souvenir, a memory?

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Notes

1. Throughout this essay, I use "sight" rather than "site" to indicate the place of a touristic experience. Although "site" may indicate a physical location, it cannot cover the broader implications of touristic behavior discussed in this essay. Tourists are, after all, *sightseers*. This use of "sight" is well established. In addition to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, see, for example, Paul Fussell, "From Exploration to Travel to Tourism," *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (New York: Oxford UP, 1980) 37-50; and

- Jonathan Culler, "The Semiotics of Tourism," *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Norman: Oklahoma UP, 1988) 153-67.
2. As a macabre and sad, but not surprising, turn of events, a Parisian Hotel, the Hotel Odeon at Saint-Germain-des-Pres, is offering private tours that retrace Diana's last minutes, according to the Associated Press. The tour goes from the Ritz Hotel to the crash site at the Pont de l'Alma tunnel, then to the hospital where she was pronounced dead. The price, as of August 1998, is free to hotel guests and twenty-five dollars for non-guests. For sixty-seven dollars, tourists can ride in a dark Mercedes similar to the model in which the accident occurred. See "Hotel offers Di's last ride in Mercedes—for \$67," *The Orlando Sentinel* (14 August 1998) A-11.
 3. "Modern Tourism," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 64.394 (August 1848) 185-89.
 4. "Americans Abroad," *The Nation* 27.692 (3 October 1878) 208-209.
 5. See Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1985). Boorstin's comments are in a chapter titled "From Traveler to Tourist," which argues that tourism threatens to undermine our ability to distinguish between reality and image, and we increasingly crave shallow experiences. See also Maxine Feifer, *Tourism in History* (New York: Stein & Day, 1986).
 6. For especially helpful discussions of tourist experience, see Paul Fussell, "Travel, Tourism, and International Understanding," *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays* (New York: Summit, 1988) 151-76; Denison Nash, "Tourism as a Form of Imperialism," *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, Ed. Valene L. Smith (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1977) 33-47; Jost Krippendort, *The Holiday-Makers* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1987); and Erik Cohen, "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences," *Sociology* 13.2 (1979) 179-201.
 7. For the definitive treatment of leisure, see Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1973).
 8. See *As You Like It*, Act II, scene vii, line 138.
 9. See MacCannell, *The Tourist* for an extended discussion of authenticity, especially page 105.
 10. For helpful discussions of authenticity, see Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist*, especially 14-15; Daniel Boorstin, *The Image*, especially 252; Erik Cohen, "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism" *Annals of Tourism Research* 15.3 (1988) 371-86; and Chris Ryan, "The Tourist Experience," *Recreational Tourism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 35-49.
 11. For a valuable discussion of multiple tourist interests see Chris Ryan, "The Tourist Experience," *Recreational Tourism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 35-49, especially 45-7.

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Rewriting Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*: A Study of Martin Gabel's *The Lost Moment*

The popularity of the works of Henry James on film in the 1990s proves that he is anything but a liability at the movie box office: three features based on his works were produced within twelve months in 1996, and the budget for Jane Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* reached \$24 million. As film critic Helen Meany of the *Irish Times* comments: "With the titles of 19th century novels blazoned across every cinema foyer this autumn, we could be forgiven for thinking that going to the pictures has become a good opportunity to catch up on some reading" (16). But it has not always been this way. The first film to acknowledge a Jamesian source and to use commercially the name of Henry James in its marketing campaign was Director Martin Gabel's film *The Lost Moment* (1947)¹. Produced by Walter Wanger in Hollywood for Universal-International, it was a loose adaptation of James's tale *The Aspern Papers*. Pitching this Jamesian "class angle" to theater showmen and moviegoers, however, was never simple. Indeed this early film's production and promotion were surrounded with nervous risks and compromises; *The Lost Moment's* casting, production, story, and subsequent critical response were full of artistic evasion and commercial ambivalence.

In the "exploitation" materials for *The Lost Moment* that Universal-International supplied to theater showmen, the new Jamesian "class angle" is explained this way in the press book: "What you have to stress is that this is the first film of the distinguished books by Henry James." One corner of the lobby cards and film posters features a drawing of a book with the title *The Aspern Papers* on the cover and a caption that reads "adapted from the world-famed novel by Henry James."

But James's works were really not famed among the popular audience, especially not *The Aspern Papers*. James himself was "hardly a household name among moviegoers" in 1947, as Hollywood historian Matthew Bernstein notes (235).² The James connection between *The Aspern Papers* and *The Lost Moment* could not, therefore, be the only thrust of Universal's ad campaign. Universal-International assured theater showmen that *The Lost Moment* could be marketed to both class and mass audiences, but the two campaigns needed to be kept separate.

Tension between class and mass appeal is addressed in the press book's advertising strategy: "Class angle: You don't have to be afraid of 'highbrow' or 'literary' angles *provided you can segregate them from your main campaign*" (italics in original). The "highbrow angle" suggested by the studio for reaching the "class" audience was to write letters to literary groups and to ask book stores and libraries to set up displays of James's books. In contrast, the separate "mass"

marketing campaign had nothing to do with Henry James; rather it involved promoting Susan Hayward's marquee strength and a non-Jamesian romantic story line.

At the start, producer Walter Wanger did not even intend to film a work by Henry James; his original plan was to produce a Civil War-era film called *Washington Flyer*. But when that project fell through, Wanger replaced it with *The Lost Moment*, designed as a star vehicle for his protégé, Susan Hayward, who was under contract with him. Wanger had just visited Europe and wanted to produce new films to appeal to European tastes (Bernstein 233).

Nearly all of the film's action takes place in a gloomy Venetian house, built on a Hollywood soundstage. Although *The Lost Moment* can still be seen on television as a "late show" light horror feature, it was no B-film: the cost was \$1,313,775 (Bernstein 444), and the studio boasted that the set featured Hollywood's longest spiral staircase and the largest fire to be filmed on a soundstage. Camera-man Hal Mohr created a Gothic mood that is described in the melodramatic theatrical trailer this way: "The house of the Bordereaus in Venice—mysterious, forbidding. To this house comes a young man—daring dangers he cannot fathom, challenging forces he cannot understand" (theatrical trailer, laser disc, *The Lost Moment*). The film's look consists of a combination of deep focus photography, low key lighting, and tracking cameras—revealing the influence of Orson Welles and contributing to the film's eerie cinematic atmosphere.

The much-altered script version of James's tale was written and sold to Wanger by free-lance writer Leonardo Bercovici, who retained only James's surface similarities: the Venetian setting, the three central characters, and the general premise: a publisher's quest to obtain a romantic poet's old love letters. There can be no doubt that Bercovici's characters of *The Lost Moment* are not those of James's tale. The popularity of Susan Hayward's name was the starting point for the film; the immediate task was to find her a star vehicle, not specifically to try to adapt a work of Henry James to film. Indeed, Hayward biographer McClelland remarks that Henry James would have never envisioned Hayward, "a carrot-top from Flatbush," as Tina Bordereau. Film historian Charles Higham agrees that the casting was strange; he imagines—like McClelland—how surprised James himself would be if somehow the author could see her cast in *The Lost Moment*. Amused by the juxtaposition of mass and class elements, Higham parodies James's own style in this remark: "Can one in fact imagine James, eye glassily fixed, eardrum quivering to the sound of peanut bags, seated, perhaps, in the loggia, gazing upon the performance, say, of Susan Hayward as his protagonist in *The Aspern Papers*, Miss Tina Bordereau? The thought, as it were, stuns" (95).

But by the mid-1940s, Hayward had stopped posing in swimsuits for advertisements, and she was becoming more selective about her movie roles. Just prior to *The Lost Moment*, she earned the first of her five career Oscar nominations

for the role of an alcoholic in the film *Smash-Up*, written by Dorothy Parker (the Associate producer of *Smash-Up* happened to be Gabel). The fact that Tina in *The Aspern Papers* is nothing like the Tina of *The Lost Moment* seemed to concern no one who was involved in the making of the film; therefore, the middle-aged, homely niece of James's tale becomes in the film a sensual and passionate character with a split personality. It was a "double" part that would call for substantial versatility from Hayward. Focusing on Tina's psychological condition and her romance with Lewis, the publisher's literary quest receives less emphasis in the film. The theatrical trailer, for instance, stresses Lewis's attraction to Tina more than his search for the poet's letters: "Irresistibly, he was drawn to Tina—strange, wonderful Tina—part of her resisting, part of her craving the rapture every woman dreams of."

The Lost Moment is a black and white film, but this did not stop the studio from trying to promote it with the popularity of Hayward's red hair. Theater showmen were told, "Since Susan Hayward is one of Hollywood's most beautiful redheads, consider the promotional possibilities of local lovelies with auburn, henna and carrot-top tresses . . . Sell 'em all the idea of painting the town red for the one night when all redheaded gals are queens!" Indeed Hayward's image dominates most of the film's posters and lobby cards—featured in open-mouth close-up profiles and kissing a less visible Robert Cummings. Reviewers responded to Hayward's appeal. *The New Republic's* critic, for instance, remarked that "Susan Hayward is so endowed that she cannot look pallid in the dreariest of bombazine" (35). Lee Mostimer of the *Daily Mirror* raved in his review of the film that she "dresses it up mightily," calling her—in reference to her character's schizophrenia—the "prettiest nut I've ever seen" (MoMA). Not to be forgotten was the corset Susan Hayward wore during the filming: it was "so tight," according to the press book, "that she could not sit down between scenes on the set." All of the publicity about her red hair, corsets, and swimsuits was intended, of course, to counter the quite separate "literary" angle.

More in keeping with James's tale is the film's Juliana Bordereau, played by Agnes Moorehead. Like Gabel the actor, Moorehead the actress was widely respected for her work with Orson Welles's Mercury Theater. Moorehead—as the grotesque 105-year-old—added the element of thespian prestige. Universal-International's trailer called her part "the acting role of the year," and the make-up job alone, which was elaborate for 1947, drew attention from the Hollywood press. The process involved pouring and baking plastic molds to fit the contours of her face; then significant amounts of make-up were applied to her mask. As the studio's press book explains, each day the process took four hours to apply and two hours to remove. On camera, Moorehead appears as an "ancient hooded skull," slumped in an ornate chair that dwarfs her frame, much like James's own shrunken, old Juliana. Vocally, Moorehead's delivery of Juliana's lines combines the clarity of a

radio veteran with the authentic shakiness of an ancient person.³ She did not receive an Oscar nomination, but John Maynard of the *New York Journal-American* wrote in his review of *The Lost Moment*: “a case could be made for Miss Moorehead as the best motion picture actress there is” (MoMA).

One of the more recent critics to praise Moorehead’s part in *The Lost Moment* was Henry James scholar Leon Edel. In a 1984 essay for the *New York Times*, he ranks hers with such other great James-on-film parts as Leslie Howard’s Oscar-nominated role in *Berkeley Square* and Olivia de Havilland’s Oscar-winning part in *The Heiress*. For Edel, these performances were so inspired and memorable that the fictional counterpart can never be the same once one has seen the film. Paradoxically, he remarks that Moorehead’s part as Juliana in “hideous makeup” is a thing of “lasting beauty” (23).⁴

James’s narrator, also known as the tale’s “publishing scoundrel,” takes on quite a different characterization in *The Lost Moment*. Wanger’s casting selection for the part of the American publisher (called “Lewis Venable” in the film) was something of a compromise. Concerned that the Jamesian film carried an automatic “class” stigma insensitive to Hollywood’s “mass” taste, Wanger opted to cast the part of Lewis—not according to Jamesian fidelity—but according to what Bernstein calls the “bobby-sox appeal” of Robert Cummings (235). Although he had appeared in serious leading roles in *Kings Row* and *Saboteur*, Cummings had mainly played light comic roles that appealed to younger audiences. More appropriate candidates for the role of the publisher might have been Charles Boyer and Rex Harrison, but they were not offered the part, so that Wanger could “hedge his bets” with the young audience by choosing Cummings (Bernstein 235).

Wanger’s unusual choice for director was Martin Gabel, who was a noted stage and radio veteran as well as an original member of Orson Welles’s Mercury Theater. He had no experience in directing films.⁵ Indeed, a great deal of tension arose on the set between Gabel and Susan Hayward, who later spoke harshly against the film and its director

In Gabel’s film, the camerawork of cinematographer Hal Mohr magnifies the Gothic elements James suggests in his own description of the Bordereau house as a “sequestered and dilapidated old palace” (1). This eerie mood has some basis in the tale, but the film expands the horror elements. For instance, in the beginning of the tale Mrs. Prest warns the narrator that the Bordereaus may be feared in their neighborhood because they “have the reputation of witches”; the narrator echoes her judgement when he privately refers to Juliana as a “subtle old witch” (62) after bargaining for the portrait of the poet. In Bercovici’s script, the Bordereau house becomes a dark Gothic castle under what amounts to Juliana’s curse on the house; and the film’s relationship between the publisher and Tina becomes a story of mental illness and melodramatic romance. *The Lost Moment*

lobby cards and theatrical trailer each boasted something about the film that could never apply to *The Aspern Papers*: “Never has love lived so close to terror.”

Both the tale’s and the film’s stories are told in the first person by an American publisher who goes to great lengths—including the assumption of an alias—to gain access to (a “footing” as James’s narrator puts it) and publish the love letters from an American poet to Juliana Bordereau; in James’s tale, the poet is called Jeffrey Aspern and in the film, Jeffrey Ashton. However, what the film does is to concentrate on an extra-textual, strange romance between the publisher Lewis Venable and Juliana’s niece, Tina Bordereau; clearly, it is *not* James’s cold tale of the failed literary scheme of a calculating “publishing scoundrel.”

In the film, Hal Mohr photographs Tina to be particularly glamorous when she slips into her “Juliana” states. Unlike the rest of the gloomy house, the room where Tina goes to enter into her Juliana spells is lit in high key. With her hair down and with Juliana’s ring on her finger, Tina wears an elegant gown and plays passionate piano sonatas that have a “pied-piper effect” on her kitten, which leads Lewis to her. Suddenly aware that Tina is becoming the character of her aunt, the recipient of Ashton’s letters, Lewis comments, “At that fearful, incredible moment I knew I had plunged off a precipice into the past. And here was Juliana—real beyond belief, beautiful, alluring, alive. How strange this was: Miss Tina who walked dead among the living and living among the dead.”



Martin Gabel directs Robert Cummings and Susan Hayward in The Lost Moment.

In order to emphasize Tina's personality changes, in Bercovici's script, when the niece is "Tina" with her hair up, she is cold and cruel ("Close the drapes," she scolds her maid Amelia [Joan Lorrington], "the sun is beginning to come into the room."). When Tina lets her hair down, she becomes the other part of her split personality and believes she is her aunt "Juliana." This contrast, *Variety* commented, is "abrupt." In her "Juliana" states, she falls into passionate, romantic spells that seduce the American publisher, whom she imagines to be the poet Ashton. ("Hold me close, Jeffrey," she says to Lewis when he enters her room). So irresistible is the film's Tina in her "Juliana" spells that she draws the publisher into joining her in what amounts to romantic role-playing. Tina becomes "Juliana" and the publisher pretends to be Jeffrey Ashton, the same poet whose letters he seeks. When she says, "Tell me why you love me, Jeffrey," Lewis replies to Tina, "I love you because your name is Juliana and because of a thousand other things I cannot say." In sharp contrast to the film's glamorous Tina, James's publisher/narrator finds the tale's Tina to be quite unappealing: "Her face was not young, but it was candid; it was not fresh, but it was clear. She had large eyes which were not bright, and a great deal of hair which was not 'dressed,' and long fine hands which were—possibly—not clean" (10-11). Obviously, Henry James is not describing someone who looked like Susan Hayward.

A number of reflective voice-overs by the publisher provide the film's point of view. Throughout the film Lewis interjects his comments on the story, and he makes these remarks from the solitude of his library—presumably in America—thirty years after his experiences with the Bordereaus in Venice. Opening the film, a fluid camera moves through Lewis's dimly lit library, showing the influence of Orson Welles's tracking camera shots and low key lighting. As the camera tracks, it lingers briefly over a portrait of "the great poet Jeffrey Ashton," which appears prominently in the mise en scene; appropriately, it is a painting of Shelley, in keeping with the original source material for James's own tale (the story of Captain Silsbee who attempted to obtain Claire Clairmont's personal letters from Shelley).

The camera comes to rest in front of a bookshelf containing two volumes: the collected poetry and the collected plays of Jeffrey Ashton. In close-up we see an empty space on Lewis's bookshelf as he describes a book of love letters that never was. Both the tale's and film's narrators are unsuccessful in their respective quests to publish the poet's letters. As the film's Lewis reflects, "In that empty space there might have been a book of the greatest love letters that have ever been written." The film does not incorporate much of James's language, but here the narrator expresses remorse that is similar to the tale's final scene. James's publisher also considers the portrait of the poet that hangs over his writing desk and "can scarcely bear" the loss of the poet's papers (96). Curiously, though, the film's

very opening scene immediately gives away this same ending; thus, there is no question, even from the start, that the film's publisher will ultimately fail to achieve, as Lewis's colleague Charles calls it, "the publishing triumph of the decade."

Because we know this publishing triumph will not occur, the film lacks Jamesian ambiguity in presenting the fate of the letters. We also learn in the beginning of the film—and witness at its end—a scene with the narrator actually reading the letters, a scene that certainly never occurs in the tale. As Lewis recalls, "Over thirty years ago, I, Lewis Venable, then an ambitious young publisher, read those letters. For a few, amazing tormented hours, I held them in my hand—literary treasures . . .". Indeed Lewis satisfies his curiosity about the letters' contents and we see him dramatically patting his brow and breathing deeply between each letter. To say the least, the satisfaction of actually reading the mysterious letters leaves the film's publisher far less tormented than the tale's narrator, who never even catches so much as a glimpse of the letters before learning—to his horror—that Tina has deliberately burned them all, "one-by-one" (96).

By shortening and cutting the original story, the film script shifts the emphasis from the literary quest to adult romance. Because of Tina's allure, infatuated Lewis has to keep reminding himself of the Ashton letters, as in this voice-over: "For a moment I hesitated. The memory of the evening—of Tina, lovely beyond words—held me. But no. It was an illusion. The letters. The letters alone were what I had come for, or what I wanted." The line is only one of many illustrations of how quickly Lewis forgets the letters when he is in Tina's presence. By the film's end, he sacrifices the pursuit of his literary obsession as James's publisher never does; the film's publisher even makes the choice to give up the very letters for which James named the novel. In the quite non-Jamesian finale, Lewis snaps Hayward's character out of her "Juliana" state, shouts her true name "Tina," drops the letters, and watches the papers burn up with the entire house. (The ancient Juliana has accidentally set the house on fire by knocking over a candle.) Nevertheless, Brad Darrach of *Time* mocks the pat melodrama of the film's non-Jamesian dénouement: "Though lose he must the literary remains, yet wins himself the woman of his heart" (104). Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* also objected to the "departure" from James's tale into the "spooky romance" of the film that—for him—added up to "little more than average 'horror'" (2).

A new "scoundrel" character, not found in the tale, is introduced in the film: Charles Russell (John Archer) is a "derelict artist" who provides Lewis with the tip that the Ashton letters may be in the Bordereau house. He appears to be a conflation of the tale's Mrs. Prest, John Cumnor, and even the "scoundrel" aspects of the publisher himself. However, the film's Lewis is declared to be "*not* a scoundrel" by both Juliana and the priest, Father Rinaldo, who is another added character. The film's conflict rises when the stock villain, Charles, unsuccessfully tries to

steal the letters from Juliana once he realizes that Lewis, in good conscience, will not. Although Charles and Lewis both seek the Ashton letters, motives are mainly what separate them. Charles's motive for stealing the letters is personal monetary gain, but Lewis hopes to gain permission to *publish* the letters so that the world can simply appreciate the "shadow and glow" of the poet's words as he does. To clear himself, Lewis even tells Charles that financial gain is not what motivates him: "Whatever money may come of this will go to those who are entitled to it—to Juliana perhaps."

An undeveloped and extra-textual mystery surrounding the death of Jeffrey Ashton appears in the confusing finale. In a struggle, Tina attempts to strangle Juliana in order to get Ashton's letters. As her life is threatened, the aunt suddenly explains her secret to Tina and Lewis, who is listening from a distance; the secret is that Juliana herself actually killed the poet Jeffrey long ago when he tried to leave her. When the murder occurred, Juliana's father, Ashton's portrait painter, Martin Bordereau, buried Ashton's body in the garden on the premises, and this secret is why, apparently, the house is cursed. In this strange film script, Bercovici's hurried explanation of the mystery was unsatisfying to many viewers. *Variety* judges the resolution "cryptic" and "undeveloped," and the reviewer for the *BFI Monthly Film Bulletin* review agrees: "This film leaves too much unexplained." Finding problems with the script, pace, and casting, the critical reception to *The Lost Moment* was mixed at best. In praise of the film, Philip Hartung of *Commonweal* writes, it "appeal(s) to the head as well as the eye and heart"; he also counters the objections that he anticipates from Jamesian purists: "Members of the Henry James cult may object to the changes...but adult moviegoers will welcome this fine Walter Wanger production" (256). In other words, Hartung suggests that the film retains a certain class appeal, even if it may not appeal to Jamesians who expect fidelity to the source. Other critics responded to Hayward's performance, such as Alton Cook of the *New York World-Telegram*, who calls her a "beautiful lunatic" but finds the film itself to be "ponderous, majestic, and thoroughly dull" (MoMA).

In an era when *The Aspern Papers* was not as "world-famed" as the lobby card claimed it was, the problems with Bercovici's plot were often attributed to James by reviewers who *claimed* some familiarity with James but who actually conflated the tale's and film's plots. The reviewer for *Film Daily*, for instance, acknowledges that James's fiction was not widely read by the masses, but he unwittingly lumps himself in that same category when he mistakenly assumes that the literary source explores the niece's mental illness: "Like a number of other James works with which the general film going public is not too conversant, it (*The Aspern Papers*) deals with abnormal psychological phenomena" (6). James's reputation among the masses for being unread was reinforced by critics themselves who had not read him either.

Several reviewers pointed out that Bercovici had vulgarized James's tale. The critic for *Newsweek* said, "Frankly, the admirers of Henry James will have cause for complaint and the average moviegoer will probably complain of boredom" (69). Reviewing for *Time*, Brad Darrach accuses Bercovici of substituting James's "perfect" plot with an "extended charade"; he writes that as a critic James would have "delicately strangled" the film if he himself were reviewing it. Darrach also addresses the class audience ("the few who know James well") and warns them that they will not find the horror elements "divertingly atmospheric" as some non-Jamesians might. Other critics who disliked the film itself expressed their appreciation of Wanger's bold attempt to adapt a James work to the screen and market it. *Motion Picture Herald* applauded Wanger for going "all out for art" and appealing to the "over-30" age group (3894). In a 1977 essay for *Films in Review*, Bodeen called *The Lost Moment* a "really bold stab at Henry James" (164) even though it was miscast and unsuccessful.

In an otherwise negative review that finds the film to be "dull," "lifeless," and "verbose," *Hollywood Reporter* weakly tried to acknowledge Walter Wanger's intent: "To catalogue it now as a dud would be to discount ruthlessly the considerable effort that went into the preparation of this first filmization of a James work" (6). Like *Film Daily*, the *Hollywood Reporter* concludes that the problem with the film is really a problem with the Jamesian source, a source that the film critic only pretended to have read. Once again confusing Bercovici's melodramatic story of a sensual, schizophrenic niece with James's cerebral tale of a cold, obsessive publisher, the critic remarks vaguely: "A literate, beautiful, and compelling book (*The Aspern Papers*), its plot line tends to become ridiculous under the cold scrutiny of the camera." Like so many others, the critic unwittingly reveals that he has not read James's tale when he attributes Tina's "mental quirk" to James. Her mental illness, of course, was an invention of Bercovici's, as was Tina and the publisher's romance. Hollywood reviewers of *The Lost Moment*, then, simply tried to write about the source without reading it. Hence, James was blamed for Bercovici's flaws, and this ignorance surely reinforced the common belief among the masses that a book by Henry James was a "hard read."

In *Films in the Forties* (1968), Charles Higham admits that Hayward and Cummings were miscast, calling them a "preposterous pair" (106). He grants, nevertheless, that the film is "pleasurably civilized"; *The Lost Moment*, he writes, deserves to be appreciated, along with its flaws, as "one of the most exquisitely made of all Hollywood's misguided forays in 'art'" (115).⁶ Tom Milne of the British Film Institute wrote one of the most recent and insightful responses to the film in 1983. Milne appreciates its "spirit of Poe" and the way that "its psychiatric basis is richly embroidered with Gothic resonances" (171). Milne's essay appeared in the BFI bulletin's "Retrospective" section, where he notes that the film

was “so misunderstood at the time as to have had no issue” in 1947 (170).

The film’s harshest critic was Susan Hayward herself, who said in 1972, “Their name for it may have been *The Lost Moment*, but after I saw it, I called it *The Lost Hour and a Half*” (qtd. in McClellan 88). At least one reason she was soured on the film was her incompatibility with Martin Gabel. According to Hayward, Gabel—experimenting as a Method-style director—annoyed and angered her when he secretly instructed the cast and crew not to speak to her on the set in order to achieve his idea of an ideal performance from the star. Gabel’s plan failed. She recalls how his “methods” affected her moods: “At one point, I lost my temper and crashed a lamp over his head, and to this day I’ve never felt sorry” (88). After *The Lost Moment*, Gabel returned to acting, never to direct another film. As critic Philip Jenkinson said of Gabel, “In a way it was his lost moment, too” (17). Despite its flaws and ambivalence, as an acknowledged James adaptation, *The Lost Moment* had no precursors; it preceded all radio, television, stage, and operatic adaptations of *The Aspern Papers* as well as all acknowledged James adaptations to film.⁷ It is currently available on video tape and laser disc—over fifty years after its theatrical release. Indeed, *The Lost Moment* stands in film history as an odd harbinger, marking an early point in the history of the cinema’s taste in Henry James.

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Notes

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1. *Berkeley Square* playwright and screenwriter John Balderston—a Henry James enthusiast—inspired Michael Redgrave to write his 1959 play based on *The Aspern Papers*. See Sir Michael Redgrave’s *In My Mind’s I: An Actor’s Autobiography*, New York: Viking, 1983. Since its debut, Redgrave’s *The Aspern Papers* has been revived a number of times in America and Britain.
2. What was gaining popularity in late 1947 was a stageplay based on James’s *Washington Square*: Ruth and Augustus Goetz’s play *The Heiress* opened on 29 September 1947 (280 performances). Two years later William Wyler directed a film version for Paramount in 1949, starring Olivia de Havilland, Montgomery Clift, and Sir Ralph Richardson. See “Adaptations of Henry James’s Fiction for Drama, Opera, and Films.” *American Literary Realism* 4 (Summer 1971): 268-78 and J. Sarah Koch’s “A Henry James Filmography,” *Henry James Review* (19) 1998: 296-306.

3. In a 1984 essay for Britain's *Radio Times*, Philip Jenkinson praises Gabel for the way he and Mohr photographed Moorehead's "gnarled, skeletal hand grasping the arm of a high-backed chair," making *The Lost Moment* a "cult movie" for film students (17).
4. Because the film's Juliana is remarkably close to the tale's, Edel conflates the two when he imagines hearing the film Juliana say, "You publishing scoundrel!" (23). The film's publisher, of course, is a lover, not a scoundrel.
5. Martin Gabel is best known for his acting in Mercury Theater plays of the 1930s (including *Ten Million Ghosts*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Danton's Death*); for his marriage to Arlene Francis of *What's My Line?*; for his Tony Award for best supporting actor in Broadway's *Big Fish, Little Fish* (1961); and for his supporting role as Sidney Strutt in Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* (1964). He died May 22, 1986.
6. Michael Sarne's film *Myra Breckinridge* (1970), based on Gore Vidal's novel, features a brief reference to *The Lost Moment*: Rex Reed's character, Myra, plays a movie trivia game with a question about what year the film was released.
7. For a checklist of pre-1981 television and radio adaptations of *The Aspern Papers*, see Anthony J. Mazzella, "A Selected Henry James Artsography," *Henry James Review* 3 (Fall 1981): 44-58. Since the publication of Mazzella's checklist, *The Aspern Papers* has been adapted to the opera by Dominick Argento (1988, Dallas Civic Opera Company); it was aired on PBS's "Great Performances" program. Eduardo de Gregorio directed a modernized film adaptation of James's tale that is set in Portugal: *Aspern* (1983). In an interview published in BFI's *Monthly Film Bulletin* #593 (1983), de Gregorio discusses his interest in Henry James, but, curiously, he does not mention *The Lost Moment*. In 1998 Jonathon Holloway wrote, directed, and toured Britain with yet another play adaptation of *The Aspern Papers*, which was performed by the Red Shift Theatre Company. In an interview with Sue Wilson of the *Scotsman* (18 June 1998: 19), Holloway explains how film techniques influenced his stage direction, but, like de Gregorio, Holloway does not mention *The Lost Moment*.

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The Portable Opera Comes of Age: Philip Glass's *Monsters of Grace*

Philip Glass's new 3-D digital opera, *Monsters of Grace*, is a stunning achievement in every respect, and signals the dawn of a new era in interactive multi-media presentations, while serving as a millennial antidote to the over-stuffed, Franco Zefferelli productions currently in vogue at Joseph Volpe's Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Using a spare ensemble of perhaps a dozen musicians, complemented by an enormous, panoramic projection screen hanging overhead, *Monsters of Grace* presents the audience with the spectacle of the first truly "portable opera," in which all the sets, costumes and "actors" are digitally generated, and then pre-recorded on 70mm film for playback by a high-intensity 3-D projection system. As with many of his other works, Glass's visual designer on *Monsters of Grace* is the gifted Robert Wilson, who collaborated with Glass on the epic *Einstein on the Beach*, one of the signal events in modern performance history, an enormously long (4 1/2 hours) and ambitious spectacle that required the talents of numerous musicians, performers, and a wide variety of spectacular props for each presentation. With *Monsters of Grace*, both Glass and Wilson have stripped down their emphasis on the epic, to create a work that requires only 73 minutes to perform, and needs only the musicians, and an unexceptionally adroit projection staff, to present their combined vision to the public gaze.

Monsters of Grace contains many signature characteristics of Glass and Wilson's past collaborations; as always, Wilson's digital sets and simulacric performers move through their paces at an almost imperceptible pace, creating an ever-changing landscape of humanist and spatial configuration that perfectly complements Glass's insistent, pulsating score. The unifying element of *Monsters of Grace* is in the libretto, which ties together concerns of memory, love, desire and human frailty with a series of brief and elegiac passages, sung by the members of Glass's ensemble. But the scale of the completed opera would be impossible, or impracticably expensive, to perform with human actors and full-scale props, as had been the case with *Einstein on the Beach*. As Glass told writer Jeff Brown, "When Robert [Wilson] and I conceived this piece back in 1993, we soon came to the realization that, without artistic assistance and financial backing, we could not stage the production conventionally. It was just too broad and ambitious. So we shelved it until we could find a better way to conceive it live. . . that's when we hooked up with Jeff Kleiser and Diana Walczak, our 3-D computer firm, to create our performance using stereoscopic animation. And so the *Monster* was born" (53).

Above the singers, an enormous screen (perhaps 100' long and 30' high) vibrates with a series of disparate and haunting images, faultlessly projected in stereoscopic verisimilitude. In a mountainous terrain, a series of helicopters flies through the skies aimlessly, as if engaged in a reconnaissance mission without any concrete objective. A series of attenuated tendrils, or sinews, lead to a decapitated hand, which turns and gestures towards the audience, its fingers extending out into space over the heads of the crowd, as a small knife traces the lifelines of the disembodied hand in minuscule rivulets of blood. A house drifts out to sea, past a dense and lushly populated jungle, then past a distant, monolithic metropolis, and finally past an enormous iceberg, while a sea serpent threatens to devour the house and its inhabitants, who glide towards each other in a trance, on the rooftop of the derelict abode. Notes Glass, creating "the animation was fun. I've always loved Robert's work, and to see it jump out of the screen at you is really exhilarating. It is truly something that has to be seen to be believed" (Brown 53).

At other points in *Monsters of Grace*, the images become even more abstract, as when a series of glowing lines stretch across the screen in ethereal slow motion, creating a series of luminescent Mandarin paintings in the simulacric 3-D performance space. What is most impressive about *Monsters of Grace*, as I have previously suggested, is that it can easily be taken out on tour in its "original" form, with the original performers, rather than in an inferior "road company" version that dilutes and vitiates both the quality and intensity of the work. While traditional opera relies upon hyperspectacle, with enormous sets and ornate costumes, in addition to a company of performers, *Monsters of Grace* signals the dawn of a new operatic performance style, in which economy of presentation is not allowed to affect the emotional impact of the work. When the Metropolitan Opera presents *La Traviata* in Central Park as part of their annual summer series of free presentations, for example, the visual aspect of the work is almost entirely sacrificed in order to transport the performance into the public sphere. Sets, costumes, even stage directions are almost entirely eliminated.

What results is only an approximation of the actual experience of witnessing *La Traviata* on stage at the Met, in which the performers must carry both the burden of the spectacle and the rituals of presentation, without any aid from the imposing physical sets they are used to inhabiting, and relying upon. By contrast, one could easily imagine an outdoor evening presentation of *Monsters of Grace* being every bit as effective as one witnessed on stage; as long as the 3-D image projection quality is maintained, nothing would be sacrificed. But to better understand the impact, and the prescient example that *Monsters of Grace* presents for contemporary audiences, a bit of history on both the performance piece itself, and the careers of those involved in its production, is both instructive and necessary.

Philip Glass was born in Baltimore, MD, and as a child, received a rather

unorthodox but engaging education in the classics. As his biography on the *Monsters of Grace* website notes,

Glass discovered music in his father's radio repair shop. In addition to servicing radios, Ben Glass carried a line of records and, when certain ones sold poorly, he would take them home and play them for his three children, trying to discover why they didn't appeal to customers. These happened to be recordings of the great chamber works, and the future composer rapidly became familiar with Beethoven quartets, Schubert sonatas, Shostakovich symphonies and other music then considered 'off-beat.' It was not until he was in his upper teens did Glass begin to encounter more 'standard' classics. (*MOG* website)

Glass practiced the flute and violin as a child and budding teenager, but soon grew bored with the existing repertoire of material at his disposal, and the lack of opportunities for advancement in Baltimore. Accepted at the University of Chicago, Glass graduated at the precocious age of 19, and moved to New York City to attend the Juilliard School. After study with such notables as composer Darius Milhand and Nadia Boulanger, Glass garnered an assignment transcribing Ravi Shankar's music into western notation as part of a film project. Immediately overwhelmed by the impact of Shankar's music, Glass embarked on an extended trip through India, North Africa and the Himalayas, gathering additional knowledge which he would later incorporate into his own works.

By 1974, Glass had written a large amount of music for the Mabou Mines (a group he co-founded), and also started the Philip Glass Ensemble, which exists to this day, to perform his new work. In 1976, Glass and Robert Wilson co-created *Einstein on the Beach*, merging Wilson's slow-motion theatrical spectacle with Glass's trance-like musical score, creating one of the key artifacts of performance art in the process. Since that time, Philip Glass has engaged in a wide variety of projects, including the operas *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *Satyagraha* and *Hydrogen Jukebox*, as well as film scores for *The Thin Blue Line*, *Kundun*, *Koyaanisqatsi*, *Mishima*, and *A Brief History of Time*. In addition, Glass has composed three operas based on the works of Jean Cocteau, and is working at this writing on a new project, *White Raven*, which will be yet another collaboration with Robert Wilson. This outline is the merest sketch of Glass's work as a composer for opera, theatre and film; his prolificacy is matched only by the high degree of quality he brings to each new project (for more details, see the *MOG* website).

Robert Wilson, born in Waco, TX, received his education at the University of Texas, and the Pratt Institute in New York City, where he was granted a

As the musicians and vocalists of Philip Glass's ensemble repeat these evocative phrases with controlled intensity, the screen above the live performers fills with a forest of digitally generated trees, which gradually, as we move through the foliage, reveals a group of inviting, doll-like houses, with illuminated windows. It is the fantasy landscape of childhood brought to life, a place of peaceful sanctuary. Because the images we watch are rendered in faultlessly effective 3-D, it seems as if the distance between this bucolic scene and the audience has been dissolved: we are *in* the forest, gliding through the trees, slowly and with a certain inexorably deliberate grace. As we watch, a young computer-generated boy on a bicycle appears on a road that runs between the houses, far in the distance, slowly pedaling towards us. It takes perhaps five minutes for the young boy to reach the center of the performance space in front of us; just as he dominates the center of the 3-D frame, the view cuts to an out-of-focus side angle of the houses in the distance. As we watch, disoriented by this change in perspective and spatial differentiation, an enormous child's shoe (seen in close-up) drops from the top to the bottom of the frame, resting in front of our collective gaze, an ominous talisman of disaster. What has happened to the image of domestic serenity and safety? Disaster has befallen the young boy, but the accident, observed only through the agency of his falling sneaker, remains obscured from our view, and thus becomes more sinister, less defined.

The non-specificity of Robert Wilson's images is inextricably intertwined with Rumi's text, creating a sense of mystery and evocative sadness which is no less tangible for being, in a certain sense, undefined. Then, too, it should be noted that all of the 3-D digital images in *Monsters of Grace* are determinedly "constructed," that is, no attempt at verisimilitude (with perhaps one exception, the "stereoscopic couple" sequence [actually titled "stereo gram"]) in the creation of Wilson's glyphic universe. Rather, under Wilson's guidance, visual artists Jeff Kleiser and Diana Walczak have created a series of storybook images that seem remote yet accessible, recalling the brightly colored world of children's storybooks, coupled with the surrealist bent of Magritte. Kleiser and Walczak have used digital special effects (computer generated imagery, or CGI) to create such recent projects as the Columbia Pictures logo, as well as special effects for the feature films *Stargate* (Dir. Roland Emmerich, 1994), *Clear and Present Danger* (Dir. Philip Noyce, 1994) and numerous other assignments. Given the current capability of CGI's to produce near-perfect copies of human, animal, or objectificational models, it would easily have been possible for Wilson, working with Kleiser and Walczak, to create more "realistic" performers for *Monsters of Grace*.

But it is the absolute transparency of Wilson's creations in *Monsters of Grace* that transfixes us; like the nascent pod-people in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Dir. Don Siegel, 1956), the figures and locations of Wilson's landscapes are

vaguely familiar, and yet indistinct, featureless, as if waiting for a final stroke of definition to individuate them. Because of this, the dreamlike locale of the visuals in *Monsters of Grace* is simultaneously universal and distant, becoming to us even as it withholds from us the final seal of signifiatory identification.

This is entirely in keeping with Glass's score for *Monster of Grace*, which, as Glass notes,

incorporates samples of Persian and other Middle-Eastern or similar-sounding string and percussion instruments in the design of the keyboard sounds. Among the stringed instruments sampled are: jubus, saz, tzouras, baglamas, Ethiopian double harp, psaltery, ukelin, renaissance lute, archlute, and Chinese zheng; percussion instruments include the dumbeq (Persian drum), gomé (African drum), and Iranian zill (finger cymbal) . . . [computer] samples have also been created of Persian instruments of ancient origin including: the santur, a hammered dulcimer with a lovely ringing tone; the tar, a banjo-type instrument with a skin head and adjustable gut frets; its relative, the sitar, a lute with a small oval laminated wood body, also with moveable gut frets; and the oud, a large lute with a teardrop-shaped laminated wood body, more closely resembling a Western lute, with an unfretted neck and a tuning peg block at a 90 degree angle to the neck. (*MOG* website)

These "samples" are fed through a complex variety of Macintosh computers utilizing sample cell II playback cards, although all the "samples" used are manually performed by members in the ensemble during each performance — no automatic sequencing is used. Yamaha synthesizers power the entire performance of *Monsters of Grace*, and so the resultant sound mix is simultaneously electronic-edged, and yet derived from natural sound sources. The musical score, grounded in the past, and in the humanist concerns of Jalauddin Rumi's poetry, is nevertheless very much a contemporary electronic construct, just as the images that accompany the score are entirely the product of CEI digital imaging processor. Once Robert Wilson has storyboarded one of the sections of *Monsters of Grace*, Jeff Kleiser and Diana Walczak are faced with the formidable task of concretizing these images into real-time 70mm film for 3-D stereoscopic projection, a task that is significantly more difficult than merely enhancing existing imagery in a conventional theatrical motion picture. In *Monsters of Grace*, each scene must be created from the drawings alone, as in a conventional animated cartoon, but with considerable additional difficulty.

Simultaneously, the process of creating the visual environment for the opera was both labor and equipment intensive.

Monsters of Grace breaks barriers in technical innovation and production for digital stereoscopic film. Each scene is animated, modeled and lit . . . using the full spectrum of Alias/Wavefront software: Maya, Alias, TAV, Explore, Dynamation, Kinemation and Composer running on O2 graphics workstations . . . [this] specialized . . . hardware can perform perspective and shade polygons in real time, essential for rapid creation of 3-D environment, [. . . creating] images for over two hours of 70mm film . . . Every scene created . . . for *Monsters of Grace* has a team of at least three people working on it. Once the art department finalizes the story boards originally designed by Robert Wilson, a modeler is assigned to 'build' the elements of the scene using the computer software tools most suited for the task. The completed models are then handed over to an animator who choreographs and executes the desired action within the scene again within the parameters of computer technology. The final member of the team must light the scene just as though it were a traditionally staged scene, with the added challenge of creating the depth, colors and textures which would occur naturally in the real world. Depending upon the complexity of the scene, the entire process can take anywhere from four to 12 weeks. Ultimately plans call for *Monsters of Grace* to exist in purely digital form as a CD-ROM, DVD, three-dimensional enhanced website or VR installation. (*MOG* website)

In short, a complete synthetic, virtual landscape is created through the use of contemporary computer technology, one in which all is fabricated, real and tangible but still not derived from nature.

All of this technology would be of no purpose if the completed work was lacking in a human aspect, however, and this is where *Monsters of Grace* succeeds as a combined live performance/simulated action performance piece. Indeed, I am deeply suspicious of the announced plans for the work to exist ultimately "in purely digital form as a CD-ROM, DVD, three dimensional enhanced website or VR installation (*MOG* website)," precisely because it is this mixture of human agency and digital technology that makes the resultant work so compelling. Remove the members of the musical ensemble from the performance of the work, and you would have only the "record" of their voices and instruments, accompanied by the visuals Wilson has designed. It is the contributions of the ensemble members,

including Glass as keyboardist/conductor, Michael Riesman as musical director/keyboardist, Jon Gibson on flute, bass flute, clarinet and soprano saxophone, and the vocal performers Marie Mascari (Soprano), Alexandra Montano (Mezzo-Soprano), Richard E. Peck, Jr. (Tenor/Soprano/Alto Saxophone), Gregory Purnhagen (Baritone), and Peter Stewart (Baritone) who make *Monsters of Grace* such a compelling site of mediation between the real and the simulated, the actual and the projected. Even with the creation of an entirely digital universe, what renders *Monsters of Grace* ineffably human is the element of chance and mortal frailty that both intrinsically archaic film projection (an extension of the ancient magic lantern device, or light thrown on a screen, shadow-play) and the incorporation of live performance (both the keyboard and wind instrumentalists, but especially the singers) bring to the work, making each performance individual and unique.

As the opening words of Jelaluddin Rumi's libretto remind us,

Don't worry about saving these songs!
And if one of our instruments breaks,
it doesn't matter.

We have fallen into the place
Where everything is music . . .
Stop the words now.
Open the window in the center of your chest,
And let the spirits fly in and out.

Even in an age driven by technology, and one that necessarily embraces that technology as an extension of human vision, if we erase that which is intrinsically mortal in our works, they cease to be a part of our experience, but rather markers that stand outside the domain of humanistic commerce. In short, these are tricky shoals to navigate. *Monsters of Grace* succeeds because it uses digital imaging, stereoscopic projection, and synthesized "samples" in the service of the performer, who controls the spectacle she/he creates, but is never dominated by it. As each vocalist performs her/his part, a keylight illuminates their faces, reminding us that it is human agency that made this entire construct possible.

Conventional opera performance is equally a creature of artifice and synthetic creation; if a backdrop quivers and collapses, or a singer misses a note, the illusion of perfection (which is what all performance strives for) is marred — but this is part of the fabric of the creative act. Towards the end of *Monsters of Grace*, an enormous Chinese tea set is displayed in the space above the performers' heads, extending out into the audience space through the medium of 70mm stereoscopic film projection. As we watch, the image begins to disintegrate into a series of lines and pixels, as if acknowledging the ephemerality of its phantom existence.

Similarly, in the sequence in which a series of digital helicopters roam a phantasmal mountain terrain, and gigantic birds fly over the heads of the audience, these images, too, are allowed to evanesce into video oblivion, relinquishing their tenuous hold on the real authenticating, the truth of their constructed, synthetic origins. If *Monsters of Grace* succeeds so brilliantly as a work of art, and as the operatic spectacle of the future, it is because of this alliance between the real and the manufactured, which Glass and Wilson continually reaffirm, and transgress upon. Indeed, the title itself re-states this pull between the mortal and that which survives mortality — we are monsters who strive for grace and enlightenment, in an increasingly technological environment, which seeks (at its worst) to replace the humanist instinct with synthetic visions alone: witness “point and kill” video games, television programs where spectacle *becomes* content and violence supersedes any human intercession, such as the recent spate of Fox television “specials” involving high-speed automobile chases, crashes, and other disasters.

Monsters of Grace thus occupies a site of contested ground between the real and the hyperreal, and mediates this merging of the simulacric and the simulacra through the ineluctable modality of visible human intervention — a merging of performer and performance, in which emotion is not denied. Having seen the opera performed several times, I can attest to the passion and commitment that Glass and his ensemble bring to the proceedings, presenting a concert in one city after the next in an exhausting road tour that many other artists would have avoided. After all, Glass is quite profitably employed creating film soundtracks, among other pieces, and it would be easy for him to simply sit back in Hollywood and create music for *The Truman Show* (as he did), send out a road company of assistants to perform the work, or even stage the work solely in major metropolitan centers, and leave the rest of the country with videodiscs and second-hand accounts of the actual performance. That he has not done so is a tribute both to Glass’s own tenacity and commitment, but also to the inherent construction of the piece. Designed for easy transport from one location to the next, *Monsters of Grace* has been performed at numerous sites around the world since its world premiere on April 15, 1998 at Royce Hall, on the campus of UCLA.

In this, it signals the possible future of operatic presentation, because the “spectacle” inherent in all operatic presentation resides, for this production, within the confines of a film can, ready to be re-projected, re-experienced with each successive performance. But without the random operations of chance inherent in all live performances, and without the *visible proof* of human agency provided by the members of the ensemble during each presentation, much of the power of the work would be lost. Thus, even as we beckon towards the digital future, we must remember that *we* are the beings who devise that future, and those who must necessarily bear ultimate witness to all its creations. *Monsters of Grace* may be either a “springboard into the void” as Cocteau characterized all works that challenge con-

temporary norms, or it may be a harbinger of the future of “portable” spectacle, opera for a new post-digital public. In its linkage of the mechanistic and the real, Robert Wilson and Philip Glass have devised an entirely new sort of work, yet one which certainly has links to La Scala and the Met. As we cross into the next century, it will be fascinating to see how this new hybridized medium continues to evolve.

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Interrogating the Representation of African American Female Identity in the Films *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*

In the past twenty years or so, members of Western culture have become consumed by a myriad of popular culture artifacts designed to entertain, educate, or inform. Such artifacts as film, television, and theater are primary mediums through which these needs are met. While the images constructed within these mediums are created essentially for the purpose of entertaining, they are often central to the (de)construction of race, class, and gendered identities. More specifically, these images are critical in constructing and/or challenging lived reality and perceptions of that reality.

Research has discovered the critical role the mass media play in shaping our attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions; however, little inquiry has been made into the dialectical tensions associated with racialized gender identities in cinema. Victims of cinematic annihilation are African American women, whose cinematic caricatures typically perpetuate and rarely challenge longstanding stereotypes ascribed to them via film and television. These images of Jezebel, mammy, prostitute, maid, and welfare queen, among others, have adapted to the changing times; however, they have only evolved into “sophisticated ghettoized” images of African American female identity.

Few would argue against the observation that popular culture has become integral to life in America. Unfortunately, limited discourse has evolved regarding how film as a visual artifact articulates a dilemma for marginalized communities, particularly the African American community. Social scientists have observed a double standard in popular culture. While films and television programs that appeal to mainstream society give the opportunity to strictly entertain their audiences, a double standard exists to which African American television programs and movies are held (Tucker, 1997; Inniss & Feagin, 1995; Merritt, 1991; Poussaint, 1988). Instead of solely “entertaining” for the sake of entertainment, which we have come to assume is the goal of most Hollywood films, films featuring predominately African American casts are expected to possess a moral fiber that pricks our social consciousness. Whether it is to address racism, sexism, or classism within a political framework, films that capture and express racialized experiences and Blackness (Gray, 1996) are criticized as devaluing the very people they are embracing because the films fail to present an assimilated image of racial identity within a Western framework.

In order to address this dialectical tension as it relates to racialized gender

identity in film, the current essay explores the mediated messages embedded within the films *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*. Each film is a visual (mis)representation of African American women's experiences with love and life in the 1990's. Each film presents character experiences that reflect real life experiences for some African American women, yet a dialectical tension emerges when the consequences of entertaining result in the perpetuation of negative stereotypical images. In their own right, each film embodies life for African American women from two distinct socio-economic classes. It is through the context of friendship, or sisterhood, that we understand the multidimensional aspects of African American female identity. The tension becomes more apparent as the movies are juxtaposed and examined for their contributions to (de)constructing racialized gender identity as it relates to African American women.

Waiting to Exhale is based on Terry McMillan's novel of the same name and explores the sisterhood between four African American women as they share with the audience the frustrations experienced in maintaining balance between their personal and public lives. Similarly, *Set It Off* is a screenplay centering around four African American women who are in search of a "better" life as they deal with classism, sexism, and racism. In either case, both sets of friends capture the multidimensional aspects of identity and the centrality of female friendship in understanding one's self and her position in society.

The films *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off* were selected because of their popularity, although undocumented, within the African American community and their shared attempts to address the centrality of sisterhood (emotional/spiritual) between the characters as they survive and/or cope with their life circumstances. It is through their sisterly relationships that we understand how the characters negotiate and deal with pressures from mainstream society to achieve the "American Dream." As each film evolves, we are able to further understand how these pressures influence the individual and collective decisions made by the characters. Although each film presents a unique dilemma for its characters, both films collectively speak to a societal dilemma regarding representation and racialized gender identity. The images communicated from these visual texts create contradictory images that challenge our perceptions, constructions, and ideas of what it means to be an African American woman in the 20th century.

This critical essay will engage in a textual analysis of the films and how these storylines/plots, which are commonly found within mainstream films, present a dialectical tension that challenges the movies to entertain yet educate the audience as they reconstruct long-held notions of "the African American woman." As a conceptual framework, Black Feminist Thought will be used to understand the media's role in creating multiple, contradictory meanings that succeed in deconstructing or reconstructing the multiple identities of African American women.

Black Feminist Thought: Understanding Cinematic Representation

As construction of knowledge varies across people and individuals, it is essential that a framework be used that embraces difference and provides a unique perspective from which this difference may be understood. By using Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 1996a; 1993) for the present study of *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*, voice will be given to two popular culture artifacts that position marginalized experiences and voices in the forefront for both African American and mainstream audience members (Hine, 1992). Such a standpoint provides a consciousness for an oppressed people and provides a platform for sharing gendered and racialized experiences too often excluded from dominant discourse (hooks, 1996; Phillips & McCaskill, 1995; King, 1988).

According to Collins (1996a), Black Feminist Thought offers African American women a voice or a “self-defined collective women’s standpoint about black womanhood.” Inquiries into such experiences have provided African American women with a conceptual framework that challenges stereotypical images of American women (Collins, 1993), thus creating a consciousness of systematic oppression from all fronts. In her extensive investigation of Black Feminist Thought, Collins (1993) has described four controlling images that create a distorted image of African American women. These four controlling images are “the mammy—the faithful obedient house servant” (p. 71), the matriarch, who is “central to the interlocking system of race, gender, and class oppression,” (p. 74), the welfare mother (breeder woman) who is dependent on the welfare state for survival, and the Jezebel, also referred to as “the whore or sexually aggressive woman” (p. 75). Collins further demonstrates that these images individually and collectively work to maintain the oppressive system within which racism, sexism, and classism work to denigrate the private and public being of all African American women.

Movies as Texts: Storylines of *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*

In a qualitative study of movies and their portrayals of African American women, Harris and Hill (forthcoming) found that African American women as an interpretive community (Bobo, 1995) observe a dialectical tension existent in *Waiting to Exhale*. They found that while the film was perceived as an appreciated visual text providing a multidimensional perspective of African American female identity, *Waiting to Exhale* is noted as perpetuating the very stereotypes and controlling images that oppress all African American women. Therefore, it is the purpose of this critical essay to provide a descriptive analysis of the controlling images within the movies *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*.

If we are to fully understand the dialectical tensions inherent in racialized representation in the media, a description of each movie’s storyline must be provided. *Waiting to Exhale* is a visual text that captures the friendship of four middle-

and upper-middle class African American women as they deal with balancing their single and professional lives. Each of the four women is searching for relationship satisfaction as she attempts to maintain her gender and professional identities. Given her own circumstance, each character battles for “centeredness” as she searches for a “complete” life involving family, relationship and career. Bernadine gave up her career to become a homemaker, only to later be divorced by her husband and left to raise their two children on her own. Gloria is a divorced, self-sacrificing mother and business woman who feels empty when her son leaves home. Her only solace comes from sporadic sexual encounters with her bisexual ex-husband. The two never-married characters, Robin and Savannah, are successful professional women who continually make bad choices in their relational partners, which ultimately lead to self-imposed heartache. On several occasions, however, both women are willing to compromise their standards in order to fill the empty void of loneliness. Savannah becomes involved with a married ex-boyfriend, while Robin settles for sexual relationships lacking emotional intimacy.

Conversely, the four characters in *Set It Off* are dealing with more complex issues relative to their low-income status. Instead of focusing on romantic relationships, the women are playing a game of survival in their everyday lives. Unfortunately, the characters experience classism, racism, and sexism on their journey. For one reason or another, each character ultimately is “forced” to compromise her integrity, which results in their collective decision to resort to a life of crime to absolve their financial woes and achieve the American Dream. The characters occupy a social position of oppression that creates barriers which hinder success. Level-headed Stoney is the moral compass of the group who takes on the role of mother as she nurtures her brother and friends through life. When she resorts to prostitution to save her brother from the streets, Stoney compromises her integrity but holds onto her dream of marriage, family, and living in suburbia. Frankie is the most successful of the group, as she has gone to college and has a professional job in a bank. Her dreams of receiving promotions and raises dissolve when she is accused by her White employers of conspiring with Black bank robbers from her neighborhood to rob the bank.

Unlike Stoney and Frankie, Cleo is the stereotypical “masculine” lesbian, and has little to dream about as she walks aimlessly through life with little ambition beyond just making it in the ‘hood. Throughout the movie, we see Cleo become more resigned to a life of mediocrity, poverty, and oppression. The final character, Tee-Tee, is a single-mother trying to take care of her child as she searches for full-time employment. This task becomes overwhelming as Tee-Tee has no other means of providing childcare for her son and has limited employment opportunities due to her lack of education beyond high school. It is through their individual and collective economic oppression that the women establish a solidarity that surpasses the legal consequences of their actions.

Waiting to Exhale, Set It Off, and African American Female Identity

In order to fully understand the degree to which each movie challenges the controlling images traditionally held of African American women, this critical analysis will examine each movie independently and then provide a comparative analysis of the overall impact such movies have on the social construction of African American female identity.

The movie *Waiting to Exhale* has been held in high regard as a positive visual text that provides an alternative image of African American women. Upon closer examination, however, one can observe a dialectical tension that challenges such observations. The movie is positive in that the women are presented as successful women of the 1990's; unfortunately, their relationship choices further preserve the very controlling images the African American community aims to dismantle. The preeminent images that demonstrate this tension and are integral parts of understanding cinematic portrayals of African American women are the matriarch and the Jezebel.

As previously noted, Collins (1993) describes the matriarch as being "central to the interlocking system of race, class and gender oppression" (p. 71). This image is typically perceived as resultant of role reversal in the African American community whereby males and females (husbands and wives) exchange roles for the purpose of maintaining the family. In the absence of the male, however, the female takes on the role of father and mother for the sake of her children. According to Collins (1993), this role reversal stems from the systemic and purposeful destruction of the African American family through the slave system of Africans in the U.S. The matriarch is often perceived as a superwoman possessing incredible strength that enables her to effectively maintain her multiple roles within the family.

Unfortunately, the very qualities that exemplify her strength and character have been manipulated to construct an image of an overbearing, controlling woman committed to emasculating the African American man. The character that typifies this contradictory image is Gloria, a single mother and successful business owner of a beauty salon. As a parent, Gloria is very caring and attentive, yet when her son begins to mature, Gloria's role as mother and caregiver becomes more pronounced. She exhibits very controlling behaviors in that she attempts to heavily monitor her son's school and extracurricular activities as well as his sexual escapades. Though the reality of such parental obligations is magnified by her status as a single mother, the physical attributes and qualities of the character further support this perception of the matriarch. The matriarch is often presented as unattractive, overweight, and devoid of sexual identity. Throughout the movie, we observe Gloria's preoccupation with food, thus contributing to the overweight identity, and her feelings of low self-esteem which is quite evident in her choice to engage in meaningless, unfulfilling sex with her bisexual ex-husband. In compari-

son to the other characters, Gloria is presented as having less sex appeal, thus contributing to the asexual image of the matriarch.

A second and very disturbing controlling image in the movie is the image of the Jezebel. Although the movie is centered around the characters' search for relational satisfaction, the sexual encounters of the various women in *Waiting to Exhale* perpetuate the image of the sex-craved African American woman. Characters Savannah and Robin sacrifice relationship for sexual encounters with men who are either commitment-phobic or not "marriage material." Instead, the characters experience a total of four sexual encounters with four men throughout the movie (two per character). While such brief escapades may appear mild or moderate in comparison to mainstream "relationship" movies, *Waiting to Exhale* is in a unique position as it is held to a double standard to which other movies are not. Thus, natural aspects of the male-female relationship are distorted and further perpetuate the allegations about African American men and women's "preoccupation" with pre-marital and adulterous sex. If a comparison were made, it is plausible that mainstream movies are the primary perpetrators of the very image that is typically ascribed to African Americans. Although the characters present various aspects of their individual identities as women balancing career obligations and their desires for satisfying romantic relationships, *Waiting to Exhale* encompasses a dialectical tension relative to realistic portrayals and entertainment as escape. Unfortunately, the controlling images of matriarch and Jezebel overshadow the relational component of their identities.

Set It Off, on the other hand, embodies the controlling images of matriarch, Jezebel, and welfare mother as it attempts to tell of class, race, and gender oppression through its four characters. Similar to *Waiting to Exhale*, *Set It Off* perpetuates the stereotype of the matriarch in subtle nuances embedded in the character Stoney. On several occasions, Stoney takes on the role of mother as she provides nurturance for her younger brother after her parents' death and for her "sistahs" as they deal with their respective crises. Stoney attempts to provide emotional support as she bolsters her friends' self-esteem and security through their friendship. Though unspoken, Stoney serves as the moral guide for the women as they contemplate their decision to engage in criminal activities (i.e., bank robbing). Unlike Gloria in *Waiting to Exhale*, Stoney is very petite, physically attractive, and attuned to her sexual identity. This character possesses a quiet strength that is contrary to the stereotypic image of the matriarch ingrained in the psyche of many.

The controlling image of Jezebel is also contained in the character Stoney, specifically when she chooses to provide sexual services for a man in exchange for money so that her brother can attend college. After the exchange, Stoney's countenance changes as she acknowledges this moral compromise yet actively works to maintain her self-respect and dignity by keeping this indiscretion to herself. Simi-

larly, the lesbian character Cleo is also perceived as an atypical form of the heterosexual Jezebel. Instead of being “preoccupied” with sex involving a male partner, Cleo’s lesbian relationship is depicted as very sexual in one of the two scenes where her lover is present. It is in this scene where the sexual nature of their relationship supercedes all other aspects, thus perpetuating this construct of the Jezebel. This image is further compounded by the fact that Cleo has little inclination to rise above her circumstances; instead, she is happily resigned to a lazy life in the ‘hood where she lives a commodified version of the American Dream.

As an extension, the controlling image of the welfare mother is inherent in *Set It Off*’s character Tee-Tee. In the beginning of the film, we observe Tee-Tee as a single mother dependent on social services to aid her in transition to motherhood. While she has no other familial unit to assist her with childcare, Tee-Tee is overly dependent on her “sistahs” to help her find employment. This perpetual cycle of economic oppression becomes more pervasive as Tee-Tee is fired from her job and her son is taken into foster-care until she can prove herself worthy of her parental responsibilities. Although this experience may be a reality for many young mothers, African American and otherwise, *Set It Off* unknowingly sustains the image of welfare mother which has been wrongly associated solely with African American women. As we observe Tee-Tee’s evolution into motherhood and adulthood, it is quite obvious that her immaturity and naivete contribute to her inexperience with and apprehension of her newfound adult obligations. Thus, it is plausible to conclude that the financial trappings of single motherhood and limited education are obstacles also experienced by women of all racial and ethnic groups.

Similarities and Differences in Portrayals of African American Women

The current textual analysis indicates that the movies *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*, targeted to the African American community, contain controlling images historically and traditionally ascribed to African American women. The controlling image of the matriarch, as portrayed in both movies, presents the African American woman as provider of emotional and spiritual strength for others. *Waiting to Exhale*’s character Gloria maintains this image by preserving the facade of the asexual (i.e., indiscriminant), overbearing, and overweight female. Conversely, *Set It Off*’s Stoney is a pinnacle of strength and courage for her “sistahs,” yet challenges this matriarch image through her petite stature and overall awareness of her feminine and sexual identities. Though many of the characters possess characteristics and qualities that are double-edged in their connotative meanings, it is the matriarchal characters’ moral fiber in *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off* that demonstrate positivity and “completeness” as experienced by some African American women. In Gloria’s case, she is the only woman of integrity who deservedly wins the unconditional love of a divorcee committed to making her happy. As for

Stoney, although she made a life-threatening decision to rob banks for a living, her escape at the end of the movie demonstrates her commitment to the vision she set for herself. Of the four women, Stoney is dedicated to achieving a life beyond the four walls of the 'hood, despite the decisions she made that temporarily compromised her integrity.

The second stereotype of the Jezebel was pervasive in both movies and re-introduced the image of the sexually promiscuous African American woman. The characters Robin and Savannah in *Waiting to Exhale* portrayed successful, professional African American women as self-serving sexual beings who were willing to sacrifice relationship for sexual relations. Such "amoral" decisions were evident in their decisions to become sexually connected with commitment-phobic men who were not considered "marriageable material." In essence, the women were willing to prostitute their bodies and souls in exchange for temporal relationship satisfaction. As previously noted, *Waiting to Exhale* is a visual text centered around relationships; therefore it would stand to reason that the portrayal of sexual intimacy is inherent in romantic heterosexual relationships. In *Set It Off*, only one character, Stoney, has a pronounced "traditional" sexual identity in her relationship with a male character. The underlying message revolving around her sexual encounters is that she is not solely defined by her sexual identity but also by her vision for a better life. Conversely, Cleo has a "nontraditional" sexual identity that perpetuates the Jezebel image from a divergent standpoint. As a lesbian, Cleo perpetuates the masculine lesbian image as well as the image of an African American woman being "preoccupied" with fulfilling her sexual needs and desires. In one of the two scenes where we observe Cleo interacting with her partner, there are strong sexual overtones that communicate to the audience the "true" nature of their relationship. Despite Cleo's attempts to normalize their relationship, her partner's silence, or non-speaking presence, in each scene magnifies the sexual dimension of their defined relationship.

Despite this natural part of male-female relationships, the movies perpetuate the Jezebel stereotype. While the *Waiting to Exhale* characters engage in sex with only four male characters (two per female character) and *Set It Off*'s Stoney remains sexually monogamous, these stereotypic depictions are further magnified due to the few opportunities African American screen writers, directors, and actors have to share these life experiences with the masses. In contrast, American audiences are bombarded with thousands of movies each year that feature predominately or all-White cast members who tell stories of romance, love, danger, humor, political warfare, and murder, among others. Although the characters engage in various sexual acts that are deemed "normal," rarely are the films individually and collectively scrutinized for perpetuating stereotypes that are historically ingrained in the psyche of their American audiences. Instead, various plat-

forms are constructed to address a collective of social issues that are historically bound by race.

The final stereotype found in only one movie was that of the welfare mother in *Set It Off*. The character Tee-Tee personifies this stereotypical representation of African American women by her dependence on the welfare system to assist in her transition to motherhood and adulthood. She succumbs to the very oppressive force that has constructed her reality by choosing a life of crime to resolve her economic plight. The movie presents the welfare mother through a "victim of the system" framework which positions Tee-Tee as woman who has no control or will over her own destiny. Instead, this character is accustomed to a life of passivity, as this appears to be a part of her identity. The communication strategies used by Tee-Tee, including being passive, shy, even-tempered, and introverted, contribute to this persona, thus conveying to the audience that she is lazy and unable to find good work. Despite the fact that she only has a high school education and lacks a support system, Tee-Tee's efforts to find a job and provide a better life for herself and her son are minimized when she is deemed an unfit mother by social services, thus perpetuating the welfare mother stereotype. Her son is taken away from her and becomes a ward of the state, which ultimately serves as the catalyst for metamorphosis into an angry Black woman.

As the various images presented in *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off* indicate, cinematic portrayals of African American women present a dialectical tension despite attempts made to capture their multidimensionality. For the characters in both films, their pursuit of relational satisfaction and overall happiness potentially becomes overshadowed by their "preoccupation" with sexual gratification (*Waiting to Exhale*) or getting out of the 'hood (*Set It Off*) by any means necessary. Despite the fact that sex and violence are primary components of most mainstream films, *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off* are held to a different standard of credibility. While the characters' experiences may be reflective of reality for many African American women, the stereotypes of Jezebel and welfare queen have the potential to become pronounced as the viewer is exposed to these images on-screen. Instead of accepting sexuality, sexism, racism, and classism as a part of life for these characters, audience members stand the chance of perceiving these representations as confirmation of their beliefs about African American women as a whole.

In recent years, there have been a number of movies released specifically targeted to African American audiences. These visual texts create a dialectical tension in that they capture a myriad of "snapshots" of life for African Americans in the U.S. yet have the potential to distort reality through the perpetuation and/or maintenance of negative stereotypes. In order to fully understand the degree to which such tensions directly impact the socially constructed gender identities of African American women, this critical essay examined the portrayal of African

American female identity as illustrated by the female characters and storylines present in the movies *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*.

It was found that while the African American female characters were telling stories of relationship (dis)satisfaction and race, class, and gender oppression, the same stories perpetuate controlling images that have become a mainstay in Western culture. Instead of challenging the very negative depictions that such images epitomize, the various characters keep alive the matriarch, Jezebel, and welfare mother images traditionally associated with African American women. Both movies embody African American women's experiences from two distinct socioeconomic classes through the interpersonal context of friendship/sisterhood, creating an interesting dynamic in need of critical inquiry. Collins states that Black Feminist Thought offers African American women a voice or a "self-defined collective black women's standpoint about black womanhood" (1996a). In turn, formal inquiries into such experiences have provided African American women a conceptual framework that challenges stereotypical images of American women (Collins, 1993), thus creating a consciousness of systematic oppression from all fronts.

In a recent qualitative study about perceptions of the cinematic representation of professional African American women in the movie *Waiting to Exhale*, Harris and Hill (1998) found that some women serving as members of an undervalued interpretive community experienced cognitive dissonance as they watched the characters develop on-screen. While there was satisfaction in seeing a somewhat realistic representation of life for themselves in the movie, most participants were disheartened to observe the subconscious debasing of African American women. Although they felt *Waiting to Exhale* was a positive attempt by African American film makers at providing creative space for the expression of Blackness and femaleness, participants felt that it also perpetuated the matriarch and Jezebel stereotypes traditionally associated with African American women (Harris & Hill, 1998).

According to Collins (1993), African American women have experienced a particular oppression and misrepresentation, which has created unfavorable images that have been readily accepted as truth by the masses. Currently, some cinematic efforts have been made to challenge such manipulated constructs in an effort to redeem the beauty of all African American women. Using Black Feminist Thought as the conceptual framework, this essay explored a dialectical tension whereby attempts to portray African American women in the movies ultimately perpetuate stereotypes of matriarch, Jezebel, and welfare mother, which are historically and traditionally associated with African American women in Western culture. It is hoped that future inquiry into this tenuous state of cinematic annihilation will be explored to deconstruct and reconstruct the multiple identities of all African American women.

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Jacques Tourneur's World War II Films: From Unity to Chaos

Jacques Tourneur, son of the legendary silent film director Maurice Tourneur, worked for over 30 years in the Hollywood film industry. As a dependable and versatile director he was assigned a variety of film projects, crossing genres and ranging in budget and cast from "A" to "C". Although best known for his work in the horror and *film noir* genres (*Cat People* [1942], *I Walked with a Zombie* [1943], *The Leopard Man* [1943], *Curse of the Demon* [1956] in the former genre; *Out of the Past* [1947] and *Nightfall* [1956] in the latter genre), his career was, in fact, more diverse, proving that he could produce competent films in most genres. Tourneur's westerns, thrillers and adventure films may not be as accomplished and as startlingly *good* as the horror and *noir* films, yet they provide interesting material for any analysis of the relationship between films and their society.

Many of Tourneur's films can be read as social texts: often a western that seems to be apolitical due to its historical setting, its adherence to genre conventions, and its use of familiar plot structures can offer us an insight into America in the 1940s and 1950s. Thus, Tourneur's 1946 western *Canyon Passage*, which is not, ostensibly, a political film, nevertheless uses its genre to offer a critique of American capitalism in the Old West. In a similar way, Tourneur's most famous film, *Out of the Past*, uses *noir* settings, conventions, and characters to introduce us to the dark side of American capitalist society of the 1940s. One can apply a socio-political reading to almost all of Tourneur's films. However, two films in particular — *Days of Glory* [1944] and *Berlin Express* [1948] — invite such a reading. These two films are overt political films: not only do they offer much material for socio-political readings, they were specifically produced as *films with a message*. Both films are examples of Hollywood's use of popular film for overt political proselytizing. What is perhaps the most interesting aspect of these films is the way in which they impart their political message — in one sense the reason for their being — in often ambivalent terms. Before I turn to a comparative analysis of the two films, it is perhaps pertinent to place them within broader socio-historical and cinematic contexts.

When war broke out in Europe in 1939, the U.S. and Hollywood had at first responded with caution, reluctant to commit to one side or the other. Although most Americans were sympathetic to the Allies, there was a strong isolationist mood in America as many believed that America should stay out of this "European" war. At the same time, there was a growing faction that favored intervention: many of the intellectuals who called for American involvement in the war had already seen the results of the Franco take-over in Spain in 1936. For inter-

ventionists like John Howard Lawson, the writer of *Blockade* (1938, US, Wanger/Warners, dir: William Dieterle), one of the first anti-fascist films produced by Hollywood, America had a moral obligation to involve itself in this fight against fascism. The aforementioned *Blockade* was probably the first film made in Hollywood that directly addressed the issue of fascism, and it signaled the growing influence of liberalism in Hollywood, an influence that would be curtailed from 1947 on, with the emergence of HUAC. Even though *Blockade's* script was watered down by Warners who were under pressure from the Breen office and from their foreign markets (Koppes and Black 24-27), the film was significant as it represented a first attempt to deal with the immediate, worldwide threat of fascism. It was another example of Warner Brothers' interest in political and social matters, an interest motivated by commercial and ideological factors. Naturally, Warners was primarily concerned with making money, but the heads of the studio were also vehemently anti-Nazi, especially after the murder, in 1936, of Warners' chief salesman, Joe Kaufmann, in Berlin by the Nazis (Shindler 23). Warners would become the studio most associated with the war effort, especially after 1941. Perhaps the best known of the anti-fascist films before 1941 was Fritz Lang's *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939, US, Warners), which located the fascist threat not only in Europe, but also in America among immigrant Germans. The success of this film led some Hollywood studios to adopt a more interventionist attitude, an attitude that was reflected in film output after 1941.

Many of the war films and political thrillers made by Hollywood during the war used the conventions of established genres, a point that has been made by Koppes and Black: "The studios quickly grafted the war upon their traditional formula pictures" (61). As profit was always uppermost in the minds of the studio heads, the war was, to some extent, exploited. Studios knew that many of their audience members were directly affected by the war and thus would have an interest in spending their money going to see films that might help them "share" the experience of those who were away. As many commentators have noted, films dealing with the war could, by their very nature, run into problems as the fighting changed the facts every day (Koppes and Black 67). Such is the case with Tourneur's *Days of Glory*, a film produced at a specific time, for a specific cause. By the time Tourneur made *Berlin Express*, the huge changes that had enveloped Euro-American relations had rendered the earlier film obsolete and potentially dangerous. The same can be observed when one looks at *Berlin Express*, a film written in 1946, shot in 1947, and released in 1948, by which time it had already been overtaken by new political attitudes and events in both Europe and America.

Of all the films made by Jacques Tourneur in a rather uneven career, *Days of Glory* is surely one of his weakest. It was a film that Tourneur himself had little time for, calling it "atrocious" and criticizing its "stylization" (Tavernier 50;

Greenberg 220). Although Tourneur tends to be overly critical of his films, with regard to *Days of Glory* his assessment seems valid. The film suffers from the political naiveté that is apparent when one looks at any of the pro-Soviet films produced by Hollywood from 1943 on. Written by Casey Robinson, *Days of Glory* was made by RKO as a response to the series of pro-Soviet films that were being produced by other studios such as MGM and Warners at the time. Probably the most famous of these included *Mission to Moscow* (1943, US, Warners, dir: Michael Curtiz) and *North Star* (1943, US, Goldwyn, dir: Lewis Milestone). These films attempt to win support for the Soviets, by then fighting to keep Hitler out of the Soviet Union. All the films were essentially propaganda films and uneasy ones at that. Unlike films made to gain sympathy for other Allies such as the British (the best example made in Hollywood being *Mrs Miniver* [1942, US, MGM, dir: William Wyler]), the pro-Soviet films threaten to self-destruct from their very inception. The stark incongruity of Hollywood, an archetypal capitalist structure, making a film exalting the virtues of a group of Soviet guerrillas, is apparent throughout the Soviet film cycle. In an attempt to mask this essential incompatibility, and also to win American audience support (and box office dollars), the films transform Soviet characters into safe stereotypes or into honorary Americans.

One can see this plainly in both *North Star* and *Days of Glory*. Both films fail to address the differences that characterized the Soviet experience of the War, preferring to emphasize the similarities between the Soviet and American experience. The characters are little more than stereotypes, an American view of what life was like in the Soviet Union in the 1940s. The Soviets are seen to be like any other American patriots. They are fighting for "Mother Russia": they despise the Nazis, not only because they are deceitful and belligerent, but also because they have no comprehension of the importance of culture (similar to Ernst Lubitsch's view of "tasteless" Nazis in his satire *To Be or Not to Be* [1942, US, Korda]). Unlike the vulgar Nazis, the Soviets blend cultural taste with military genius and a romantic love for the motherland. In *Days of Glory*, Casey Robinson's Soviet characters are little more than stock comedy types: for example the "lovable drunk"; the little girl who fusses about like a mother hen; the romantic intellectual who reads Lermontov as the Nazis march through Russia; and the young boy mentally disturbed by the effects of war. This mixing of stereotypes was obviously an attempt to convey to an American audience, not only the varied nature of life in Russia, but, more importantly, the great unifying force of patriotism. This great patriotism seems to be the motivation behind the guerrillas' struggle: there is no sense that they find fascism, the ideology and the practice, abhorrent. This reluctance to engage on a political and ideological level with the debates concerning fascism is typical of many of the films made during the war. The film was made as a propaganda film, intended to appeal to American audiences on an emotional,

rather than intellectual, level. In an article, the producer-writer Casey Robinson acknowledged that the film wasn't a masterpiece, but that it did serve its purpose: "[It] was not calculated to make the critics throw their hats in the air, although it did turn out to be a modest success." (Peary 472)

The film's failure to portray the complexities that were inherent in the struggle it depicted can be attributed to a number of factors, particularly the commercial pressure placed upon filmmakers by studios anxious to give the audience "entertainment" and the studios' reluctance to introduce levels of ambiguity and complexity that might incur censure from the OWI (Office of War Information) and the box office. Despite injecting some "Russian" folk songs into the film to "authenticiise" it, the film could really be set anywhere. As several critics have pointed out with regard to *North Star*, the filmmakers are so anxious to encourage audience empathy with the characters and events that all cultural specificity is discarded (Koppes and Black 211-215; Shindler 60-63). One can perhaps excuse this in a propaganda film made for commercial *as well as* political/ideological reasons. If the film was too removed from the everyday experience of American audience members, then it would fail as both commercial product and propaganda vehicle. However, the failure of *Days of Glory* is also related to Tourneur's handling of the material.

In a letter to the author, Gregory Peck, the star of *Days of Glory* (the film that introduced him to American cinema audiences) has said that Tourneur was unable to produce a good film because he was "wrestling with a sentimental script and a cast of inexperienced actors" (Peck, 1-2). Perhaps the main problem with *Days of Glory* lies in its complete lack of realism. The film is, as Tourneur himself pointed out, highly stylized, with most of the "action" taking place in a subterranean bunker. Even though this film had an "A" budget, all the filming was done on the RKO lot. The absence of exterior locations adds to the sense of unreality that pervades the film. Unlike many war films which revel in scenes of grim action and violence, *Days of Glory* contains few action scenes. The few scenes involving military engagement are shot from the point of view of the small band of guerrillas, and the action sequences are quite surreal, almost half-hearted. This absence of battle scenes and exterior locations could lead to a highly effective film if it instead presented us with psychologically developed characters realistically enduring the mental effects of brutality and war. Unfortunately, as the characters are so weakly drawn in *Days of Glory*, realism is not present either in the action sequences or in the characterization.

If Tourneur had encouraged his cinematographer Tony Gaudio to use more low-key lighting, then the routine material might have been invested with a sense of ambiguity and real dread. A propaganda film might have been transformed into another "Tourneuresque" study of the nature of fear — a fear that was very real in

1944 (Telotte; Siegel). The main setting of the film — a subterranean bunker in the catacombs of an old monastery — presents an ideal opportunity for an evocative use of lighting. However, despite Gaudio's skills, there is little or no sense of profundity underlying the brief uses of *noirish* lighting in the film. Unfortunately, with the exception of one scene when the captured Nazi threatens Nina (Tamara Toumanova), Gaudio and Tourneur fail to invest the *mise en scene* with any real atmosphere.

Overall *Days of Glory* is of interest only as a historical document — a “curiosity” as Peck as called it (Peck 2) — revealing only in its reflection of contemporary attitudes towards the Soviet Union. Within months of its release, the film was obsolete, a victim of the rapidly evolving political situation of 1944-5, and of poor box office returns. The change in American society's attitude to the war and towards Europe forms the basis for Tourneur's superior *Berlin Express*. Here, propaganda has been replaced by a liberal message, a trend increasingly seen in a number of films released by studios like RKO in the post-war years. *Berlin Express* represents a more successful fusion of politics with drama and style.

In the aftermath of the war, there was a scramble to flood Germany with American films. This was seen not only as a commercial venture, but also as an ideological venture: to re-educate and “deprogram” the German people (Guback 245-275). In some sense these films were as much a form of control as the establishment of military and political control by the Allies at the end of the war. However, many of the films didn't reach Germany until 1948, by which time the Germans were in no mood to listen to Allied speeches. The poverty and deprivation that enveloped Germany after the war led to a greater feeling of cynicism, not only in Germany, but also among American directors working abroad.

There are a number of films dealing with post-war Berlin and Frankfurt that either undercut their dominant message of optimism at the re-establishment of democracy, or attempt to portray the effects that Nazism and defeat has had on German society. In films like Billy Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* (1948, US, Paramount) there is a deep vein of cynicism regarding the effect of the Allied victory on German society. One can see this cynicism as characteristic of Billy Wilder and yet it is surprising that *A Foreign Affair*, a film whose portrayal of the American army is deeply unflattering, could be produced in Hollywood at all. Instead of setting the Americans up as heroes, Wilder presents them as either stuffy and humorless, or as opportunistic con men. There is no sense that the Americans are bringing the light of democracy and goodness to the starved Germans; instead they are encouraging the black market and prostitution. Nowhere in the film does Wilder attempt to argue the moral superiority of the Americans.

Roberto Rossellini's *Allemagne Anno Zero/Germany Year Zero* (1947, France/Italy, UGC/DEFA) is also critical of the effects of the harsh war repara-

tions imposed on Germany after the war, reparations that had the effect of crushing the economy. The same issues — poverty, prostitution and the callous individualism that comes from the constant struggle to survive — can be seen in Rossellini's film as in Wilder's. Admittedly Wilder takes a tragic situation and turns it into a black comedy. Yet both films are effective in their portrayals of post-war Berlin and German society.

In some respects, Wilder's and Rossellini's portraits of post-war German society are in stark contrast to the portrait of the good American soldier (Montgomery Clift) offered by Fred Zinnemann in *The Search* (1948, US/Switzerland, MGM/Praesens). The film is clearly sympathetic to ordinary Germans who have suffered much material and moral deprivation, yet there is a sense that the American army is here to help, rather than punish, the German people. *The Search* focuses a great deal of attention on the efforts made by the Allied occupying forces and the International Red Cross, to reunite German families torn apart by war. This emphasis on the reunification of the natural family means that Clift *must* let go of the boy (whom he had wished to adopt) when the boy is reunited with his mother. Clearly, Zinnemann is drawing an analogy between Clift's responsibility towards the (weak) boy, and the United States and UN's responsibility towards the people of the defeated (weak) nation. It is significant that the film was produced at the same time as the United States was instituting the Marshall Plan. Although *The Search* may seem more optimistic than Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* or Sam Fuller's *Verboten!* (1959, US) (dealing with a doomed romance between an American GI and a German woman), this optimism is undercut by the realism of the *mise en scene*. Influenced by the Italian neorealist school of location shooting, Zinnemann shoots on location, using the bombed-scarred landscape to comment on the condition of the German people, ruined by a military and ideological defeat. The ruins are clearly used for symbolic purpose: they serve to remind the German people, and the world, of the "heart of darkness"(Nazism) that both built these cities and sowed the seeds for their destruction.

Tourneur's *Berlin Express* predates all the above films and can be seen as one of the first, and best, examples of Hollywood's attempts to embrace both a European subject, and a style of shooting. Based on a story by European exile Curt Siodmak and produced under the auspices of Dore Schary's RKO unit, (which also produced liberal films like *Crossfire* [1947,US, RKO, dir: Edward Dmytryk] and *The Boy with Green Hair* [1948,US, RKO, dir: Joseph Losey]), *Berlin Express* is a film about the death of idealism in the post-war years. Clearly influenced by the downbeat style and subject matter of Italian neorealist cinema, the film was shot on location in Paris, Frankfurt and Berlin. In an interview, the cinematographer Lucien Ballard, then married to the film's female star Merle Oberon, explained how he had tried to make the best use of the locations and the new handheld

cameras that were as then unknown to Hollywood filmmaking (Higham 49-63). The cinematography and location shooting are key factors in the success of the film, adding to its sense of realism and authenticity.

The influence of the documentary style, which Tourneur would have been familiar with from his MGM days (when he worked on several short documentaries), is also apparent through the use of a narrative voice-over. Just like the voice-over used in many documentaries and newsreels, *Berlin Express*' narrator gives us facts, dates and procedural detail. Unlike the voice-over used in documentary films and newsreels, Tourneur's narrator offers an often ironic commentary on the action of the film and on the state of post-war Germany. One immediately learns that the Allied victory may not be complete. This is announced by the cynical, world weary tone of the narrator, who introduces us to the devastated city of Frankfurt, thus: "Something like peace was supposed to be here." There is also a withholding of information from the viewer, best exemplified early in the film when all the details of the passengers on the train are given, with the exception of Schmidt. This withholding of information not only builds up suspense, but also moves the film away from strict reliance on an authoritative voice-over, a device also adopted by Tourneur in some of his early short documentaries. It is perhaps appropriate that the voice of authority is discarded by Tourneur in this film. As some critics have pointed out, *Berlin Express* could be read as a typically "Tourneuresque" exploration of fear and the coexistence of the rational world with an older, more mysterious world of duplicity (Henry 9). In some respects this is true of the way *Berlin Express* pits the new world rationalism of American Robert Lindley (Robert Ryan), against the mysteriousness of the old world, a world that is reluctant to give up its secrets and its autonomy. Although the Americans may have some control over Germany, the resentment felt, not only by the Germans, but also by the Soviets, the French, and the English, always threatens to erupt. Unlike Wilder's *A Foreign Affair* and the earlier propaganda films that pitted the Allies against the Germans, *Berlin Express* portrays the general lack of unity between the Allies. This is a much more honest film than *Days of Glory*, where the similarities, rather than differences, between the Americans and the Soviets had been stressed. It may be argued that critical assessments of *Days of Glory* have been unavoidably affected by hindsight. This is undoubtedly true, yet *Days of Glory* does suffer from a reluctance to discuss, at any level, the complexities of the situation it is depicting. This reluctance is not apparent in *Berlin Express*, and this is one of the reasons that it is a superior film.

Ostensibly, the film seems to endorse American involvement in the political and socio-economic structures of Germany. After all, Lindley, the American, is ultimately the one who saves Dr. Bernhardt (Paul Lukas), the representative of European liberal thought (a character apparently modeled after Thomas Mann).

It is the American approach, strong yet humane, that seems to represent the best way forward for post-war Germany. There are close parallels between the action and attitudes expressed in the film and those which were current in America in the 1940s. In the post-war period there was the understandable desire for revenge against the Axis powers (although there was more resentment against the Japanese who had bombed Pearl Harbor, than against the Germans). Yet the actions taken by the Allies after the war were not simply knee-jerk ones. There was a belief that Allied control would have to be extended into Germany for a long period. This control was not only asserted through the occupation of Germany by Allied troops, but also by economic aid, in the form of the Marshall Plan which gave America a socio-economic and moral foothold in Germany. There was a belief that the German people were not *all* evil Nazis. The perception was that the German people had been misled by Hitler and his supporters. This perception can also be seen in Carol Reed's *The Man Between* (1953, GB, British Lion/London films) and Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero*, thus proving that this sentiment was not unique to American filmmaking.

National character plays a key role in *Berlin Express*'s representation of each Allied force's approach to controlling their respective zones. The film features representatives of each Allied force, and these characters are delineated as national archetypes. The Soviet soldier, Lt. Maxim (Roman Toporow) is, broadly speaking, seen to be dry and strict, more concerned with following orders than attempting to understand the Germans, or even the other Allies. The Englishman, James Sterling (Robert Coote) is seen to be blustering and indecisive, presumably representative of a nation that needed American help to win "their" war. Similarly, the problematic Frenchman, Henri Perrot (Charles Korvin) is seen to be charming, but rather obsequious in front of the "might" of the American, Robert Lindley (Robert Ryan). In a sinister turn the "archetypal Frenchman" turns out to be an undercover Nazi, perhaps a sly comment on what the Americans perceived as the "weakness" of the French national character, as revealed during the war. Finally the American, Lindley, is an idealized version of the post-war G.I. a little bitter (he shudders when the train passes over the German border), but with some remaining idealism. This idealism manifests itself in his admiration for Dr. Bernhardt and his later participation in the search for him. The film's liberal message concludes that not all Germans are evil: this is evident in its privileging of the character of Dr. Bernhardt. He clearly represents a liberal German conscience, as well as echoes some of the sentiments expressed by Americans involved in the Marshall Plan program. The representation of him is problematic in the sense that the film's "message" is expressed through him. Just as *Days of Glory* was a propaganda film whose message is evident in the watered down (American) sentiments mouthed by Russian guerrillas, so the message of *Berlin Express* (liberal, pro-American, pro-

Marshall aid) is expressed through the statements given by Bernhardt. In this way, he is an idealized representation: a type rather than a psychologically developed character. He doesn't offer analyses of Nazism, but instead expresses the (naive) belief in the essential goodness and universality of man, regardless of race. This is what American audiences wanted to hear, and yet because the film's release was delayed, even these liberal sentiments were obsolete in American society in 1948.

One of the most interesting aspects of the film is the subtle undercutting of American positivism. Ostensibly, there is a privileging of American character and world view, yet this is often undercut by the *mise en scene*. This is signified by Tourneur's use of the German locations. The ruins may be the symbols of the death of Nazi ideology, yet they also represent an air of mystery and intrigue, a sign that the old continent *can't* be taken over by American ideology. The Americans may, to all accounts, control a part of Frankfurt, but they will never be able to truly eradicate the older Frankfurt. Tourneur reminds the viewer of this in the scenes where Lindley and Lucienne (Merle Oberon) search for Bernhardt. It is significant that both get lost in the maze of ruins that dominate the landscape. It is not surprising that the "American" sergeant who seems to know his way around actually turns out to be German. Through Tourneur's melancholic tone and Lucien Ballard's superb cinematography, an air of crumbling decadence and mystery is evoked, and Frankfurt remains inscrutable. The refusal to yield fully to the "invaders" is a theme that is also present in *I Walked with a Zombie*, and is evidence of Tourneur's belief in the coexistence of "parallel worlds". There is a constant feeling that the Germans will never fully cooperate. This is seen in a number of scenes: from the woman who sees Bernhardt on the bus as he arrives in Frankfurt (and rushes to tell the Nazis that he's not dead) to the woman who faints at the station (thus causing a diversion which allows the kidnappers to abduct Bernhardt). Perhaps the best example is the silent hostility that greets Lindley and Lucienne in the underground nightclub. The hostility isn't just on the part of the Nazi sympathizers, but is also seen among the general German audience there. I would argue that the film is *not* implying that all Germans, with the exception of Bernhardt, are still pro-Nazi. Rather it points out the impossibility of imperialist practice, however benevolent that imperialism might be. The Marshall Plan may well have had altruistic motives, yet it also signified a kind of imperialistic control. Tourneur's film seems to suggest that any country's attempt to impose their laws/ideologies on another's is bound to be met with resistance, whether it be subtle or overt. In this subtle undercutting of the American positivism represented by Lindley (and Bernhardt) *Berlin Express's* liberal message is in danger of collapsing from within the film. Is this film the "no" to the "yes" of the Marshall plan? Is the ostensible liberalism actually hiding a deeper sense of distrust? One could argue that this ambiguity is conscious: an attempt by the producer and director to capture American society's

mixed feelings about the Germans. On the one hand the war is over, and America has “forgiven” Germany; on the other, there is a feeling that the Germans can’t be trusted. I would argue that Tourneur is acknowledging the fact that one can’t hope for Nazi ideology to simply “go away” even if its practice has been crushed. This acknowledgment is in marked opposition to the optimism of America’s Marshall plan approach.

Berlin Express brings out the continuing disunity within Europe, and between Europe and America. Although the film ends on a “high note” — Max, the Soviet soldier returns to retrieve the American’s card — there is a bitter after-taste. After all the conflicts and clashes that have been portrayed in the film, there is little realistic hope that any of the characters will stay in touch. The dream of a united Europe seems as far away in 1948 as it did in 1938.

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Positionality, Film, and Asian American Literature

In *Orientalism*, Palestinian American scholar Edward Said divides Orientalism into two categories: the *latent* Orientalism which is represented by “an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity” and the *manifest* Orientalism which includes “the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth” (206). Whereas the latent Orientalism is unanimous, stable and durable, the manifest Orientalism is chiefly responsible for accentuating the differences between the East and West; it can be seen in the portrayal of “the separateness of the orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability” (206). Said’s interest in problematizing the definition and function of culture is as engaging as his critical methodology which is not dissimilar to those employed by other postcolonial scholars. In a 1983 interview with University of California-Berkeley Professor Paul Rabinow, et al., French scholar Michele Foucault responded to the criticism that his study of modern power structures lacked an overall theory and, therefore, was anarchistic in nature. Foucault argued that he believed that the forms of totalization offered by politics are always, in fact, very limited. What he attempted to achieve was, to the contrary, apart from any *totalization*—which would be at once *abstract* and *limiting*—to *open up* problems that are as *concrete* and *general* as possible; he was interested in studying problems that approach politics from behind and cut across societies on the diagonal, problems that are at once constituents of our history and constituted by that history (“Politics and Ethics: An Interview” 375-76). In “Subject and Power,” Foucault again states that the key issue is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. For the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state (216).

Both Foucault and Said’s theoretical approach to the study of the archaeology of knowledge are as dialectical as their belief in the importance of opening up problems that are as concrete and general as possible is strong. Both build their argument on a decentralizing that leaves no privilege to any center. Thus, to suggest that they develop a new theory to replace those which the scholars challenge is to misunderstand the very basic premises of postcolonial criticism. Further, to apply the critical methodology employed by postcolonial theorists to the analysis of the latest (re)presentation of the Asian American experience in film by both Asian American and non-Asian American writers, directors, and producers is to

describ the necessity not so much to “validate the culture and state of which” Asian American writers are “a part,” but to problematize the cultural, historical, social, and political configuration of the state they are associated with.

Hollywood has been notorious in mis(sing)-representing Asian and Asian American experience and cultures. From silent movies such as *Chinese Rubber-necks* (1903), *The Yellow Peril* (1908), and *What Ho the Cook* (1921), to the Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu series, Hollywood’s portrayal of Asian Americans and the Asian American community has always been driven by social and political conditions rather than by the desire for artistic and authentic representation. In the “Introduction” to the anthology, *Charlie Chan Is Dead*, Filipino American author and critic Jessica Hagedorn recalls cinematic images which populated Hollywood movies until the 1970s:

The slit-eyed, bucktooth Jap thrusting his bayonet, thirsty for blood. The inscrutable, wily Chinese detective with his taped eyelids and wispy mustache. The childlike, indolent Filipino houseboy. Always giggling. Bowing and scraping. Eager to please, but untrustworthy. The sexless, hairless Asian male. The servile, oversexed Asian female. The Geisha. The sultry, sarong-clad, South seas maiden. The serpentine, cunning Dragon Lady. Mysterious and evil, eager to please. (xxii)

In recent years, the portrayal of the Asian American experience in film has undergone some changes. Besides movies written, made, and produced by Asian American writers and directors such as *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, *Dim Sum*, and *Picture Bride*, some mainstream movies such as *Dragon*, *The Bruce Lee Story*, *Golden Gate*, and *Heaven and Earth*¹ have demonstrated their sensitivity to issues related to Asian and Asian American cultures. There are, however, also images which have now evolved into subtle stereotypes, as Jessica Hagedorn observes:

There’s the greedy, clever *Japanese Businessman*, ready to buy up New York City and all the Van Goghs in the world. There’s the *Ultimate Nerd*, the model minority Asian American student, excelling in math and computer science, obsessed with work, work, work....There’s *The Lover*, the pathetic Chinese millionaire boy-toy completely dominated by his impoverished, adolescent, blonde waif dominatrix in both Marguerite Duras’ popular novel and the recent film version. (*Charlie Chan Is Dead* xxii-xxiii).

What is so interesting about Hollywood's latest portrayal of the Asian American experience and community, though, is that some Asian American writers have played an inadvertent, corroborating role in helping perpetuate cultural stereotypes. In "Re-Viewing Asian American Literary Studies," Chinese American scholar King-Kok Cheung suggests that if, as Japanese American scholar and poet Garrett Hongo charges, ethnic presses and ethnic studies programs in the past tended to valorize texts that are bitter, brashly political, and accountable to an ethnic community, "the commercial presses seem to have favored works at the other end of the spectrum: those that are optimistic, apolitical, autobiographical" (17). Interestingly enough, the latter are indeed works which have received Hollywood's attention and been adapted to the silver screen.

Chinese American novelist Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* was first published in 1989. Portraying middle and upper-middle class Asian American experience, the book was a commercial success. It opened doors for many struggling Asian American writers. Nineteen ninety-one, for instance, saw publications by several Asian American writers (Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Frank Chin's *Donald Duk*, David Wong Louis's *Pangs of Love*, Gish Jen's *Typical American*, Gus Lee's *China Boy*, etc.). The success of *The Joy Luck Club* was not unnoticed by Hollywood. Several major film studios had indicated interest in buying the movie rights of the manuscript. But Tan insisted on having full control of the manuscript. With the support of Oliver Stone, Tan reached an agreement with Disney and invited Wayne Wang to direct the movie.

Considering Hollywood's proclivity to tailor movie scripts to public taste and demand, it is not so difficult to understand Tan's decision to have full control of the manuscript. From Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*,² Hollywood has demonstrated again and again its willingness and propensity to sacrifice artistic probity in exchange for success at the box office. Whereas Tan's determination to protect the integrity of the manuscript is applaudable, together with Ronald Bass she made several important changes in the movie script which not only raise questions about the issue of how culture should be represented but also seem to confirm how Orientalism responds "more to the culture that" produces it "than to its putative object" (Said 22). In fact, *The Joy Luck Club*'s success is itself controversial. Similar to critics', especially African American scholars' reaction to the popular TV sitcom "Cosby," *The Joy Luck Club* is being criticized as a book describing Chinese yuppies' life style and prolongating the myth of Asian Americans being the "model minority."

In Chinese American writer and critic Frank Chin's article, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," the author divides Chinese and Japanese American writers into two groups: Asian American authors and Americanized Asian Authors. Chin posits that only those Asian American writers who

are not susceptible to Christian conversion (18) and uphold traditional Chinese and Japanese values such as Confucianism, the Japanese sense of honor, and the samurai sense of nobility (69), can be considered as the real voice in Asian American literature. This group includes Chinese American writer Louis Chu (*Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 1961) and Japanese American writers Toshio Mori (*Yokohama, California*, 1949) and John Okada (*No-No Boy*, 1957). But Chinese American writers such as Pardee Lowe (*Father and Glorious Descendant*, 1943), Jade Snow Wong (*The Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 1945); Maxine Hong Kingston (*The Woman Warrior*, 1975; *China Men*, 1980; *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*, 1989), and Amy Tan (*The Joy Luck Club*, 1989; *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 1991), Japanese American writers Mike Masaru Masaoka and Bill Hosokawa (*NISEI: The Quiet Americans*, 1969), and Asian American writers who use the exclusively Christian form of autobiography and revise Asian history, culture, and childhood literature and myth are the fake voices: in their depiction of the "Christian yin/yang of the dual personality/identity crisis," these writers not only misrepresent their own cultural heritage, but also betray its values (11-26).

Whereas Chin's arduous effort to defend the purity of Asian cultures is laudable and his attempt to problematize the cultural configurations of Asian American literature instrumental to developing a healthy critical discourse, his definition of Asian American literature is too narrow and arbitrary. In the "Foreword" to *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, Korean American scholar Elaine H. Kim acknowledges that the pioneering work of the members of the Combined Asian Recourses Project (CARP)—Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, Nathan Lee, Benjamin R. Tong, and Shawn Hsu Wong—played an important role in helping define the identity of the Asian American community and establish Asian American literary voices. But Kim also points out that the terms of our cultural negotiations have changed and are changing over time because of differences in historical circumstances. In order to (re)vision Asian American literature we must traverse the boundaries of unity and diversity, to make our rootedness enable us to take flight, and to have it all by claiming an infinity of layers of self and community (xiii-xvi).

Chin's article, however, raises a legitimate question about how to integrate and represent Asian histories and cultures in Asian American literature. A noticeable phenomenon in Asian American literature is that most "successful" works are produced by American-born Asian American writers. These writers do not have a language problem; some of them are more ideologically in tune with American mainstream culture than with their own ethnic cultural heritage; and thanks to their language capability, many of these writers have adopted the role as translators for their ethnic culture. In Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and *China Men*, Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*, for instance, the narrators

are second generation Chinese Americans born in the United States. They not only tell stories about their own lives, but also serve as “narrators” of traditions with which they sometimes struggle, as the narrator in *Bone* describes: “We know so little of the old country. We repeat the names of grandfathers and uncles, but they have always been strangers to us. Family exists only because somebody has a story, and knowing the story connects us to a history” (36).

To compare works by first generation Asian immigrants and those by second and third generation Asian American writers is also to describe a divergence in thematic concerns, in tone, and in the use of traditional materials such as myths and legends. In the article, “Ethnicizing Gender: An Exploration of Sexuality as Sign in Chinese Immigrant Literature,” Chinese American scholar Sau-ling Cynthia Wong calls for “in-depth comparisons” of the “intriguing contrast between the thematic preoccupations of the foreign- and American-born Asian American writers.” In her study of Asian American female writers’ works, the author notices that while immigrant writers such as Yu Lihua, Nie Hua-ling, Chen Ruoxi, Li Li, Shi Shuqing, and Cong Su “are especially interested in issues of heterosexual courtship, marriage, jilting, celibacy, divorce, widowhood, extramarital affairs, and child rearing, a consequence of sexual union,” American-born authors seem to favor “the coming-of-age story in which sexual initiation is conspicuously absent: the canonical pattern shows an adolescent or young adult seeking a healing reconnection to his/her ethnic culture and a viable place in American society” (123). Indeed, whereas the main thematic occupations in Vietnamese American writer Le Ly Hayslip’s autobiographies, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989) and *A Child of War, A Woman of Peace* (1991), and Korean American novelist Ronyoung Kim’s *Clay Walls* (1987) revolve around issues such as survival and the fight for respect, dignity, and social justice, characters in Chinese American writer Gish Jen’s novel, *Typical American*, in David Wong Louie’s collection of short stories, *Pangs of Love* (1991), and in Amy Tan’s *The Kitchen God’s Wife* are more concerned about individual development and social and economic mobility; whereas the voice behind Filipino American writer Carlos Bulosan’s autobiography, *America Is in the Heart* (1943), Asian American Indian writer Bharati Mukherjee’s novel, *Jasmine* (1989), and Korean American writer Mary Paik Lee’s autobiography, *Quiet Odyssey* (1990), is painful, bitter, and sometimes sarcastic and angry, the one behind Chinese American writer Pardee Lowe’s *Father and Glorious Descendant* and Jade Snow Wong’s *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is reconciliatory and appealing.³

It is also interesting to notice that while works by both first generation Asian immigrants and second and third generation Asian American writers are celebratorial of the writers’ cultural heritage, the two groups’ treatment of their cultural and literary traditions is quite different: the use of traditional materials by the first group is usually sincere, faithful, and respectful, whereas the use of the

same materials by the second group is more creative and symbolic. As is demonstrated in Asian American literature, stories play a critical role in connecting second and third generation Asian immigrants to history, to their cultural heritage, and to the country where their parents and grandparents come from. Stories help characters (re)define their relationship with both American mainstream culture as well as their ethnic cultural heritage. Stories enable them to ontologically embrace what they can not culturally ignore. Stories remind them of who they are instead of who they are supposed to be. How the stories are told signifies not only the characters' but also the writers' relationships with both American mainstream culture and their own ethnic culture. In Hayslip's *When Heaven and Earth Changed Place*, for example, traditional Vietnamese legends are incorporated not so much to accentuate individual characters' struggle to find their identity as to suggest the importance of familial and social harmony. The autobiography ends with a Vietnamese legend about a boy-turned-soldier who made peace with his enemy after realizing revenge would throw both in a vicious circle. At the end of the legend, the two men, "no longer boys, parted and began new lives" (365). The legend is apparently used to reflect traditional Vietnamese values placed on forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.

On the other hand, second generation Asian American writers' use of Chinese myths and legends is more liberal. In "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," Chin cites *The Woman Warrior* as an example to suggest why he believes that Kingston, (David Henry) Hwang and (Amy) Tan are the first writers of Asian ancestry to so boldly fake the best-known works from the most universally known body of Asian literature and lore in history (93). Chin argues that in *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston mixes two famous Chinese legendary characters, Fa Mulan and Yue Fei, from two different stories:

In *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston takes a childhood chant, "The Ballad of Mulan," which is as popular today as "London Bridge Is Falling Down," and rewrites the heroine, Fa Mulan, to the specs of the stereotype of the Chinese woman as a pathological white supremacist victimized and trapped in a hideous Chinese civilization. The tattoos Kingston gives Fa Mulan, to dramatize cruelty to women, actually belong to the hero Yue Fei, a man whose tomb is now a tourist attraction at West Lake, in Hanzhou city (3)

In *Articulate Silences*, King-Kok Cheung suggests that it is the distrust of inherited language and that of traditional myth with patriarchal ethos that bring Asian American writers, especially Asian American female writers, to the conclusion that they must cross cultural borders in search of ways to not only revise history,

but also transfigure ethnicity, for the point is never to return to the original but to tell it with a difference. The “two-toned language”⁴ concretely objectifies a large group of Asian American writers’ attempt to negotiate a ground on which they can find their own identity (170). In the case of *The Woman Warrior*, because of Asian American female writers’ distrust of their inherited “language,” it is conceivable that Kingston’s combining of the legendary female character, Fa Mulan, and the historical male figure, Yue Fei (a general who lived in the Song Dynasty, 420-479) serves two purposes: it is intended to destroy both the traditional Chinese gender line which was ignominious in placing women at the bottom of the social totem pole, and the line that separates imagination and reality. Besides, as Chinese American scholar Amy Ling in *Between Worlds* suggests the transposition of the carving on the back from the life of Yue Fei is appropriate to the story of Fa Mulan, for it effectively symbolizes the physical tortures that Chinese women have endured (160). Rather than to rewrite the heroine, Fa Mulan, to the above-referenced specs as Chin charges, Kingston’s is an effort to reclaim Chinese American women’s sense of history and identity by creatively using Chinese lore and legends.

The movie version of *The Joy Luck Club*, nevertheless, goes beyond the issue of border crossing, creativity, and eclecticism. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said suggests that the European invention of the Orient plays a key role in the development of Orientalism: the Orient is “the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the sources of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other”; the Orient “has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (1-2). Orientalism, therefore, is “more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient” (6); it draws attention to “the debased position of the Orient or Oriental as an object of study” (96); and to emphasize the Orient as a contrasting image to the Occident, Orientalism keeps in tact “the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability” (206).

Hollywood has consistently been painting the Orient as a contrasting image to the West. What is alarming, though, is that this trend seems to be corroborated and reinforced in movie scripts by both Asian American as well as non-Asian writers. In comparison to the book, for instance, the portrayal of women’s struggle in China and in the United States in the movie version of *The Joy Luck Club* is unbalanced. In the book, juxtaposition plays a key role in exposing the cruelty and injustice of sexism no matter where it is practiced. Ying-ying St. Clair, An-mei Hsu, and Lindo Jong’s failed marriages in China correspond to Lena St. Clair, Rose Hsu Jordan, and Waverly Jong’s struggles in their marriages in the United States. Part III of the book, in fact, is titled “American Translation,” revealing

Tan's thematic preoccupation with balanced portrayals of women's lives in the two countries. In the movie, however, several changes have been made to accentuate how hopeless things are in China while pointing to the possibilities of reconciliation of life in America. The movie version of *The Joy Luck Club* keeps intact all the negative portrayals of life in China. From the practice of child bride to the custom of concubines and to abandoned children, the movie paints a dark picture in which the audience sees no light of hope but only oppression and exploitation. It is true that in the movie, as is in the book, Tan portrays some very strong female characters whose determination to fight against adversity is as strong as their longing for change. But the portrayal of the mothers' lives in China seems to result as much from the script writers' determination to expose the darkness of the old China as from their awareness of the appeal of exoticism and their eagerness to placate the viewers' sense of complacency. The strategy apparently worked. When Annette Bening hosted a private LA screening of the movie, she warned guests to get out their handkerchiefs; the movie "is a five-star tear-jerker." After viewing the movie, as Tan recalls, one of the first things her mother said was: "So many bad things in China; it wasn't that bad."⁵

In comparison to the mothers' struggles in China, though, the daughters' marriages, as they are portrayed in the movie, carry a reconciliatory tone. Waverly Jong and her boyfriend Rich's is not so much a struggle of cultural misunderstanding as a way for Waverly to impress her mother and get even with her. In the book, Rose Hsu Jordan finalizes her divorce from Ted Jordan by insisting on keeping the house. But in the movie, the two have reconciled resulting not so much from a logical development of the plot as from *deus ex machina*. The only divorced couple in the movie are Lena St. Clair and Harold Livotney. With a name like Harold Livotney, the character apparently was not conceived as Asian American. But in the movie, the role is played by an Asian American actor whose stinginess only further confirms some of the cultural stereotypes about Asian people: penurious, cheap, petty, and dishonest.

Amerasian author Ruthanne Lum McCunn's *Thousand Pieces of Gold* is a creative non-fiction. First published in 1981, the book helped to blaze new trails in the development of a new literary genre. It was also one of the first books which started the movement for Asian Americans to reclaim their voice, history, and identity. The movie version of the book, however, seems to follow the formulaic Hollywood approach in its portrayal of characters' experience in China and in the United States. In the opening of the movie, the audience are again reminded of a country torn by war and its people tortured by bandits, famine, and other calamities. Unlike the book which devotes nine chapters to describing the main character Lalu's tender and caring relationship with her parents, the movie shows a glimpse of a heartless man who sells his daughter for money, a man who shows no con-

cerns for his daughter's welfare and future.

Orientalism sustains itself by relying on the fabrication and prolongation of cultural stereotypes and myths rather than facts. American literature and film are replete with modern fairy tales in their portrayals of Caucasian male and Asian female, savior and the saved relationships. Many Asian American writers have challenged this myth. Lena St. Clair in *The Joy Luck Club* is Amerasian. In "The Voice from the Wall," she recollects her mother's ambivalent feelings toward a relationship with her father. Clifford St. Clair is a very complicated character. His feelings for Ying-ying St. Clair are sincere and compassionate. But his ethnocentric and sometimes patronizing attitude is astonishing and overbearing. It makes him insensitive to Ying-ying St. Clair's yearnings for respect, understanding, and appreciation. As Ying-ying St. Clair's Lena recalls:

My mother never talked about her life in China, but my father said he saved her from a terrible life there, some tragedy she could not speak about. My father proudly named her in her immigration papers: Betty St. Clair, crossing out her given name of Gu Ying-ying. And then he put down the wrong birthyear, 1916 instead of 1914. So, with the sweep of a pen, my mother lost her name and became a Dragon instead of a Tiger. (107)

The "sweep" of Clifford St. Clair's pen does not only have an effect on Gu Ying-ying's name and birthyear, it also threatens to obliterate Ying-ying St. Clair's past and identity by cutting her off from her cultural roots. Ying-ying St. Clair's insistence on using her Chinese first name, therefore, takes on a thematic significance.

Chinese American playwright David Henry Hwang also parodies the "Madame Butterfly" myth in his Broadway hit, *M. Butterfly*. In the "Afterword" attached to the published version of the play, Hwang discusses the inspiration for his play:

The idea of doing a deconstructivist Madame Butterfly immediately appealed to me. This, despite the fact that I didn't even know the plot of the opera! I knew Butterfly only as a cultural stereotype; speaking of an Asian woman, we would sometimes say, "She's pulling a Butterfly," which meant playing the submissive Oriental number. Yet, I felt convinced that the libretto would include yet another lotus blossom pining away for a cruel Caucasian man, and dying for her love. (95)

M. Butterfly dramatizes French diplomat Bernard Bouriscot's love affair with a

Chinese Beijing Opera singer. Bouriscot fell in love with a male singer who played female roles in Beijing Opera. In the play, Hwang challenges the “Madame Butterfly” myth through role reversal, turning the French diplomat into modern day Madame Butterfly and the Beijing Opera singer into the manipulator.⁶

The movie version of *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, however, seems to support and reinforce the stereotype of white-male-Asian-female relationships. The Chinese who appear in the movie are oppressors of their own people: Li Ma is a cruel smuggler of humans, Jim a jealous and uncouth transporter of illegal immigrants, and Hong King a despotic slave master. The rest of the Chinese appearing in the movie are apathetic and aloof. On the contrary, Lalu’s savior is a Caucasian man, Charlie Bemis. It is true that Lalu’s relationship with Charlie, as it is portrayed in both the book and the movie, is built on mutual understanding and respect. He saves her from Hong King’s control and she nurtures him back to life after he is wounded by a sniper at a Chinese New Year festival. But the movie follows along the same line as those which exploit the myth of “Caucasian male and Asian female relationship”: the white man is muscular, powerful, protective, and supportive, whereas the Asian woman is feminine, dependent, subordinate, and respectful; the man is heroic in rescuing the woman from a dangerous situation, while the woman is grateful and feels forever indebted to the man.

Come See the Paradise is another movie which follows a long line of Hollywood tradition in rehashing, romanticizing, and perpetuating the “Madame Butterfly” myth. It is true that it is one of the first Hollywood movies which dramatizes the Japanese American experience before and during the Second World War from a sympathetic perspective. There are realistic depictions of discrimination against Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) in California⁷, anti-Japanese riots on the West Coast after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Japanese American evacuation from the West Coast, and life in the relocation camps. But the movie also follows the white-male-Asian-female formula in its portrayal of Jack, an Irish sweat shop lawyer, and Lily, a Japanese American seamstress. As a Nisei (second generation Japanese American who was born in the United States), Lily, whose name is as indicative as it is question-begging about her sense of identity, is portrayed as a stranger from her own culture: she does not speak very good Japanese; she does not like Sake, a Japanese rice wine; and she is rebellious against her father’s dictatorial control. Again, a white man to the rescue. Jack saves Lily from a prearranged marriage, sweeps her off her feet, and emancipates her from the oppressive traditional Japanese culture practiced by Lily’s parents.

In the “Introduction” to *The Foucault Reader*, Paul Rabinow recalls that during Michele Foucault and Noam Chomsky’s debate on a Dutch television program on the topic “Human Nature: Justice versus Power,” Chomsky revealed that he believes that there is a human nature: “a bio-physical structure underlying the

mind which enables us, both as individuals and as a species, to deduce from the multiplicity of individual experiences a unified language"; there is a "mass of schematisms, innate governing principles, which guide our social and intellectual and individual behavior"; there must be "something biologically given, unchangeable, a foundation for whatever it is that we do with our mental capacities" (3). Foucault, on the other hand, avoided the abstract question of whether human nature exists but asked instead: "How has the concept of human nature functioned in society?" Taking the sciences of life during the eighteenth century as an example, Foucault draws a distinction between the actual operational categories within a specific discipline at a particular historical moment and those broad conceptual markers such as "life," or "human nature," which, in his opinion, has had very little importance in the internal changes of scientific disciplines. He posits that in the history of knowledge the notion of human nature seems mainly "to have played the role of...designating certain types of discourse in relation to or in opposition to theology or biology or history" (4). Foucault's attempt to contextualize the study of the definition of human nature and to challenge "the regularities of science" epitomizes the essence of the postcolonial movement. His questions are equally applicable to the study of cultural representations. A close examination of Hollywood's portrayals of the Asian American experience seems to confirm further that the study of the definition of Asian American literature and cultures is not as critical as the understanding of its history, its relationship with both its ethnic cultural heritages and the mainstream American culture, and the way it is mis(sing) and (re)presented.

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Notes

1. Oliver Stone's *Heaven and Earth* seems to push stereotypes to the other extreme: Le Ly Hayslip's American relatives are portrayed as wasteful, overweight, and insensitive.
2. Ken Kesey refused to accept an Academy Award for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in 1976. He believed that the movie version had changed his original thematic intentions. In the book, the reader sees things through a Native American Chieftain's eyes. But in the movie, a middle-aged white person played by Jack Nicholson becomes the central character. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* was nominated for 11 Academy Awards, although it failed to win any. Many critics believe that the movie, in comparison with the book, is too "Hollywood."
3. In "Chinese-American Literature" (*Asian-American Authors*), Kai-yu Hsu and Helen Palubinskas contends that both Pardee Lowe's *Father and Glorious Descendant* and Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* "seem to confirm rather than modify a stereotyped image of the Chinese and their culture"; they "tend to suggest the Chinese

culture described in the connoisseurs' manuals of Chinese jade or oolong tea, and the stereotype of the Chinese immigrant, either withdrawn and totally Chinese, or quietly assimilated and unobtrusively American, a model of the results of the melting-pot process" (10). This view is also shared by Frank Chin, Patricia Lin Blinde, and Elaine Kim who in *Asian American Literature* suggests that Jade Snow Wong defines her identity by "whatever was most exotic, interesting, and non-threatening to the white society that was her reference point" (66).

4. King-Kok Cheung's use of the term "two-toned language" is very similar to the Bakhtinian Dialogism. In the essay "Discourse in the Novel," Russian critic Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin explains how "the internalized double-voiced discourse" works in the novel: heteroglossia is "*another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way.*" Since such "speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced* discourse," it "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (324-25).
5. Annette Bening's hosting the preview of *The Joy Luck Club* was reported by Associated Press in September 26, 1993's *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. The comments made by Amy Tan's mother appeared in "The Joy Luck of Amy Tan," *Asian Pages*, 10/15-31/93: 10.
6. The movie version of *M. Butterfly* is apparently toned down to appease the audience. In the movie version, Renee Gallimard has transformed from being a pathetic figure to a tragic figure. David Henry Hwang has also deleted Song Liling's severe criticism of the West in the court such as: "The West has sort of an international rape mentality towards the East"; the "West thinks of itself as masculine—big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor"; the "West believes the East, deep down, *wants* to be dominated—because a woman can't think for herself" (82-3).
7. As is explained by Lily in *Come See the Paradise*, the 1913 Alien Land Law Act prevented Issei who were not eligible for citizenship from owning land in California.

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What Disney Teaches Our Children About Leadership

Newspaper and television journalists pay considerable attention to workplace leadership and leadership in social/political arenas. Presidents, senators, and corporate executives are constantly evaluated on their influence and decision-making abilities. Leadership ability, however, is not bestowed upon individuals as they assume positions of responsibility in adulthood; instead, leadership is a skill set recognizable and developed in childhood. Not only are leadership skills demonstrated in childhood, but an agreement regarding what characteristics constitute leadership exists between adults and children; Edwards found that “children and their adult supervisors agree not only on who the leaders are, but also on how those leaders present themselves” (925). Additionally, Edwards found that leadership was most strongly associated with organizational skills, goal orientation, and the ability to generate creative ideas (925).

In Landau’s and Weissler’s study of gifted children’s perceptions of leadership, once again, children identified and demonstrated leadership characteristics commonly believed by adults to be indicative of leadership: responsibility, achievement orientation, persuasive powers, and especially, self-confidence (685). Of particular significance was the strong association between leadership and decisiveness and daring (Landau and Weissler 685). These authors concluded that “leadership characteristics appear at a very early age in a form similar to that evidenced among adults” (686).

Much of the learning and socialization process of children occurs through indirect means such as modeling and role playing. Although human adult models such as teachers, parents, and other adult relatives may be available, children often learn from models provided in movies and cartoons. Television, video, and movie watching continues to play an increasing role in the application of a child’s waking hours. Heroes and heroines of the movie world not only speak to children as they watch the program, but the characters reinforce their messages each time they appear on consumer items such as lunch boxes, sneakers, bed sheets, umbrellas, and notebooks. In fact, cartoon characters continue to have a significant impact on children long after the movie has been supplanted by the next box office hit.

One of the biggest influences on the socialization of children is the character portrayals of the Disney cartoons. Disney cartoons continue to draw large audiences, especially when charismatic characters are combined with engaging musical scores. Many adults have fond childhood memories of attending Disney

films, and on occasion, during unguarded moments, are heard humming the tunes to “Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah” and “Bibbidi- Bobbidi-Boo.” As children we are not always consciously aware of the thematic content of the films, but subconsciously the messages are imprinted. As children we may have been caught up in the antics of an idiosyncratic nanny, but as adults in academic and business organizations, we know the truthfulness of the statement “a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down” and apply the adage liberally in many forms of organizational communication. Similarly, as children, we were enchanted by a puppet coming to life, but many of us still have not learned the lesson Pinocchio learned a long time ago: “[we’ve] got no strings to hold [us] down.”

Although entertainment has always been the primary goal of Disney films, they do convey thematic messages in the minds of the viewers. Regardless of the physical and temporal settings, the films are intended to have a timeless application. Thus, whether the setting is London in the early 1900’s (as in *Mary Poppins*) or suburban America in the 1990’s (as in *Toy Story*), the films are intended to entertain and speak to the modern audience. Disney’s recent films are no exception. The plots are more complex, the characters are more fully developed, the music is more sophisticated, and the themes are as powerful as ever. What messages do these cartoon characters convey to children? Specifically, what do these characters teach children about leadership? This paper will explore the leadership themes of three of Disney’s recent box office hits: *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, and *Toy Story*.

Beauty and the Beast

The film’s first comments on leadership are revealed in the opening scene. The movie begins with a flashback to an earlier event when a prince was subjected to a spell for not offering hospitality to a haggard old woman. The old woman, really a beautiful “enchantress” in disguise, had offered the prince a rose in exchange for protection from the night’s bitter cold. The prince refused her lodging and the woman cursed him and the castle’s inhabitants with non-human forms. The prince, the legitimate ruler of the land, and the one endowed with legitimate leadership power as defined by French and Raven in “The Bases of Social Power,” was rendered ineffective, essentially stripped of his leadership ability, for being “spoiled, selfish, and unkind.” He became a beast and a recluse.

An analysis of *Beauty and the Beast* reveals only two central characters. Although the Beast plays a central role in the film, he is not, in and of himself, a main character; the Beast is a manifestation of two other characters in the film - Belle and Gaston. When the Beast is playing the part of the brute, he manifests Gaston, the boorish, hyper-masculine character; when the Beast is genteel, he manifests Belle, the kind and beautiful feminine character. The main conflict and

character depiction, and the main insights on leadership, occur in the lives of Belle and Gaston.

The audience first meets Belle as she goes to town to borrow yet another book. She reads voraciously; but instead of enlightening her, her reading isolates her. As she walks into town, she says, "Little town, it's a quiet village, every day like the one before; little town full of little people...." She finds the social and intellectual stimulation available unfulfilling, for she says, "there must be more than this provincial life!" Likewise, the townsfolk are not enamored with Belle. They describe her as strange, dazed, distracted, peculiar, and odd. Their biggest concern is that she challenges the social norms of small village life. They explain: "...she's rather odd. Very different from the rest of us. She's nothing like the rest of us."

In contrast, Gaston does fit in: he is the town idol. Honored primarily for his hunting expertise, a skill much valued by the townsfolk, he earns constant praise from the village residents for his skill and physique. He is extolled as slick, quick, thick-necked, a good fighter and wrestler, burly, brawny, and hairy. Gaston even says of himself, "I'm especially good at expectorating!"

The intellectually refined and literate Belle is readily contrasted with the illiterate and crude Gaston. The townsfolk do not value Belle's intellect or book-learned expertise and thus do not afford her respect. According to French and Raven in "The Bases of Social Power," expert power is a basis of power from which to lead and influence others, but only if the followers can envision a way in which the expertise or learning can be of benefit to them. In the case of Belle, no power is gleaned from her vast learning. Her learning is neither shared with nor valued by the village because they can see no meaningful application of "book-learning" to their daily lives. Instead of being a role model, Belle is an outcast with whom the village cannot identify.

In contrast, Gaston garners great respect. A member of the community tells Gaston, "There's no man in town as admired as you, you're everyone's favorite guy. Everyone's awed and inspired by you...." Because he exhibits the valued traits of manliness—brawn, strength, handsomeness, and hunting skills—he has crowd appeal and the masses follow him. He relies on referent power, the power held by a leader based on the subordinates' desire to emulate his attributes or achievements (French and Raven). Under ideal circumstances, subordinates aspire to emulate the uplifting and edifying attributes of a leader, but history is full of examples where less admirable traits were the objects of admiration. Gang leadership often is bestowed on the member who has the most criminal convictions, the deadliest weapon, or other signs of "valor." Additionally, Gaston relies on coercive power, the power a leader has to punish, threaten, or control his subordinates (French and Raven). Frequently throughout the film, Gaston punches,

kicks, and otherwise inflicts bodily harm on men he wishes to influence.

Just as Gaston and Belle demonstrate the degrees of effectiveness of different bases of power, they also demonstrate the effectiveness of differing problem solving techniques. When resolving conflicts, Gaston resorts to a competitive stance. Whereas model leaders approach conflict resolution with numerous problem solving skills—accommodation, compromise, and mutual problem solving tactics—Gaston relies only on his strength and brutality in confrontation. His solution is to kill or severely injure his opponent, be it man or beast. Belle, lacking the physical size and demeanor to coerce others into seeing her viewpoint, relies on other tactics. Not wanting to hurt or embarrass Gaston, she wards off Gaston's amorous advances by avoiding him in the marketplace or by explaining, "I really don't deserve you." When her father is held hostage by the Beast, she acknowledges the Beast's authority by negotiating to serve as the prisoner if the Beast will release her father. Although she is usually successful in resolving the conflict and in preserving the feelings of the one with whom she is in conflict, she never feels confident enough to rely on mutual problem solving. Indeed, the only characters with whom Belle exemplifies equality or influence are the non-human characters of the castle: Mrs. Potts (the teapot), Lumiere (the candlestick), and Cogsworth (the clock), among others. At times she is able to influence the Beast, but this influence occurs only as he falls in love with her, and presumably, allows her to influence him.

The main leadership statement is made at the end of the film when the Beast integrates within himself the honorable masculine attributes of Gaston and the effective feminine attributes of Belle. When he overpowers Gaston (the real beast of the film) he eradicates from within himself the darker sides of leadership—selfishness, coercive power, and domination—all attributes demonstrated by Gaston. When he learns to love Belle, he embraces attributes of Belle—selflessness, learning (as depicted by his large library), responsibility for others, and the ability to see a conflict through the eyes of another. The Beast emerges as a kind, sensitive, and feeling creature who has the courage to fight for just causes (in this case, the love of Belle and the well-being of his castlemates). As the integration of these masculine and feminine attributes occurs within the Beast, the spell is broken and he is transformed into his higher princely self. The castle is returned to its original beauty, his castlemates regain their humanity, and the prince is restored to rightful leadership.

In summary, this film delivers the message that leadership is a privilege granted to those who successfully overcome their base natures and raw desires for power, and cultivate a sensitive concern and appreciation for others. Leadership resides in those who pursue intellectual understanding and do not isolate themselves in a make-believe world, who develop vision to see beyond outward

appearances no matter how ugly (the hag) or handsome (Gaston), are courageous in fighting *only* for causes of merit, and recognize that influence, from whatever source it is derived, must be honorably exercised.

The Lion King

The leadership message of *The Lion King* is more explicit. The film begins with an obvious conflict over leadership. King Mufasa has just presented to the animal subjects of his kingdom his newly born heir to the throne, Simba. Mufasa's brother, Scar, fails to attend the presentation, thus displaying his lack of acknowledgment of the new king-to-be. Had Simba not been born, Scar would have succeeded to the throne. His opportunity to become the reigning monarch has been negated, however, as the leadership lineage will now pass to and through Simba.

A subsequent scene depicts Mufasa and Simba having their first father-son leadership chat. Mufasa tells Simba, "A king's time as ruler rises and falls like the sun. One day, Simba, the sun will set on my time here and will rise with you as the new king." Mufasa takes his role as leading monarch very seriously, but acknowledges that his role as leader has temporal constraints. Additionally, he strongly enforces the concept of leadership passing through family lines, implying that leadership traits are passed genetically from father to son.

Unlike his father, Simba immediately assumes a despotic arrogance regarding his future fate but is chastened by his father for doing so. Mufasa explains that unbridled authoritarianism is counterproductive to society and that leadership comes with the responsibilities of supporting and protecting the lives of one's subjects. Simba replies, "I thought a king could do whatever he wants." Simba displays similar arrogance in a later scene when he says, "I'm brushing up on looking down; I'm working on my roar." Later he describes his future role as king as being one where there would be "...no one saying do this...be there...stop that...see here - free to run around all day; free to do it all my way."

These comments are laughable when expressed by one as young as the lion cub Simba, yet they are lamentable when expressed by one of maturity. Through a series of orchestrated malevolence, Scar arranges for the death of Mufasa, convinces the young and impressionable Simba that he, Simba, is responsible for Mufasa's death, and counsels Simba to "run away and never return." After the banishment and intended death of Simba, Scar returns to Pride Rock to inform the pride of the "unfortunate event" and to announce himself as their new reigning monarch. During a subsequent conflict with one of his subjects he boldly states, "I'm the king. I can do whatever I want."

During Simba's absence from the pride, his family and friends believe he is dead. In reality, he has been rescued by two creatures best characterized as social dropouts. They live lives of unending leisure and subscribe to the motto

“hakuna matata,” meaning “no worries.” Their carefree lives appeal to Simba, who as an adolescent lion feels a strong need to escape the supposed sins of his past. Although his guilt and internal conflict are not erased, he is able, with the help of his two new friends, to think only about the moment at hand. Simba describes “the good life” as one of no rules, no worries, and no responsibilities.

Simba is forced to rethink this definition when confronted by a childhood friend. Because conditions at Pride Rock have degenerated under Scar’s lack of responsible leadership, the lionesses are forced to hunt a great distance from their original hunting grounds. Simba happens upon a lioness who recognizes him as Mufasa’s son and questions him about his failure to return to assume leadership. She cannot understand why he would abdicate his position and allow the inhabitants to suffer. He responds to her probing by blithely stating, “Sometimes bad things happen and there’s nothing you can do about it, so why worry?” She pointedly replies, “because it’s your responsibility.”

Although Simba led a life of contentment and ease, others suffered by his failure to return and assume a leadership role. In a vision facilitated by the local shaman, Simba is permitted a conversation with his deceased father. In the vision, Mufasa tells Simba, “You have forgotten who you are....You are more than what you have become.... Remember who you are.... You are my son, and the one true king.” The film concludes with Simba returning to Pride Rock, overthrowing Scar and assuming leadership responsibility, restoring societal order, and later presenting to his subjects his newly born son as heir to the throne. Consequently, the film’s ultimate message about leadership is that leadership positions are rightly bestowed upon those who assume responsibility for the well-being of their subjects. Leadership in the hands of authoritarians who abdicate responsibility for the welfare of their followers leads to chaos and the disintegration of society. Although lineage is important, character is the ultimate determinant of leadership.

Toy Story

In contrast to Mufasa, Woody, the leadership figure in *Toy Story*, cannot accept the idea of being displaced. He has been his owner’s favorite toy for a long time and all the other toys recognize Woody’s favored position. They defer to him during toy counsels, look to him to settle disputes, and rely on him to bring order to their toy society. The primary leadership issues arise when Andy receives a new toy for his birthday, the coveted Buzz Lightyear.

Buzz is a high-tech robotic spaceman with mechanical arms, laser lights, a built-in radio communication module, and the ability to fly. Compared to Woody, a cowboy sheriff doll with a pull-cord in his back to make him talk, Buzz looks omnipotent. His state-of-the-art construction, combined with restrained but abun-

dant self-confidence, wins the awe and admiration of all the toys, leaving Woody in second place. Woody explains to the toys, in Buzz's presence, that Buzz is not what he appears to be: he cannot fly, his spaceship is only a cardboard box, the laser light is merely a tiny bulb operated by a battery, and he is nothing more than a "toy." The others, however, see him as he has been advertised, a savior to a threatened universe, a warrior of "infinity and beyond."

Woody's chagrin at being so easily replaced is supplanted by his desire to dispose of Buzz Lightyear. Woody's desires are realized when Buzz falls from the bedroom window. The other toys do not believe the incident is an accident and consequently withdraw any remaining support. In their minds, if Woody cannot act ethically, he is unworthy of leadership status.

Realizing that the other toys would never again acknowledge him as their leader, Woody attempts to make amends by launching a campaign to retrieve and rescue Buzz from the child next door who has found him. A major adventure ensues, but critical leadership issues arise when Woody and Buzz are forced to work together. After several thwarted attempts to escape, Buzz begins to lose his confidence. Although Woody tries to encourage him, Buzz gives up and acknowledges that he cannot fly, his radio communication links him with no one, and he is only a toy. Through a series of events, Buzz and Woody are returned to Andy, but the main leadership messages are contained in the aforementioned struggles.

It would appear that Woody originally assumed a leadership role among the toys only because they saw that Woody was their owner's favorite. Although it makes sense that "Cowboy Sheriff" Woody would preside rather than, for example, Mr. Potatohead or Bo-Peep, Andy owned other authority figure toys, toy soldiers, that could have assumed a leadership position had they been favored by their owner. In reality, Woody had no special attributes other than the confidence instilled in him by knowing that he was Andy's "chosen one." Woody assumed the role of the legitimate leader because he had been appointed to that position by his owner. When Buzz Lightyear arrived, however, the toys saw a being of confidence, power, and charisma. Buzz had abilities the toys admired and they respected the fact that he lived in a world much larger than they. Buzz traveled the universe; their world was Andy's bedroom. Thus, their allegiance shifted from a leader with legitimate power to one with referent power.

A second leadership issue arises when the toys renounce Woody as their leader when they believe he has knocked Buzz from the bedroom window. This withdrawal of support is explained by the theoretical position that "the personal qualities of a would-be leader determine his or her esteem in the eyes of potential followers" (Bass 12). Leaders, regardless of their appointments or rights to the position, will not remain leaders in the eyes of their followers if they violate the values of the followers. Many talented leaders throughout history have fallen

from leadership positions because, in moments of passion or thoughtlessness, they violated a core value of their constituency, as exemplified by President Nixon, and others. Leaders are only leaders when their followers acknowledge them. Thus, despite the authority embedded in certain positions of power, real power is bestowed by the followers, not by the position.

A third leadership issue arises when a charismatic leader engages in self-reflection and finds that he is not all that he has presented or believed himself to be. Although self-scrutiny can be daunting to any leader, it is especially disheartening to those who exhibit a larger-than-life persona. When Buzz realizes that he cannot fly, that his spaceship is, indeed, merely a cardboard box, and that he is “just a toy,” his personal power is depleted. He is totally disempowered. What he fails to notice, however, is that Woody and all the others are merely “toys” as well. Instead of seeing himself as a member of the “race of toys,” he sees himself as a “fallen being.” In Buzz’s mind, he is either a paragon of leadership or a total failure.

Through a series of well-orchestrated strategies and tactics, Buzz and Woody, by combining their individual talents, jointly solve their problem and return to their rightful owner. *Toy Story* thus delivers the message that a larger than life leader rarely can withstand alone the blows life affords. At some point, every leader must come to terms with his or her personal inadequacies. These assume numerous forms, including a lack of information, an underdeveloped skill, and failure to see long-term consequences. Woody and Buzz overcame their personal inadequacies, insecurity and pride, and acknowledged that, despite their personal flaws, together they were able to accomplish what neither could accomplish alone. *Toy Story* thus teaches that inadequacies, inherent in the human condition, are overcome by engaging in team effort and enlisting the strengths of others.

These recent films reveal that Disney continues to speak to the times. In a child’s mind, a beast becomes human when he falls in love with a pretty young girl; in the mind of an adult, leadership is regained by overcoming base needs for power and domination. In a child’s mind, a young lion returns to his home to assume his rightful position as leader of the lion kingdom; in the mind of an adult, leadership authority is regained when commensurate responsibility is assumed. In a child’s mind, two competing toys become good friends; in the mind of an adult, success is the result of cooperation and team effort, not competition. The themes of these films are relevant and applicable to a world where productivity and accomplishment, indeed success, are contingent upon the resolution of conflicting core values; the assumption of responsibility at the expense of living a comfortable, leisurely existence; and the act of engaging in cooperative team effort with those who could threaten positions of superiority.

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High and Low in the Himalayas: Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air*

An outstanding example of contemporary popular writing, Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster* is a best-selling story of a high-altitude disaster experienced by the author during a climbing expedition in 1996. It describes an ascent of the peak, the deaths of five climbers, and the climb's aftermath, and explores the nature of such high-altitude expeditions, of the participants in such ascents, and of the problems of memory associated with traumatic experience. Although the book is regarded as a non-fictional treatment of climbing, it verges on being a fictional account concerning the preoccupations and concerns of our contemporary popular culture — to say simply that Krakauer's story has become popular because, like classical fiction, it is a good, though a non-fictional, story, leaves important questions begging. In this article, the conventional boundaries between fictional and non-fictional accounts will be set aside as the social implications of Krakauer's narrative is considered, for, arguably, all narrative is given to certain structures demanded of storytelling and figurative representations. In this case, furthermore, memory itself, the basis for all claims to accurate non-fictional narrative, is in doubt. As Krakauer said in an interview published in a 1997 issue of *Outside Magazine*, of which he is a contributing editor,

The unreliability of memory among Everest survivors, clients and guides alike, is something that I find strange and fascinating and quite disturbing. While comparing multiple interviews that various subjects gave to me and other journalists, I discovered that the recollections of some of us have changed dramatically with the passage of time. Consciously or unconsciously, a number of people have revised or embellished the details of their stories in significant and occasionally preposterous ways. And, big surprise, the revisions invariably put the subject in a better light. Maybe this has something to do with the fact that the kind of person who goes to Everest, the big ego and big personality, isn't inclined to self-criticism or self-analysis.

Let's not mince words: Everest doesn't attract a whole lot of well-balanced folks.

In his swift transition between these paragraphs, Krakauer joins his comments on the problems of memory with earnest criticism of certain psychological

and cultural imbalances evident in climbing culture, itself a figure for American culture as a whole. Although he did couch his social criticism more mildly in *Into Thin Air* than in his more recent interview in *Outside Magazine*, the author's self-recriminating theme of the inevitable consequences of hubris was not wasted on the book's sizable audience. That the cultural problem critiqued in *Into Thin Air* is a result of the hubris of social class was another crucial point not missed by many Americans, historically uncomfortable with the very concept of class, and Krakauer's success as a popular writer has been predicated on the content of his social analysis as much as it has also been dependent on his finely narrated drama of mountaineering.

The publication of the account of the Everest disaster on May 1st, 1997 (coincidentally, international workers' day) was heralded in the popular media and provoked extended debate about the author's perspective on expedition climbing, an elite activity *and* a form of recreation that captures the popular imagination. Although mountain climbing relies on pre-modern, pedestrian means of locomotion, narratives about it are communicated to spectators through high-tech modern media of nearly every kind, including television, news magazines, journalism in daily newspapers, and reporting via the Internet. The contemporary explosion of interest in mountaineering is not entirely novel, of course: mountain ascents have been, since the inception of mountaineering in the late 1700s, popular news in many countries. Moreover, rival national efforts to scale 29,000-foot Everest, the highest peak in the world, have always been related to the competitive struggle between entire nations for imperial influence in the world. Notably, it is the British, with the most far-flung modern empire, who have most successfully defined the ethos of mountain climbing. When Sir George Leigh Mallory protested in 1921 that using bottled oxygen as an aid to climbing was "unsporting and therefore un-British" (*Into Thin Air* 152), he reiterated an ethos of low-tech sportsmanship that is tied not only to nationalism but to upper-class moral claims on the highest point of the world. He spoke as if to prove that, even without modern technology, the British nevertheless possess the innate character certifying their right to surmount the highest point on the globe.

In the tradition of such a transcendental climbing ethos, much of *Into Thin Air* excoriates the commercialization of guided climbing dependent on corporate sponsorship. Defending a romantic anti-capitalist tradition that would situate climbing as a potent symbol of autonomy from the power of the market shaping social life, Krakauer draws from the writings of 19th-century climbers and literary figures to uphold an elite ardor for purity and danger. The massive circulation of his defense of recreational purity suggests, however, that the air breathed by climbers is not so rarefied (or thin, as declared in the title of his book) as it might at first appear, for the cultural politics of class are climbers' very oxygen.

Krakauer himself has suggested that Everest is perceived as more of a myth than a mountain; here I am suggesting that as a mythic construction, Krakauer's narrative of the climbing of Everest explores the concerns of the society that consumes his story. *Into Thin Air* is a treatise exposing the social tensions inherent in a culture with unequal access to leisure and prestige and of a society in which the purported transcendence of commercial relations is a mark of extreme privilege. In this light, the critique of the Everest disaster is a paradoxical argument for the maintenance of an anti-utilitarian ethos defiant of the capitalist economy that makes this ethos possible by producing an elite pool of rich physicians and millionaires who can afford the character-building sufferings and pleasures of high-altitude expedition climbing. These particular ironies are familiar to both producers and consumers of climbing culture.

Indeed, the commercial success of *Into Thin Air* has inspired an incisive parody from the regional heart of Krakauer's Northwestern American climbing culture. Gerry Riggs's "Into the Store: A Personal Account of the REI Disaster" appeared in *The Seattle Weekly* in December of 1997; it accounts for the harrowing journey of a team of consumers assigned the not-so-difficult mission of spending \$29,000 each (one dollar for each foot of Everest's elevation above sea level) on climbing gear. Since they are competitive "gear-heads" (a term with currency among climbers and climbing enthusiasts), however, their success in the new REI megastore is assured. The team is well instructed by one of their Japanese guide's famous sayings: "It's not the climbing that matters.... It's the gear" (28). The satire works well because it is aimed at a tension explicitly central to Krakauer's climbing ethos. Riggs, one of four shoppers led by their Japanese guide, a "well-known. . . gear accumulator," begins melodramatically with a narrative haunted by a sense of tragedy: "In May of 1997, *Gear Up!* magazine sent me to the new REI flagship store in Seattle to participate in and write about a guided attempt at a one-day credit card charge of \$29,000 worth of climbing gear.... On May 23 at 8:53 p.m., I reached my goal; but it came at a terrible cost. In plain truth I knew better than to go to REI anyway, and in doing so I was party to the financial ruin of several good men — not to mention a blight on my own credit history that is likely to remain for a very long time" (23). Riggs's imaginary climbing party includes such parodic *dramatis personae* as Tim Smalls, a community college student, Rick Forthright, a Bellingham building contractor, and Tammi Trinkets, President and founder of the Mercer Island National Association for the Advancement of Color Coordination, Chairperson of the Eastside Climbing Gear Enthusiasts Club, and co-sponsor of the "Hillary Step" — a women's workout program whose name alludes to a cliffy obstacle on the Everest route. In Riggs's story there is opportunity for self-examination mimicking Krakauer's own confessional mode: "Taking on the REI \$29,000 challenge is not a rational act, and those who attempt it are

beyond reason almost by definition. There was nothing I could do as I watched my teammates' financial futures disappear into thin air" (28).

The satire plays on the dark comedy inherent in human helplessness in the face of mortality, of course, but also on the reality that it is the very idea of a noble autonomy from market forces that successfully markets both guided climbs and non-fictional accounts such as *Into Thin Air*. To be fair to Krakauer and to what I will call the climbing community, however, it should be recognized that these inconsistencies are explicitly considered by many writers interested in the sport. The successful popularization of climbing as a spectator sport has helped to impose on its representation a certain responsibility for entertaining, not only a comparatively sedentary audience, but also this audience's conflicting responses to the idea of social elitism. Consequently, contemporary representations of expedition climbing, an expensive sport requiring leisure time for the acquisition of the skills necessary for scaling peaks, are obliged to extol a certain elitism and at the same time to condemn a culture marked by the class differences sustaining social elitism. In the example of *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer's social critique enlists the popular audience by casting the story as a spiritual journey.

An interview of Krakauer a year after the disaster on Everest begins with a comment from a Sherpa's autobiography that functions as a device for grounding climbing in an originary ethos disassociated with the opulence and excess of the American social elite. At the beginning of the discussion, *Outside* interviewer Mark Bryant cites the autobiography of Tenzing Norgay, the Sherpa who made the first ascent of Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary in 1953 and who had also chosen to climb with a Canadian romantic named Earl Denman in 1947. Says Norgay: "Any man in his right mind would have said no. But I couldn't say no. For in my heart I needed to go, and the pull of Everest was stronger for me than any force on earth." Krakauer responds to his interviewer by responding to Norgay's statement from the heart,

Yeah, I love that quote. Among the reasons I love it is because it illustrates that while climbers sometimes tend to think of Sherpas as mainly being in it for the money, here was someone who'd been trying to get on a successful Everest team since 1933 and was as deeply "in its grip," as you say, as I was 50 years later. I'd had this secret desire to climb Everest that never left me from the time I was nine and Tom Hornbein and Willi Unsoeld, a friend of my father's, made it in '63. They were my childhood heroes, and Everest was always a big deal to me, though I buried the desire until *Outside* called. And as critical as I've been of some of the guides and clients in the magazine piece and in the book, on one level I identify with them very deeply. I had summit fever as bad

as anyone, and I was there for reasons that, professional duties aside, were no less suspect than anyone else's. I wanted to climb it; that's why I was there. Sure, I thought there was an interesting, even important story to be told about what was happening to Everest. But I wouldn't have taken the writing assignment if I wasn't utterly motivated to get to that summit.

Krakauer not only deflects any possible charge of being a climbing mercenary, but also models his ideal of climbing on the idea of the authentic desires of a Sherpa, representative of a group long conferred the status of load-bearing servants to elite Westerners. Krakauer mixes poetic and social justice in honoring the servant class in the Himalayas for their possession of a fundamentally pure desire — a desire for climbing that is reinforced by religious belief in the deities of the mountain range. Through its religious underpinnings, Sherpa faith in mountain climbing is seen as transcending the social divisions of the West.

In developing the Everest climbing story as a social morality tale, the U.S. media took its cue from Krakauer. In a book review, *Time* Magazine writer John Sko commented that the Everest disaster of 1996 revealed how

Mountaineering was in danger of becoming an extreme sport for the rich, with gaudy adventure-travel stunts such as being guided up the highest mountain on each continent. A New York society woman named Sandy Hill Pittman was on hand to complete this cycle, along with masses of electronic equipment lugged by Sherpas, including a satellite phone with which she intended to file Internet dispatches from Camp Four, at 26,000 ft. Did she deserve to be mocked for her pretensions or admired for her pluck? (Pittman did reach the top, "short-rope" or dragged there by a Sherpa, and got back down, after collapsing and being revived by an emergency steroid injection.)

Like Krakauer, *Time* magazine casts climbing as raw material for narratives about moral lessons. Sandy Pittman's moral right to ascend peaks representing social and moral ascendance, is the main point this key passage addresses: "Did she deserve to be mocked for her pretensions or admired for her pluck?" Hubristically inclined to publicize her endeavors on the Internet, recipient of a steroid injection and of the direct aid of the Sherpa who short-rope her, the "New York society woman" is presented for critical scrutiny by an audience highly ambivalent about the social elite she represents. In thus presenting Sandy Pittman as an unregenerate character, the *Time* writer merely played on a theme already provided in *Into*

Thin Air. Indeed, Krakauer's observation, at the conclusion of his book, that Pittman had become "the lightning rod for a great deal of public anger over what had happened on Everest" — exemplified by scathing *Vanity Fair* and *Hard Copy* (a television tabloid) coverage of Pittman — is a bit disingenuous.

By autumn, things had gotten so bad that she confessed tearfully to a friend that her son was being ridiculed and ostracized by classmates at his exclusive private school. The blistering intensity of the collective wrath over Everest — and the fact that so much of that wrath was directed at her — took Pittman completely by surprise and left her reeling. (288)

Yet such hostile reaction at what Krakauer takes care to note is an "exclusive private school" was clearly related to Krakauer's initial story of the climb in the September 1996 issue of *Outside* magazine, which portrayed Pittman and her climbing guide. The article relates that Scott Fischer, "who had climbed the peak without oxygen but had never guided the mountain, was still trying to get established in the Everest business. He needed to get clients to the summit, especially a high-profile one like Sandy Hill Pittman, the Manhattan boulevardier-cum-writer who was filing daily diaries on an NBC World Wide Web site." Thus Krakauer is less than candid with his audience — and perhaps himself — in his later understated description of her public fall from grace in *Into Thin Air*, for her ostracism was prepared in part by his own emphatic descriptions of her and others' desire for publicity. Moreover, in his later book-length narrative he again passes on the information that Fischer, one of the guides who did not survive the climb, was very excited by the prospect of leading Pittman to the summit for all of the television publicity it might give his climbing company — there is contained in this theme an implied sense of cause and effect, even of divine justice (*Into Thin Air* 170). Krakauer describes Pittman directly as "a millionaire socialite-cum-climber" who had raised "more than a quarter of a million dollars from corporate sponsors to secure the talents of four of the finest alpinists in North America" (*Into Thin Air* 115-16).

[T]he society columnist Billy Norwich hosted a farewell party for Pittman at Nell's in downtown Manhattan. The guest list included Bianca Jagger and Calvin Klein. Fond of costumes, Sandy appeared wearing a high-altitude climbing suit over her evening dress, complemented by mountaineering boots, crampons, ice ax, and a bandolier of carabiners.

Upon arrival in the Himalaya, Pittman appeared to adhere as closely as possible to the proprieties of high society. During the trek to Base Camp, a young Sherpa named Pemba rolled up her sleeping bag every morning and packed her rucksack for her. When she reached the foot of Everest with the rest of Fischer's group in early April, her pile of luggage included stacks of press clippings about herself to hand out to other denizens of Base Camp. Within a few days Sherpa runners began to arrive on a regular basis with packages for Pittman, shipped to Base Camp via DHL Worldwide Express; they included the latest issues of *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *People*, *Allure*. The Sherpas were fascinated by the lingerie ads and thought the perfume scent-strips were a hoot. (*Into Thin Air* 118-19).

Crucially, Pittman requires these magazines because they are likely to feature her and her mountaineering exploits: she is portrayed as the vain subject of popular culture, not a mere follower of it. Therefore, in Krakauer's narrative logic, she is both morally beneath "the people" in her vanity, but falsely above "the people" in her stardom. In contrast, Krakauer worked in construction and has lived the life of a socially marginal climber. He notes in his account of an earlier trip in which he was assigned to cover Jann Wenner, publisher of *Rolling Stone*, *Men's Journal* and *Us*, and a number of his rich friends, including Rocky Hill, Pittman's brother and her husband Bob Pittman, the co-founder of MTV, that during this trip he "had precious little in common with any of them, and there was no forgetting that I had been brought along as Jann's hired help." He adds: "Over dinner Bob and Jann and Rocky compared the various aircraft they owned (Jann recommended a Gulfstream IV the next time I was in the market for a personal jet), discussed their country estates and talked about Sandy" (*Into Thin Air* 116). Krakauer's representation of Pittman should be seen in its contrast with contemporary autobiographical representations of formidable women climbers in, for example, Arlene Blum's *Annapurna, A Woman's Place* (1980) and Julie Tullis's *Clouds From Both Sides* (1987), which narrate the experiences of pioneering women. In these narratives, female participation in climbing is not associated with its commercialization as it is in Krakauer's account. Of course, Krakauer is too sophisticated a writer not to recognize his own contrary positions about his topic.

In his interview with Bryant, Krakauer is explicit about his own ambivalence concerning the social character of climbing:

There's something about the recent commercialization of Everest that's shocking and very troubling. But maybe it shouldn't be. The sport of mountaineering, after all, was invented by wealthy Englishmen who hired burly local hill people to guide them up the Alps, do the grunt work, and keep them from harm. There's a long tradition of guided climbing, so who am I to say that it's bad or wrong, even on the world's tallest mountain? All I can say is that the commercial experience on Everest leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

The way Everest is guided is very different from the way other mountains are guided, and it flies in the face of values I hold dear: self-reliance, taking responsibility for what you do, making your own decisions, trusting your judgment; the kind of judgment that comes only through paying your dues, through experience.

On one hand, Krakauer's preference for climbing less glamorous than Himalayan expeditions is quite persuasive. On the other hand, it is worth noting that his preference does not necessitate the particular morality tale found in *Into Thin Air*. Krakauer's self-described "latent puritanical or Calvinist streak" is sustained by his mountaineering experiences demonstrating to him that "there's something noble about stoicism and sacrifice and suffering for a goal." Under received gender codes, of course, this kind of suffering for teleological ends is typically masculine. For Krakauer, it is an attraction of this form of masculinized Protestant "nobility" that it is earned, and therefore exhibits the democratic virtues of a social meritocracy. In this vision successful climbing necessarily involves the creation of an interdependent community, one symbolically represented through the practice of roping up for protection against falling from a precipice or into a crevasse — what Krakauer calls elsewhere the sacrosanct "bond between ropemates" (*Eiger* 150). Krakauer's earlier writings quote one climber of working-class origins who speculates about how the large sums of money spent and the media hype about Everest climbing might contribute to a future disaster on the peak. With "the direct involvement of the media, the climb is going to be hyped-up like crazy. And the climbers will start believing all that hype, of course, and develop a 'go-for-it' mentality. Personally, I think somebody's going to get killed" (*Eiger* 147). According to Krakauer, a significant failing of his own Everest expedition in 1996 was that the climbers involved never became "a team," a community.

Instead we were a bunch of individuals who liked each other to a certain degree and got along well enough, but we never had this feeling that we were all in it together. Part of it was that we didn't

do enough of the actual work: Sherpas set up camp, Sherpas did the cooking. We didn't have to cooperate and work out who was going to haul this load or who was going to cook or do the dishes or chop the ice for water. Which contributed to the fact that we never coalesced as a team, which in turn contributed to the tragedy: We were all in it for ourselves when we should have been in it for each other. When I should have been there for others, I wasn't. I was a client and my teammates were clients, and we all counted on the guides to take care of anyone who got into trouble. But the guides couldn't, because they were dead or dying, and there weren't enough of them.

The callous individualism associated with a self-interested elite is here flailed for the public good. Krakauer is perhaps the perfect medium for the articulation of a class-bound social critique of climbing because he is a home-grown climber from Corvallis, Oregon: like some other northwestern climbers, his experience is as much a product of geography as it is socially privileged access to the sport of mountaineering.

Krakauer's own climbing heroes included Willie Unsoeld, who died while climbing the north face of Mount Rainier in Washington State; John Gill, who developed "bouldering," a kind of rock climbing focused on the nearly mathematical surmounting of smooth bare faces on short climbs garnering little prestige; Yvon Chouinard, the premier ice-climber of the 1960s who, though he made good with his invention and sales of climbing equipment and clothing, at times lived on cat food in order to sustain his climbing habits (*Eiger* 33); and the lusty working-class Yorkshire lads Alan and Adrian Burgess (*Eiger* 130-62). In climbing circles, these are homespun heroes, purist counter-cultural climbing bums. Interestingly, Krakauer constructs the finished pantheon of this sort of pure and unpretentious climber in his 1990 book *Eiger Dreams* long before the events at Everest invited further review of the unpalatable excess of the richest climbing set. Not simply judgments about climbing, these essays are also social judgments that resonate morally in Krakauer's very choice of metaphors. In his description of a climb of McKinley published in *Eiger Dreams*, for example, he portrays the small hamlet of tents at a base camp as divided by "seedier neighborhoods" — one of which is located next to the busy communal latrine — and, at the opposite end of camp, there lies "the high-rent district" (*Eiger* 71). With the 1996 death of five climbers on Everest and the emergence of his own feelings of culpability for their fate, Krakauer's democratic credo of meritocracy has returned with a vengeance, and there has been little indication that it will abate. In the recent *National Geographic* production *Explorer* portraying his ascent of a 2000-foot peak in Antarctica with

two famous climbers, Krakauer made the comment that hauling up 500-pounds of gear on ropes as the three made their way up the face amounted to “blue-collar climbing.” Krakauer’s comment, made after flying in from Cape Town, South Africa, with the support of *National Geographic*, would be utterly mysterious if it were not generally known that the arduous guided campaigns, complete with regiments of Sherpas for ferrying supplies to successive camps, necessary for an ascent of Everest are his basis for comparison.

Significantly, the spirit of climbing Krakauer admires is captured best by a non-climbing figure to whom Krakauer dedicated an entire book: Christopher Johnson McCandless, whose unsuccessful struggle to survive on his own in Alaska one summer provides the material for *Into the Wild*, published in the same year as the Everest accident. McCandless, a graduate of Emory University and a product of what Krakauer calls “a well-to-do East Coast family,” is portrayed in the book as a romantic in pursuit of transcendental experience, a Tolstolian hero who renounces the worldly concerns of his father. Krakauer is strongly drawn to McCandless — who, among other things, burned all of his remaining cash after giving away his educational trust fund to charity — and compares McCandless’s driven and competitive father to his own.

My father was a volatile, extremely complicated person, possessed of a brash demeanor that masked deep insecurities. If he ever in his entire life admitted to being wrong, I wasn’t there to witness it. But it was my father, a weekend mountaineer, who taught me to climb. . . [he] loved his five children deeply, in the autocratic way of fathers, but his worldview was colored by a relentlessly competitive nature. Life, as he saw it, was a contest. He read and reread the works of Stephen Potter — the English writer who coined the terms one-upmanship and gamesmanship — not as social satire but as a manual of practical stratagems. He was ambitious in the extreme, and like Walt McCandless, his aspirations extended to his progeny. (*Into The Wild* 147).

Krakauer describes how, in responding to his father’s requirement that he excel and enroll in medical school, he rebelled. Repentantly, Krakauer writes: “He’d built a bridge of privilege for me, a hand-paved trestle to the good life, and I repaid him by chopping it down and crapping on the wreckage” by pursuing an amateur career in climbing (*Into The Wild* 148-49).

Ironically enough for descriptions of a sport denoting alpine purity and elevated desires, excremental imagery signals adolescent arrogance and disrespect for his father’s wishes. In *Eiger Dreams* Krakauer also uses excremental imagery

as he alludes to the problem of locating clean cooking snow near a high-elevation camping zone, found on the most popular route up McKinley, littered with human waste (*Eiger* 67). Although the problem of waste elimination on McKinley might well be used to indicate the impurity of a route treaded by too many climbers, the assumed identity of alpine life and ordinary life is revealing. In both examples it is noteworthy that human degradation, denoted by waste, and human aspiration, denoted by mountaineering, are hopelessly intermixed. In relating his father's story, moreover, Krakauer dwells on the uncanny resemblances between the unregenerate world of professions and the regenerate world of climbing.

His father ultimately descended into a delusional state that led to attempted suicide and his placement in a psychiatric hospital in Portland, Oregon: "That his foolproof life plan had in the end transported him here, to this nightmarish station, was an irony that brought me no pleasure and escaped his notice altogether.... He never understood that the Devil's Thumb [a climb in British Columbia] was the same as medical school, only different" (*Into The Wild* 150). Indeed, the very title of *Eiger Dreams: Ventures Among Men and Mountains* seems to equate climbing with other "ventures" — a term with strong financial connotations — and it is not gratuitous to observe that his father's madness faintly resembles the psychology of some climbers Krakauer has described. Krakauer's identifying his own climbing of the Devil's Thumb with the professional teleology professed by his irrational father complicates his portrait of Everest climbing because this identification effectively undermines much of his self-criticism and his criticism of other Everest climbers and because his assumption of climbing's moral autonomy is often contradicted. In his own climbing party, after all, physicians constituted a majority: his operative distinction between the ethos of the medical profession and the ethos of recreation thought to exist separately from the urban political economy is often strained or nonexistent.

Krakauer upholds a Sherpa theological interpretation that parallels McCandless's Tolstoian perspective on modern society and its decadence. Mount Everest, worshipped as the God Sagarmatha, does not approve of certain activities on the mountain's slopes, as Krakauer notes in *Into Thin Air*. When Ngawang Topche began to suffer from High-Altitude Pulmonary Edema, other Sherpas attributed his medical condition to fornication between unmarried couples on the mountain's slopes (*Into Thin Air* 127-28). There are allegorical implications for Krakauer: the United States, divided by social classes and beset by its own secular, Epicurean modernity, has angered Everest. In his narrative construction, Krakauer replays a moral contest between scientific rationalism and old-testament orthodoxy he inherited from his father. What Krakauer calls his own "Calvinism" is the philosophical foundation he recovers from the trauma of his experience. His alpine theology, because it actually deviates from the realities of the climbing tra-

dition — Mallory, for example, best known for his anti-utilitarian, romantic proclamations about the virtue of climbing, climbed in part because the publicity would grant him a reputation and enable him to secure a teaching appointment under the new Oxford Extension scheme (Graves 83) — reveals all the more fully the commitments of the author, the nature of his successful rhetorical strategy, and the needs of his contemporary popular audience. Although in his individual example Krakauer's need for the construction of a religious allegory is propelled by his persistent "survivor's guilt" — his feeling of responsibility for the death of members of his party and an overwhelming sense of the arbitrariness of his own survival — the popular success of his narrative depends on its attractions for a non-climbing audience ambivalent about the class divisions climbing seems to amplify more dramatically than other popular spectator sports. Climbing provides perhaps the best subject for playing on the themes of hubris and Calvinistic virtue, and its contemporary audience seems prepared to believe that the moral failings precipitated by social elitism and consumer culture caused the deaths on Everest.

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Archetypal Metaphor and *The Shadow* Radio Drama

All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes.

Carl Jung (45-6)

All cultures appear to share beliefs in archetypal heroes that model the ideal virtues of humanity in general and of the culture in particular. Indeed, Northrop Frye believed that the heroic quest was the central archetype of narrative literature (16-18). Ray Browne stated it this way:

Heroes serve as models and leaders of people and nations because they reflect the projection of the consensus of the dreams, fantasies, self-evaluations and needs of individuals and of society itself. Heroes like a lens concentrate the power of people, of a nation and serve as the muscle for the movement and development of a people, which they epitomize. (91)

Though all eras have had heroes, the advent of mass communication technology has perhaps made the heroic archetype more pervasive than ever. Roger R. Rollin observed that mass communication has accelerated the production of myth in general and heroic myth in particular (30-31).

Heroes frequently employ a common set of archetypal metaphors in the construction of their heroic narratives. Some of the most common archetypes that occur in heroic myth are the hero's birth and rebirth, the conflict of good (represented by the hero) and evil, the hero's use of magic or other superhuman abilities, the heroic quest, and the consummation or triumph of the hero.

If, as Rollins suggests, it is true that archetypal heroes become even more prevalent in a mass communication culture, it should be informative to examine the heroes of America's first broadcasting mass medium: radio. This study will explore how archetypal metaphor figures in constructing the myth of the greatest of the radio heroes.

Archetypal Metaphor and *The Shadow* Radio Drama

When the continuing dramatic series developed on radio in the early 1930s, heroic drama quickly became one of its most popular forms (MacDonald 29, 42). Heroic drama came in a number of variations—adventure, detective, mystery, science-fiction, western—but all had one thing in common: a strong heroic character (or characters) battling the forces of evil. In other words, radio heroes were archetypal heroes, as J. Fred MacDonald wrote: "Radio heroes, like most champions in

American popular culture, were symbols of truth, justice, honor, and other bourgeois virtues. Products of a middle class, commercial, and competitive society, radio heroes embodied the essence of those morals and values upon which the society was founded” (42).

During the two decades of radio’s golden age, scores of radio heroes celebrated their exploits over the air, but one emerged as the archetype of them all: The Shadow. The Shadow was one of the earliest radio heroes and his career spanned virtually the entire golden age of radio. The character successfully made the transition to other genres—such as the pulp magazine, the paperback novel, the hardcover book, the comic book, television, and film—but he was a creation of radio. When some of the classic radio shows were revived in the 1960s, The Shadow was one of the most popular. Consequently, most Americans, if they know of no other radio hero, are familiar with The Shadow.

The Shadow in his earliest form was an all-knowing narrator for the radio program *Detective Story Hour*. This series premiered on CBS on July 31, 1930, and featured dramatizations from *Detective Story*, a pulp magazine published by Street and Smith. The Shadow character, though just a narrator, caught the public’s fancy. Newsstand vendors began to report that people were asking for “that Shadow magazine” when referring to *Detective Story*. Less than six months after *Detective Story* took to the airwaves, Street and Smith executive Henry W. “Bill” Ralston decided to feature The Shadow in his own magazine to establish a copyright on the character (Nanovic xxii-xxiii).

In December 1930, Walter B. Gibson, a magician and writer who had worked for Houdini and Thurston, was hired to develop The Shadow character and write four novel-length stories, to be published on a quarterly basis in the new magazine. Street and Smith executives were astonished when the first issue nearly sold out in the first month it was on the stands. The second issue was even more popular and the magazine quickly went from quarterly to twice-a-month publication (Gibson, “My Years” xii).

In today’s culture we are accustomed to popular entertainment that spans several mass media: many motion pictures are accompanied by animated series, toys, novels, video games, and the like. The Shadow, though, is one of the first examples of a popular hero who became a mass-media phenomenon. The incredible response to The Shadow demonstrates the hunger of Depression-era Americans for archetypal heroes. *The Shadow* magazine continued publication until 1949, amassing a total of 325 novels, with Gibson writing 282 of them (Eisgruber 59-63). Gary Hoppenstand observed: “What had begun as a simple copyright practice quickly blossomed into a media event because it supplied something heroic that the reading public needed, the extent of this need being reflected in the speed with which the public bought the issues” (142).

In 1932, The Shadow got his own radio show, but remained principally a narrator until 1935. Leaving the air briefly, The Shadow returned with a new series in September 1937. This series was wholly based on The Shadow hero of the pulp magazines and featured Orson Welles in the title role. This time, *The Shadow* radio series remained on the air until 1954 (Harmon, *Radio Mystery* 149).

By linking The Shadow to the new medium of radio, with its ability to broadcast “real” voices and sounds into people’s living rooms, Street and Smith magnified the character’s ability to function as a heroic archetype, especially in the minds of the many young people who listened to the radio drama and read the pulp novels. Street and Smith encouraged the public to think that The Shadow was a real person. The magazines carried messages proclaiming that the novel contained within was “from the Private Annals of The Shadow, as told to Maxwell Grant” (Grant, *Crime Oracle* 2). In the first Shadow novel, *The Living Shadow*, Gibson kept up the ruse by including an episode in which The Shadow broadcasts his radio show from a hidden room in the radio studio. No one ever sees him enter or leave, but his voice always comes over the airwaves at the proper time (Grant, *Living Shadow* 188-89).

Walter Gibson’s Shadow was a much stronger character than the *Detective Story* announcer who was his inspiration. Under Gibson’s hand, The Shadow became a mysterious, costumed hero who materialized out of the night to terrorize evildoers. A coterie of secret aides assisted him in his work. During the day, The Shadow adopted the guise of millionaire playboy Lamont Cranston. In short, Gibson transformed The Shadow into an archetypal hero of mythic proportions.

Birth and Rebirth

Several heroic archetypal metaphors figure powerfully in The Shadow myth and, no doubt, have contributed to its resonance with the public. Most obvious is birth and rebirth, perhaps the most basic archetypal metaphor, rooted in the cycle of time. This metaphor can be manifested in a number of ways: the dawn, the season of spring, birth, resurrection, and light/dark imagery.

The Shadow’s very name brings to mind the juxtaposition of light and darkness, which he embodies in a unique way. Traditionally darkness conveys feelings of cold, fear, and evil, while light represents warmth and goodness. For example, the Bible repeatedly associates God with light: “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5, *New International Version*). The Shadow, though he is a force for good, adopts a cloak of darkness and turns it against evildoers. Darkness, the traditional hiding place for criminals, is no longer a refuge for them. In the pulp magazine, The Shadow had the ability to hide in the shadows, virtually invisible. In the radio series this capacity became a useful plot device and The Shadow acquired the power to assume an actual cloak of invisibility.

This dimension of The Shadow character seems to manifest the “vigilante” desires of law-abiding people to take vengeance on evildoers when traditional justice seems inadequate. Criminals may evade capture by police, but The Shadow metes out justice as inevitably as the Grim Reaper serves up death. Lee Server caught this aspect of the character well when he described The Shadow as “a Victorian wraith with his black cloak and sinister cackle” (92). In his first appearance in *The Living Shadow*, The Shadow prevented a man named Harry Vincent from committing suicide and recruited him as one of his agents. Vincent’s impression of The Shadow follows:

It seemed as though the man’s strength had been wrested from him as he faced a tall, black-cloaked figure that might have represented death itself. For he could not have sworn that he was looking at a human being. The stranger’s face was entirely obscured by a broad-brimmed felt hat bent downward over his features; and the long black coat looked almost like part of the thickening fog. (7-8)

Good versus Evil

A second heroic archetypal metaphor present in the Shadow myth is the conflict between good and evil. Though The Shadow is mysterious in many ways, one thing is certain: he exists to fight evil. The opening sequence of *The Shadow* radio series, which has become a part of the American language, illustrates this: “Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows! [weird laughter]” (“Message from the Hills”).

The Shadow, who knew all, and who spoke to men from the darkness, took on the character of one’s conscience. This aspect of The Shadow was present from his earliest days as narrator on the *Detective Story Hour*. Recordings of this early series are apparently rare, but one surviving introduction went like this: “I am The Shadow. Conscience is a taskmaster no crook can escape. It is a jeering shadow even in the blackest lives. The Shadow knows and you too shall know if you listen as Street and Smith’s *Detective Story Magazine* relates for you the story of ‘The House of Death’ [weird laughter]” (Tollin).

The Shadow’s inhuman laughter became a signature of the character’s disdain for evil. This chilling laugh from the darkness curdled the blood of evildoers, signaling that The Shadow had no fear and delighted in destroying criminals. Gibson described it thus: “It was a long, mocking laugh; a strange, unaccountable laugh; a laugh that would chill the heart of a man who had never known fear!” (*Living Shadow* 67). The radio show heightened this sense of the macabre by using foreboding organ music and sound effects in the background. Each show began with the sound of crashing waves or howling wind and the haunting strains

of “Omphale’s Spinning Wheel” by Saint-Saens, followed by The Shadow’s opening lines (Buxton and Owen 201). The hiss and crackle of 1930s radio, coupled with the ghostly glow from the radio dial, undoubtedly magnified the gothic mood of the music.

The radio series included other memorable elements that amplified the basic motif of good versus evil. Many episodes included a statement by the announcer explicitly declaring the moralizing intent of the show, such as “These half-hour dramatizations are designed to forcibly demonstrate to young and old alike that crime does not pay!” (“Isle of Fear”). The episodes usually ended with another frightening warning from The Shadow about the dangers of evil: “The weed of crime bears bitter fruit. Crime does not pay! The Shadow Knows! [weird laughter]” (Tollin).

Sometimes other archetypal symbols of good and evil were employed in The Shadow’s pronouncements: “Let no man tempt you into crime, for crime is like a strangling serpent: it crushes him who feeds it most. Beware lest the serpent of crime ensnare you in his fold. Remember, crime does not pay. The Shadow knows! [laughter]” (Tollin). In this example The Shadow appealed to one of the most universal metaphors for evil, the serpent, which harkens back to the Book of Genesis. The Shadow borrowed archetypal metaphor from biblical sources on other occasions as well, often saying, for example: “As you sow evil, so you shall reap evil!” (Tollin). In the pulp novels, the role of The Shadow as a fearsome vigilante crime fighter was even more pronounced, as he used physical violence much more freely than in the radio show. Unlike radio’s other great hero, the Lone Ranger, who never shot to kill, The Shadow of the pulps used his guns with deadly efficiency.

Magic and Superhuman Ability

A third heroic archetype prominent in The Shadow myth is the hero’s use of magic or other superhuman abilities. Reference has already been made to The Shadow’s extraordinary ability to hide in the darkness (in the novels) or to become invisible (in the radio series). The radio series described this as the “ability to cloud men’s minds” and declared that The Shadow was “never seen, only heard” (“Message from the Hills”). Often, The Shadow manifests hypnotic or even supernatural powers to control other people’s actions. He had other abilities as well: he was a master of disguise, master marksman, incredibly strong, a master of self-defense, intelligent almost to the point of omniscience, a skilled pilot, and proficient in chemistry and other sciences (Eisgruber 7-14).

In addition, the very fact that most people believed The Shadow was a myth contributed to his power over evildoers, and the unseen nature of the radio medium enhanced the image:

Who was the Shadow? That was a question that no one seemed able to answer. He was an uncanny being who was capable of being everywhere; yet who also had the peculiar ability of being nowhere. His name was scarcely more than a myth among gangsters; yet they dreaded it. Some had claimed that they had heard his voice coming through spaceless ether, over the radio. But at the broadcasting studio, no one knew the identity of The Shadow. (Grant, *Living Shadow* 18)

Like other mythic heroes, such as King Arthur and the Lone Ranger, The Shadow possessed extraordinary weapons and other accouterments to aid him in his war on evil: a brace of .45 automatics; a ring inset with an opal or girasol gemstone which had a hypnotic effect on people; a wide-brimmed slouch hat and black cloak to conceal his identity; and a secret "sanctum" lit by a weird blue light, containing communication apparatus, files, and a laboratory. Jack Nachbar and Kevin Lause explain that heroes often have such "icons" associated with them (323).

Immortality

A true archetypal hero is immortal. His exploits enter the mythos of a culture and never die. A list of other golden age radio heroes reveals that a number of them, like The Shadow, were successful in other media after their radio careers: for example, the Lone Ranger, the Green Hornet, Sherlock Holmes, Flash Gordon, the Saint, Nick Carter, Buck Rogers, Superman, and Doc Savage. Besides this list, though, there were scores of heroes who died with radio. Why were some so successful? Perhaps because they so clearly and uniquely embodied the various symbolic elements of the heroic archetype, a metaphor which strikes a chord deep in the American consciousness.

The Shadow magazine ceased publication in 1949, and the radio series went off the air in 1954, but The Shadow refused to fade out. Three television pilots were made in the 1950s, then released as feature films. In 1963, Walter Gibson wrote a new Shadow novel (finally under his own name), a number of the pulp novels were reprinted as paperbacks, and recordings of the radio show were rebroadcast nationwide (Tollin 54). Recordings of the episodes have continued to be released on phonograph records, audiocassettes, and compact discs; the series is still broadcast over some radio stations today (Tollin 54). The novels have continued to be reprinted in paperback and hardcover, and in 1981 Doubleday published two Shadow novels in a hardback Crime Club edition celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of The Shadow's creation (Gibson, *Jade Dragon*). New comic book series based on the character have appeared in each decade since the cancel-

lation of the original radio show. In 1994, *The Shadow*, over 60 years after his creation, continued to battle the “weed of crime” in a forty-million-dollar feature film starring Alec Baldwin. Walter Gibson’s title for the first pulp novel remains an appropriate description for this heroic archetype: *The Living Shadow*.

Conclusion

Thomas Carlyle, in his 1840 lectures on heroes, defined a hero as “a pattern for others to imitate, in himself a justification of life” (qtd. in Bentley 42). Certainly this was true of *The Shadow*, and it remains true for heroes in today’s culture. Whether the heroic myth is shared by a group of medieval troubadours around a campfire, a Depression-era family around a radio set, or a contemporary audience in an air-conditioned movie theater, the function of the archetypal hero remains the same: to communicate and reinforce a culture’s basic values. Mircea Eliade, noting the prevalence of superheroes in contemporary popular culture, reminds us that “the mythic imagination can hardly be said to have disappeared; it is still very much with us, having only adapted its workings to the material now at hand” (40).

The mythic heroes of radio’s golden age made fine use of the materials at hand in their day: the emerging power of broadcasting, heroic archetypal metaphors, the cultural demand for heroes, and the imagination of the listeners. Radio drama demanded the involvement of its audience, and, in this sense, was much more a reflection of the American consciousness than any other medium. Radio historian Jim Harmon summed it up well when he wrote of golden-age radio:

It was a world of faceless things and faceless people, but a master showman could bring it to life. The greatest impresario of radio was not Cecil B. DeMille or Orson Welles. The one who really ushered you into the world of strange and commonplace delight that was radio, the guide through the mind’s inner rooms, was always yourself. (*Heroes* 85)

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Notes

1. These categories are drawn from the work of Northrop Frye (16-20), Alexander Eliot (1-2), and Sarah Russell Hankins (268-70).
2. Of the roughly 1000 golden-age radio shows listed in *The Big Broadcast*, by Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, at least 175 (17.5%) are some form of heroic drama. Daniel J. Czitrom showed that in 1931, all forms of drama constituted 15% of total network radio programming; by 1940 drama made up 23% (84).

3. Raymond Stedman pointed out that in the pulp magazine the definite article in The Shadow's name was always capitalized: "The Shadow" rather than "the Shadow" (154). That convention will be followed here.
4. Gibson recalled that after the first issue's success, twice as many copies of the second issue were printed. In spite of this, and the fact that summer sales are normally slower, the second issue sold out like the first. The magazine went monthly on its third issue and to twice-a-month in 1932 (Gibson, "My Years" xiii-xvi).
5. Although Gibson wrote most of the Shadow novels, they all were published under the house name "Maxwell Grant," a common practice in the pulps.
6. Jim Harmon wrote in 1992 that no known recordings of The Shadow from this period exist (*Radio Mystery* 151); however, Anthony Tollin includes a recording of a segment in his 1996 work.
7. Only two of these characters were, like The Shadow, born on radio: the Lone Ranger and the Green Hornet. The others were already successful in other media before making the transition to radio.

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Bhakti as a Popular Religious and Cultural Movement in India¹

Bhakti is generally translated in the English language as “devotion,” but, in addition, it is also unconditional surrender to someone who is loved, revered, and respected. In the mundane sense, sentiments and feelings of Bhakti can be expressed toward anyone. But in the spiritual sense, Bhakti is love, surrender, reverence, and devotion toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His multitudes of incarnations and representations.

In the classical Indian tradition, power and prestige were associated with the elite groups and the masses often found themselves faded into insignificance. The Bhakti movement changed that by shifting some loci of power and prestige from the elites to common folk and thus bringing the masses into mainstream society. This paper describes some early origins of the Bhakti movement in India, its expansion in the North and the South, and the religious and cultural impacts the movement had on Indian society. The three main traditions of Bhakti and the conceptions of Navadha-Bhakti (nine-fold Bhakti), characteristics of a Bhakta (devotee), and Bhakti-yoga (the spiritual path of Bhakti) as explained in the *Bhagavad Gita* are also discussed.

Early Origins of the Bhakti Movement

Like many other repositories in the Indian Hindu tradition, the conception and practice of Bhakti also had pre-Aryan origins. Bhakti existed prior to the Vedic tradition and alongside it. Padampurana indicates the first appearance of Bhakti movement in the South, from where it spread all over India. Classical Sanskrit was the *lingua franca* of learned and upper classes and all philosophical, literary, and artistic works in the Hindu tradition were written in Sanskrit. The masses were not much familiar with Sanskrit and they spoke and conducted their daily business in the vernacular languages. In North India, a variety of Indo-Aryan languages, Prakrits, existed. Out of these developed the modern languages of Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, etc. In South India, people spoke Dravidian languages (Tamil, Telgu, etc.), which were different from the Indo-Aryan languages of the North. The indigenous vernacular languages remained the primary medium of communication and conducting business for the masses, both in the North and the South. It was, accordingly, necessary that the existing philosophy, literature, and artistic creations in the Hindu tradition also be written and presented in the vernacular languages to meet the needs of the masses in these areas. A new class of

literature thus made its appearance at least by the 7th century A.D. and the new philosophy, literature, and art encouraged devotional theism that already had a long history on the Indian soil. The ideas and feelings expressed in the devotional philosophy, literature, and art were not new, but compared to the earlier theistic expressions, they were closer to the deeper feelings of the common folk and had considerable appeal for them. The devotional hymns, in particular, had a significant impact on the lives of the common folk and Bhakti songs could be routinely heard everywhere and at all times, diligently hummed and sung by the masses. The great stories of the traditional past, mythological backgrounds, and exhortations to virtuous conduct also found a place in the works of the saint-poet-philosophers and these were presented for the masses in vernacular hymns all over India.²

As it was to satisfy the emergent philosophical and artistic needs of the common folk, the new philosophy, literature, and art was also a part of the ongoing revolt against increased formalism, ritualism, and corruption in the Hindu tradition. In the Upanishadic period, sacrifices had already yielded ethical and moral problems and people had a growing urge for other forms of knowledge and practices, instead of the Vedic rituals. They developed a particular fascination for devotional theism and the guardians of the Vedic tradition were concerned about this development. They knew that the rise in the urge for devotional theism was partly due to prevalent flaws in the Vedic tradition and practices and partly due to other non-Vedic and non-Aryan cultural influences of the times. Of the three main paths for spiritual uplifting and attainment of Moksha (salvation) in the Indian Hindu tradition, Jnana — the path of knowledge — was too dry and hard for the masses, and Karma — the path of daily rituals and religious performances — was often too cumbersome. Compared to these two, the path of Bhakti (devotion and devotional service) was easier and it emphasized only unconditional love, surrender, reverence, and devotion toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His different incarnations and representations. This path was concerned about neither the theological intricacies in the Hindu tradition nor the intricate ritualistic observances. It became quite popular with the masses. The masses also found the Personal Supreme and His different incarnations and representations (as compared to the Supreme Abstraction or Abstract Brahman — the conception that God is formless) to be more loving and lovable and all-merciful, all-powerful, and all-knowing. Through exuberant practices, a Bhakta found an easier and more practical way to day-to-day happiness, a protected living, and attainment of the goal of Moksha. The Bhakti sentiments were expressed toward the Supreme Personality of Godhead, His male and female incarnations and representations, other heavenly bodies, and even many animate and inanimate objects attributed to have spiritual powers and impacting the lives of the people. In the practical sense, however, it did not matter whether it was the Supreme Person, His incarnations and representations, other heavenly

bodies, or animate and inanimate objects with spiritual powers — the love, devotion, loyalty, and zeal of the follower and the seeker always remained the same.³

As the Bhakti movement flourished, it created a new mediator between man and God - the “Guru” in the place of the “Vedic Acharya” (Acharya is one who actually practices what he preaches). The centers of learning shifted from sacrificial grounds to pilgrimage and sacred bathing places. Instead of the altars, there emerged temples with personable and lovable deities presiding in them. During the Middle Ages, the Bhakti movement particularly flourished and became very popular. The Muslim sufi tradition in India also helped the Bhakti movement and to this day the Bhakti tradition remains strong and popular all over India.⁴

The Three Main Traditions

From quite early times, the Bhakti movement in India centered around three main deities: 1) Vishnu and His incarnations (the sustainer of the world), 2) Shiva (the destroyer of the world), and 3) Shiva’s consort Shakti. The Shiva and Shakti movements were pre-Vedic and of non-Aryan origins and hymns to Shiva are considered to be the earliest. The Vaishnava tradition also is quite old and one finds references to the Vaishnava sect and hymns to Vishnu in the Vedas and in Mahabharata epic. Rama and Krishna are the two most glorified deities in the Vaishnava tradition and they stand identified as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, just as Shiva and Shakti are the Supreme Person for their followers. Besides Rama and Krishna, the Vaishnavas also accept eight additional incarnations of Vishnu according to the Puranic accounts, within which Buddha is also included.⁵

In South India, the Vaishnava movement found its early origins in the writings of the Alvar saint-poet-philosophers, who lived between the sixth and ninth centuries A.D. There were twelve Alvars in all, eleven men and one woman. Most of the Alvars belonged to the lower castes and this fact probably hindered a rapid growth of the Vaishnava movement for some time. Later, the writings of the Alvar saint-poet-philosophers were accepted as of great religious significance and Ramanuja, in particular, recognized these works as the “Vedas of the Vaishnavas.” The followers of the Alvars (notably, Nathamuni, Alvandar-Yamunacharya, and Pillel-Lokacharya) provided further impetus to the Vaishnava movement and the works of Ramanuja and Madhya provided the movement with the needed philosophical and intellectual bases.⁶

Along the Western coast, great saint-poet-philosophers, like Jnanadeva, Namadeva, and Tukarama, aroused the love of the masses for Vishnu from the thirteenth century onward. In the fifteenth century, Vallabacharya, a spiritual descendant of the Alvars, went to Mathura in North India and provided a new life to the Vaishnava movement through the worship of Krishna deity. His influence is

seen in the works of Surdas, Mirabai, and Chaitanya. Chaitanya (who, himself, is considered an incarnation of God or Avtar) spread the Vaishnava movement in Bengal and in the rest of India and abroad through his followers. Before Chaitanya, people of Bengal had been influenced by saint-poet-philosophers, like Jayadeva, Vidyapati, and Chandidas. However, it was Chaitanya who popularized Bhakti into a forceful religious movement in Bengal and all over India. In Assam, the Vaishnava movement was led in the sixteenth century by Shankaradeva. In the fifteenth century, Ramananda visited Benares from South India and established centers for the worship of Rama deity. His influence was felt in the works of his disciples, like Kabir and Tulasidasa. Kabir was a Muslim and Tulasidasa was a Hindu. The contributions of Kabir and Tulasidasa to the Vaishnava tradition and the Bhakti movement are well-known - through Kabir's eloquent poetry and the rendering of *Shri Ramacharitamanasa* by Tulasidasa. These saint-poet-philosophers, in turn, influenced many new generations of saint-poet-philosophers in India and doused the people with sentiments and feelings of Bhakti.⁷

Muslim sufis and mystics also had considerable influence on the Bhakti tradition in India. Like the Bhaktas (devotees), these seekers sought salvation through passionate and ardent love of God and spoke of a union with the Divine, at variance with the orthodox view of Islam. Their emphasis on experience, as against doctrine, made it possible for them to influence and be influenced by the Hindu saint-poet-philosophers. Three of the most notable saints in this category were Kabir, Nanak, and Dadu, who provided a more abstract view of God and further diversified the Bhakti tradition in India.⁸

The Bhakti movement around Shiva and Shakti somehow remained primarily concentrated to the extreme North and in the South and did not spread as widely in the rest of India. The Vaishnava movement, on the other hand, was more popular and widely accepted all over India and abroad.⁹

Navadha Bhakti and Bhakta

As indicated above, Bhakti is conceived as complete and unquestionable faith and devotion toward the Personal Supreme and His different incarnations and representations. Bhakti is selfless, non-calculating, unconditional, and it expresses itself in all walks of life and at all times. The devotional service provided in Bhakti is the easiest path for the fulfillment of one's mundane goals and the spiritual goals of self-realization and attainment of Moksha, through the causeless and ceaseless mercy of the Personal Supreme. For a Bhakta, Bhakti becomes everything — a path, a focus, a process, and an end in itself.¹⁰

Navadha Bhakti is considered even more sublime and pure. Goswami Tulasidasa describes Navadha Bhakti as follows in *Shri Ramacharitamanasa*:

When Rama visited Shabari's hermitage, along with his younger brother Lakshman and wife Sita:

"Shabari stood with folded hands before Rama, and as she gazed upon the Lord, her love grew yet more ardent. "How can I hymn your praises?" she said, "I am a woman of mean descent and of dullest wit - of those who are the lowest of the low, women are lower still; of women again, I am the most dull-headed, O destroyer of sin!"

"Listen, lady, to my words," said Rama, "I recognize no relationship except that of faith. Despite caste, kinship, lineage, piety, reputation, wealth, power, connections, accomplishments, and ability, a man without faith is of no more account than a cloud without water."

"Now I tell you the nine types of devotion; listen attentively and live them up in your mind. The first in order (or stage) is fellowship with the saints; and the second, fondness for the legends relating to me. The third is selfless service to the lotus feet of the Guru; the fourth consists in the hymning of all my virtues with a guileless heart. The repetition of my mystic "Name" with steadfast faith constitutes the fifth form of adoration as revealed in the Vedas; the sixth consists in the practice of self-governance and virtue and detachment from manifold human activities, with ceaseless pursuit of the course of conduct prescribed for the good. He who practices the seventh type sees the entire world equally instinct with me and regards the saints as greater even than myself. He who cultivates the eighth type is content with whatever he has and never dreams of spying out faults in others. The ninth form of devotion demands that one should be simple and undesigning in one's dealings with all and should in his heart cherish implicitly faith in me without either exultation or depression."

"Whoever practices any of these - man or woman, animate or inanimate - is, O Lady, very dear to me; and you have them all in the highest degree. The blessed state which ascetics scarcely attain is today within your easy reach. The most incomparable reward of seeing me is that the individual soul attains to its own original state."¹¹

Thus, complete faith and devotion have been pointed out to be the most important considerations in the path of Bhakti and, for the seekers, the Guru's status has been exalted as almost equal to that of the Supreme Person Himself. A

Bhakta has faith in the Guru and in the Personalized Supreme, constantly remains in the company of saints for proper guidance and influence, and considers Guru and the saints of utmost importance for the spiritual progress. Finding a qualified Guru and selfless service to him are important and so are the fondness for the Supreme Person's legends, singing His virtues, and meditation upon His holy name. Personal discipline, equimindedness, proper observances, self-governance, pursuit of good and virtue, balanced mood, detached attitude, simple and undesigning dealings with all, contentment under all circumstances, and not finding faults in others are also important. It has been clearly stated that worldly designations, possessions, and achievements (such as caste, kinship, lineage, piety, reputation, wealth, power, connections, accomplishments, and abilities) do not really matter in the path of Bhakti.

Lord Krishna also says in the *Bhagavad-Gita*:

“One who is not envious but is a kind friend to all living entities, who does not think himself a proprietor and is free from false ego, who is equal in both happiness and distress, who is tolerant, always satisfied, self-controlled, and engaged in devotional service with determination, his mind and intelligence fixed on me - such a devotee of mine is very dear to me.”

“He for whom no one is put into difficulty and who is not disturbed by anyone, who is equipoised in happiness and distress, fear and anxiety, is very dear to me.”

“My devotee who is not dependent in the ordinary course of activities, who is pure, expert, without cares, free from all pains, and not striving for some result, is very dear to me.”

“One who neither rejoices nor grieves, who neither laments nor desires, and who renounces both auspicious and inauspicious things - such a devotee is very dear to me.”

“One who is equal to friends and enemies, who is equipoised in honor and dishonor, heat and cold, happiness and distress, fame and infamy, who is always silent and satisfied with anything, who does not care for any residence, who is fixed in knowledge and who is engaged in devotional service - such a person is very dear to me.”

“Those who follow this imperishable path of devotional service and who completely engage themselves with faith, making me the Supreme, are very very dear to me.”¹²

Thus, a Bhakta is one who is non-envious, a kind friend to all, free of false-ego, equiminded and equipoised under all circumstances, tolerant, self-controlled, does not get disturbed, harms no one, and does not depend on anyone except the Supreme Person. A Bhakta is pure, satisfied, without cares, does not desire anything, fears none, has no anxieties, no pains, does not strive for any results, neither rejoices nor grieves, and neither laments nor desires. Finally, a Bhakta is silent, satisfied, fixed in knowledge, and always engaged in the devotional service with full determination.

Elsewhere in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Lord Krishna mentions twenty qualities for the enlightenment and devotional service of a Bhakta. These qualities are:

Humility, pridelessness, nonviolence, tolerance, simplicity, approaching a bona fide spiritual master, cleanliness, steadiness, self-control, renunciation of the objects of sense gratification, absence of false ego, the perception of the evil of birth, death, old age, and disease, detachment, freedom from entanglement with children, wife, home, and the rest, even-mindedness amid pleasant and unpleasant events, constant and unalloyed devotion to Lord Krishna, aspiring to live in a solitary place, detachment from the general mass of people, accepting the importance of self-realization, and philosophical search for the Absolute Truth.¹³

Goswami Satsvarupa Dasa also mentions twenty-six qualities of a Bhakta in *Vaisnava Behavior*. These qualities, as earlier enumerated by Lord Chaitanya to Sanatana Goswami, are:

Kripalu (merciful), Akrit-droha (not defiant), Satya-sara (truthful), Sama (equal to everyone), Nidosha (faultless), Vadanya (magnanimous), Mridu (mild), Suchi (clean), Akinchana (without material possessions), Sarvopakaraka (performs welfare work for everyone), Shanta (peaceful), Krishnaka-sharana (surrendered to Krishna), Akama (desireless), Aniha (indifferent to material possessions), Sthira (fixed), Vijita-sad-guna (completely controls the six bad tendencies of Kama - lust, Krodha - anger, Lobha - greed, Moha - illusion, Mada - madness, and Matsarya - envy), Mitabhuk (eats only as much as required), Apramatta (without inebriation), Mananda (respectful), Amani (without false prestige), Gambhira (grave), Karuna (compassionate), Maitra (a friend), Kavi (a poet), Daksha (expert), and Mauni (silent).¹⁴

Many other saintly figures of the past and present have attempted to clarify the conception of Bhakti and the qualities and the qualifications of a Bhakta. The most important of these qualities and qualifications, however, seem to be only five: 1) selfless love of the Bhakta for the Personal Supreme, 2) unconditional surrender of the Bhakta to Him and the Guru, 3) full faith of the Bhakta in all-powerful and all-merciful nature of the Personal Supreme and the Guru, 4) constant and unalloyed service of the Bhakta to the lotus feet of the Personal Supreme and the Guru, and 5) disciplined, simple, and undesigning life style of the Bhakta at all times and in all stages of life. Even of these qualities and qualifications, devotional service to the Personal Supreme and the Guru is of first and foremost importance and the fountainhead of all other qualities and qualifications of the Bhakta. In his purport in the *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*, A. C. Bhaktivedanta advises that unalloyed devotional service to the Personal Supreme (the Guru included) is the most important of these qualities: "If one takes to devotional service in full Krishna consciousness, the other nineteen items (mentioned earlier) automatically develop within him (the Bhakta)."¹⁵ Goswami Shukdeva also explains: "Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Krishna, can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive. He can do this simply by discharging devotional service, just as the sun can immediately dissipate fog by its rays."¹⁶

Bhakti-Yoga

Bhakti-yoga has been described in the *Bhagavad Gita* and has been proclaimed to be the foundation-stone for the devotee's progress toward self-realization and subsequent unity with the Personal Supreme. Of the two prescribed paths for achievement of self-realization and Moksha (Sankhya-yoga and Karma-yoga — the Path of Knowledge and the Path of Action), Bhakti is the underlying current in both. Lord Krishna advises Arjuna:

"Perform your duty equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called yoga. O, Dhananjaya, keep all abominable activities far distant by devotional service, and in that consciousness surrender unto the Lord. Those who want to enjoy the fruits of their work are misers. A man engaged in devotional service rids himself of both good and bad actions even in this life. Therefore, strive for yoga, which is the art of all work."¹⁷

Lord Krishna further says:

“Only the ignorant speak of the devotional service as being different from analytical study of the material world. Those who are actually learned say that he who applies himself well to one of these paths achieves the result of both. One who knows that the position reached by means of analytical study can also be reached by devotional service, and who therefore sees analytical study and devotional service to be at one and the same level, sees things as they are.¹⁸

Bhakti-yoga is further discussed in the *Bhagavad-Gita* as follows:

Arjuna inquired of Lord Krishna:

“Which are considered to be more perfect, those who are always properly engaged in your devotional service or those who worship the Impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested?”

Lord Krishna replied:

“Those who fix their minds on my personal form and are always engaged in worshipping me with great transcendental faith, are considered by me to be most perfect. But those who fully worship the unmanifested, that which lies beyond the perception of the senses, the all-pervading, inconceivable, unchanging, fixed, and immovable by controlling the various senses and being equally disposed to everyone, such persons, engaged in the welfare of all, at last achieve me. However, for those whose minds are attached to the unmanifested, impersonal feature of the Supreme, advancement is very troublesome. To make progress in that discipline is always difficult for those who are embodied. But those who worship me, giving up all their activities unto me, being devoted to me without deviation, engaged in devotional service, and always meditating upon me, having fixed their minds upon me, O son of Pratha, for them I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death. Therefore, just fix your mind upon me, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and engage all your intelligence in me. Thus, you will live in me always, without a doubt.”

“My dear Arjuna, O winner of wealth, if you cannot fix your mind upon me without deviation, then follow the regulative principles of Bhakti-yoga. In this way develop a desire to attain me. If you cannot practice the regulation of Bhakti-yoga, then just try to work for me, because by working for me you will come to

the perfect stage. If, however, you are unable to work in this consciousness of me, then try to act giving up all results of your work and try to be self-situated. If you cannot take this practice, then engage yourself in the cultivation of knowledge. Better than knowledge, however, is meditation, and better than meditation is renunciation of the fruits of action, for by such renunciation one can attain peace of mind.”¹⁹

It is thus clear that the conception of Bhakti is closely tied to Sankhya-yoga and Karma-yoga. In the subsequent chapters, Lord Krishna also mentions that all material and spiritual activities are undertaken by people in one of the three modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance. Bhakti, also, is performed in the respective modes of goodness, passion, and ignorance and is rewarded accordingly.²⁰

Bhakti, the Tradition, and the Social Order

Bhakti is dissociated from the bondages of both the Shastracharas (scripturally prescribed and sanctioned conduct) and the Lokacharas (traditionally prescribed and accepted conduct) in the folk tradition and becomes a matter of love, faith, devotion, reverence, duty, and persistence. The Bhakti tradition also does not recognize the bondages of the social order, caste system, and social norms. It respects the tradition and goals and ideals of life, but is restricted by neither. The tradition remains tolerant of different paths to self-realization and Moksha and it is stressed that these goals may be achieved through the available numerous paths in the mode of Jnana (Knowledge), Karma (Actions), or Bhakti (Devotion) — each path being equally valid and yielding the same results. In Mahimna Stotra, this sentiment has been eloquently stated as follows: “All these paths, O Lord,...lead but to Thee, like the winding river that at last merges into the sea.” The Bhagavad-Gita also emphasizes the same.²¹

A Closing Remark

Over the centuries, many saint-poet-philosophers have tried to instill in the people love and devotion for the Supreme Personality of Godhead through the Vishnu, Krishna, Rama, Shiva, and Shakti deities. The folk tradition has also played an important role in this regard. Successions of foreign invasions threatened the Hindu civilization in a determined and ruthless manner, starting with the 8th century A.D. invasions and lasting into the eighteenth century. Hindu civilization, nevertheless, has survived these attacks and a significant credit goes to the saint-poet-philosophers of India and the Bhakti movement. The Bhakti movement has brought greater unity and understanding among people of different faiths and creeds and bridged the gaps among religious sects. The movement enriched the Indian

culture and Bhakti-oriented art, dance, songs, and performances have enamored the masses for centuries. Contributions of the Sufi saint-poet-philosophers to the diversification and enrichment of the Indian culture are also important. Both Bhakti and Sufi movements have transcended the narrow bounds of their respective faiths and brought greater understanding in people and more diversity in the Indian culture. In fact, some of the best Bhakti poetry has been written by Muslim saint-poet-philosophers (e.g., Rehman and Raskhan) and thanks to both the Hindu and Muslim saint-poet-philosophers, the Bhakti tradition remains strong and popular all over India to this day.²²

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Notes

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18. Bhaktivedanta, op. cit., 1986, pp. 278-79.
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“Reading with One Hand”: Nicholson Baker’s *Vox* and *The Fermata* and the Politics of a Sexual Imagination

“Ah,” she said, “but you’re supposed to be telling me something true, not imagined.”

“Yes, but the true thing is shading into the imagined thing, all right?”

—*Vox*

I.

As a point of departure, and as a way of entering into my argument, I will begin with this from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In Book One of *The Confessions*, one of the seminal examples of autobiographical writing, Rousseau relates to us his youthful love of books and his acts of reading which, he adds, did not include “obscene and licentious” books. And though his benefactor Mme La Tribu could have easily provided him with such works, Rousseau considered it his good fortune not to have taken them. Moreover, Rousseau informs us that it was not until he was in his thirties that he even “glanced at one of those dangerous works which even fashionable ladies find so embarrassing that they can only read them in secret” (48). Of course this translation by J. M. Cohen for the Penguin Classics series is a bit misleading and does not do justice to Rousseau’s reason for suggesting these texts are “dangerous.” Contrary to Cohen’s translation, these works are not read “in secret,” they are read “with one hand.” Rather than being “embarrassing,” they are “bothersome”—bothersome because some works are so sexually charged that young women are reading them with “one hand” while masturbating with the other. The act of “reading with one” denotes the clear separation of one type of literature—that which is erotic or pornographic—from that which is not. The act of “reading with one hand,” also signals a propriety of usage: some books are meant for public consumption, while some are meant to be enjoyed privately.

To read either *Vox* or *The Fermata* is to indulge in the “pleasure of the text” both privately and publicly since both books open themselves to numerous levels of private reflection and public discourse; and also since both revolve around an interplay of erotic and pornographic ideas and situations that Baker uses to push his narrative and to engage our reading—reading not simply as a means of enjoying the text, but reading, too, as a complex interaction with the text, one in which we are messily engaged with morals and values uneasily upset perhaps by the language of sex and the politics of a sexual imagination.

Vox relies on the spoken word where *The Fermata* relies on overt images. *Vox* is a 90s love story where *The Fermata* is an adolescent's fantasy gone wild. *Vox* speaks the images that *The Fermata* makes real. In *Vox*, desire is viewed as an integral component of the imagination since neither Jim nor Abby—Baker's protagonist in this tale—can see or touch one another. They are separated by the distance of a continent; there is a three-thousand mile gap between them as Abby resides on the East Coast and Jim on the West. Thus, they can only imaginatively create in their own minds—as the reader must do—how the other looks, how the other touches, how the other feels. That distance between, too, heightens for either of them the other's own materiality. Each one's bodily presence is felt through its very absence. The voice, but more importantly, the seductive, erotic image that the voice harkens, stands in place of the real. We, of course, hear their voices; we listen in on their talk, intimate and playful, and are mesmerized by their discoveries, their truths, and the *jouissance* of their single and singular sex.

In *The Fermata*, however, the imaginary, at least on one level, is made concrete. Arnold Strine, the protagonist of *The Fermata*, has the ability to stop time and to move about in a frozen world. He uses this 'gift' not to enrich himself, but to remove women's clothing and to gaze on their naked bodies. It is a view that is both erotic and unsettling: in stopped time, the frozen female form retains the shape of the clothing, so breasts are pushed up flat as if housed by an invisible brassier, pubic hair is pressed against the skin as if panties were still on. As readers, we imagine the scene and in constructing the images in our minds, we understand quickly the erotic impulse; but at the same time we are unsettled by it because it is such an uncompromising masculine view: a woman, naked, frozen, passive. It is a view that reduces the women to the role of object. And as much as Baker's protagonist reassures us that he is not a sexual predator—and that, in fact, he genuinely likes and respects women—we are reminded of Martha Nussbaum's observation that no matter how much power and authority a woman has, sexual objectification reduces her to the status of "a cunt" (310). And no amount of special pleading by Arnold Strine can shake this observation from our minds.

Vox and *The Fermata* contain within them a sensual-sexual edge whereon the imagination intersects again and again with the familiar and the unfamiliar; that is, what the reader may already have experienced or not experienced, know or not know, within the world of sexual expression and sexual play. Such intersections keep us reading. To be sure, the hint of the unknown continually engages our imaginations. And since each novel adheres to a separate conceit—one is a late-night conversation between two adults on a private sex chat-line, and the other is the narrator's autobiography-in-progress—we have a number of different ways at watching and understanding the mechanism of a sexual imagination.

II.

Vox is about giving “voice” to sex and sexual play and the inherent freedom found in doing so; it is about speaking the language of sex and giving utterance to the desires and fantasies of a healthy sex life. In this way *Vox* is very much about choice. The choice of two people to indulge in their sexual desires and to indulge their sexual needs through self-pleasure. The human element in their love making is not the physical contact shared between a man and a woman. Instead it is auditory. They are joined through voice: the human voice connects each with the absent other. Together, their voices transmit the erotic narratives and fantasies they speak; their voices, too, serve as a conduit to bring about the physical pleasure they each seek.

It begins innocently enough: “What are you wearing?” “What are you doing?” Simple questions. Questions asked to begin a conversation. Questions asked to get a sense of each other. But once answered, “a white shirt,” and “lying on my,” respectively, the questions and answers they evoke are raised to a different level. And the talk circulates freely through the landscape of sexual need and desire. What follows is talk, lots of talk, an eruption of talk, an eruption of utterance and of voice. And we? Well, we are eavesdroppers, perhaps “audiophiles” of a type who listen in on their private conversations now made public. Or, at least, that’s the illusion. But we are aware of this; we enter gamely into the illusion. As we read, they speak; and as they speak, we “listen.” As they fantasize, we fantasize. And as they make more and more of their imagined world known—a world of real sex and fantasy sex, sex in showers and sex at work, sex with one or two or three or a number of different people, or, even, sex alone—we are tantalized and we are hooked. And perhaps like Rousseau’s *belle dame*, we find ourselves “reading with one hand,” too.

Vox weaves its narrative frame around the story of Jim and Abby, two people who spend most of one late evening engaged in a long, continuous telephone conversation—a conversation interrupted only when one or the other pauses to adjust or to take off clothing or to get something cool to drink. Theirs is an intimate conversation, though they are not intimate friends. In fact, they are strangers who have met on this phone line by accident; and yet, they discover in each other a person with whom they can share their most secret and intimate fantasies and pleasures and with whom there is no fear or embarrassment. Each alone in his or her respective home, it is their own private sexual need that has prompted their calls. And though sexual desire and gratification is not the whole of their conversation, it is, however, the certain theme.

We take stock of their imaginations. Because they are separated by a continent it is incumbent on each of them to rely on the imagination—that combination of the prior experienced matched up with the excitedly new—to translate

the words and images they share into the highly-charged, erotic (sometimes pornographic) images they need in order to achieve the sexual release they each desire. After all, that is the only “end” to which their conversation, by virtue of entering into such a conversation, is (or can be) directed. There is no other purpose. As readers, then, we are not surprised to find that as we near the end of *Vox*, the writing speeds up, our reading quickens, and in a rather long, sustained passage, the frenzy of the on-going conversation is increasingly steered towards that final climax. Literally and figuratively they rely on one another’s verbal images, which are rapidly translated by the hearer into mental images, in order to come—to come in their own singular climax. Afterwards, after talking “hours and hours,” they hang up and we, well, we close the book (163).

The ease of the reader to develop a mental image of the invented and real sex that takes place between Jim and Abby, as well as a mental image of Jim and Abby’s sexual imagination at play, is central here. For it is this ease that allows for the interplay between reader and story as each re-inscribe the sex that Jim and Abby imagine and engage in. The ease with which the reader enters into this mutual interplay, too, implicates—in the sense of being connected intimately—him or her in the text. Jim and Abby’s imagined and real sex-play become the imagined (and perhaps real) sex-play of the reader as well.

The Fermata is more problematic. The title of Baker’s novel comes from the name of the music notation which suggests “the prolongation of tone, chord, or rest beyond its indicated time value” (*AHD*). The “prolongation,” in this novel is not musical, but rather temporal. During different moments in his life and utilizing different methods, Arnold Strine has had the ability to bring about a temporal “fermata,” a pause in the flow of time, and then enter into what he calls “the fold”—that space where he is “alive and ambulatory and thinking and looking, while the rest of the world is stopped or paused” (3). “Thinking and looking,” of course, is central to his task; for to think and to look are the things that, for the most part, he reserves his time in the fold to do. And it is what his autobiography sets out to uncover. However, that is not enough. Interwoven within the text of his autobiography are his erotic and pornographic stories—stories which have been occasioned by his entrance into the fold, but which also exaggerate those moments. For the most part, these stories reduplicate the sexual imagination of the text, but then heighten such portrayals by providing intense descriptions of sexual play, pleasure, and perversion. These pornographic interludes, then, stand in stark contrast to the novel’s voyeuristic narrative. But such a contrast shapes, in some measure, our attitude towards Strine through a kind of negative pull. That is, his story—his autobiography—seems much more tame and less threatening juxtaposed as it is with his pornographic writings and tapes and even against the fantasies of others.

Strine, as noted earlier, does not attempt to enrich himself in these mo-

ments of stopped time; rather, he uses these periods in order to fulfill his voyeuristic and masturbatory fantasies. While in the fold he carefully undresses various women: women he knows, women he has glanced at, women who have caught his eye. Admiring their bodies, their breasts, their sex, he caresses and kisses them, and at times, ejaculates near or on them after masturbating. However, he does not attempt to force intercourse upon these women or to harm them in any way. Other than his ability to stop time, there is nothing special or extraordinary or even significant about him. Indeed, it would be a stretch to suggest that his very ordinariness makes him a kind of "everyman"—a stand meant to recast our own sexual reimaginings into ordinary (or extra-ordinary) terms. In spite of the novel's conceit—or even because of it—there is very little concerning Arnold Strine's life that many readers would share. And that may be because we realize that his text is less an autobiography as it is a counter-confession. A counter-confession where he lays bare his secret life and his desire for women who lack in a literal sense any real autonomy, while at the same time qualifying his desire. It is as if he himself realizes something about his own private world that speaks to his own personal perversion or pleasure.

"Nakedness is a great equalizer," asserts Greg Friedler in the introduction to his collection of photographs, *Naked New York*. And he is right on target. Because to be naked before the world—devoid of the elements and conventions that connects such a sight to sexual gratification, eroticism, or the play of desire—has the effect of disarming the viewer's gaze. In *The Fermata*, however, Strine eroticizes nakedness; Strine's gaze is meant to register desire filtered through the safety of an artificial distance—the distance of stopped time, where the only moving figure is the only figure moved—in this case, Strine. Any sexual interest felt by the reader at these moments is defused through the distance of the text, between that which the text suggests and that which the reader cares to imagine. Such images are pre-directed, of course, since Baker's narrative utilizes the assumptions and fantasies of generations of men—and he is not apologetic for doing so. However he does suggest that such a fantasy, though male driven, may not be gender specific. Toward the end of the story, for example, Strine attempts to bring his girlfriend Joyce into his "secret life" and in the process loses his power to enter into the fold though Joyce now retains it. And it is she who now "strips pedestrians and tells [Arnold] about the strange genitalia she has seen and known"(302).

III.

All literature, as Linda Hutcheon has written, seeks “to tantalize, [and] seduce the reader into a world other than his own” (86). Once seduced, readers imagine, interpret, decode, order, and construct the world of the text and its inhabitants (86). Our reading, therefore, is concomitant with an active production of meaning since meaning is an always on-going exchange between the reader and the text—an exchange mediated by and through the printed word. And that is where the illusion begins. Unlike visual representations of erotica or pornography, for example, that show us what they want us to see and through the framing how they want us to see it, the printed word demands that we be active agents in the creation of the text and the images contained therein. Any act of reading is dependent on the reader’s willingness to enter a writer’s linguistic codes. With novels like *Vox* and *The Fermata*, those codes are already highly charged since they rely almost exclusively on erotic and pornographic images, and since any erotic or pornographic work has, at bottom, the purpose of tantalizing or teasing out of the reader some sort of sexual response.

Since the politics of a sexual imagination require both risk and satisfaction, how far does the writer take the fantasy? What pleasures or perversions does he or she describe? And how explicit can the language be? The answers to those questions depend on the audience and on the purpose set forth by the writer. Joined, but certainly not limited by it, any level of sexual expression depends on how much the audience will allow, which depends, it seems to me, on what the audience seeks: is the work meant for private or public reflection? Does the text stand in the place of the absent other? Or is the text to be a shared event between two lovers?

The codification of pornography, notes Lynn Hunt, developed out of a “messy, two-way, push and pull between the intentions of authors, artists, and engravers to test the boundaries of the ‘decent’ and the aim of the ecclesiastical and secular police to regulate” those intentions (10). When we read *Vox* or *The Fermata* (or hundreds of other books like and even better than them) we are invested in a similar sort of “messy, two-way, push and pull.” That said, when do we “regulate” our reading (taming perhaps an unacknowledged need) and when do we “test” it? Are “obscene and licentious texts” ever really dangerous—or are they only dangerous in Rousseau’s sense? To be sure, erotic and pornographic images can be unsettling. As Thomas Moore has written, they can “shock, embarrass, . . . and inspire outrage” (74-75). It would be disingenuous, then, to suggest that such images are only benevolent things; they can have a negative impact: they can be for some “too graphic” or “too harsh” (74). However, in any real sense of the meaning of a “politics of a sexual imagination,” what is at play here belongs to the reader—for it is always his or her imagination that resonates within and creates

and constructs his or her own sexual images out of the linguistic play of the text. What he or she does with those images, well, that belongs to the reader as well.

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Notes

1. "... ces dangereux livres qu'une belle dame de par la monde/ trouve incommodés, en ce qu'on ne peut, dit-elle, les lire que/ d'une seule main." For an extended treatment of this idea see Joan DeJean's "The Politics of Pornography: *L'Ecole des Filles*" in *The Invention of Pornography*, edited by Lynn Hunt.
2. In *Vox* such a problem is solved with the purchase of a "Book Mate 1." This device, we learn, "makes reading a pure pleasure! Ingenious design holds paperback books OPEN and FLAT so even wind can't ruffle pages—leaves your hands free to do other things" (68). It is the idea of leaving a woman's hands free "to do other things" that excites the narrator and brings him to a state of arousal.
3. Or, as in Rousseau's case, not at all. Which is not to suggest Rousseau did not have an erotic life, for he tells us that in "my crazy fantasies, my wildest fits of eroticism, and the behavior which they sometimes drove me to, . . . I always evoked, imaginatively, the aid of the opposite sex" (27).
4. Professor Nussbaum's observation is directed more to pictorial representations of woman as found in magazines like *Playboy*. But the idea holds.
5. Their conversation does not deal solely with sex. It also details the minutia of their daily lives. The conversation captures their likes and dislikes and what they have in common. Perhaps this is what connects them and draws us into their story. In fact, Randall Short suggests that it is these secondary conversations that "evoke for the reader a meeting not of bodies but of souls" (9).
6. *Fermata* is Italian, "from the feminine past participle of *fermare*, to stop; and from the Latin *firmare*, to make firm" (*AHD*).
7. In her text, Hutcheon uses a slightly different sense of the idea of the "erotic" than I do. However, I do agree with her analysis of the reciprocity—that mutual exchange—between author and reader within the framing of a sexually explicit text.
8. Such a response can be as simple as eye dilation or nipple hardening, to something more complex like full penile erection or vaginal lubrication.

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American Popular Culture and the Politics of Race in Dr. Seuss' *The Sneetches*

Cartoons, particularly editorial or political cartoons, make use of the elements of caricature to explain or make light of current politics and social issues. Caricatures in American picture storybooks are satirical, sometimes bizarre foolishness – plastic representations, or descriptions – which through gross exaggeration of natural features, make cartoon characters appear ridiculous, while also trying to make clear a particular point of view.

Some picture storybooks about politics also try to explain troubling issues, giving a somewhat realistic or embellished representation of the obvious facts. According to Professor Roger A. Fisher (1996: p. 122), “By its very nature, political cartoon art in a democratic society has been one of the purest artifacts of popular culture, seeking to influence public opinion through its use of widely and instantly understood symbols, slogans, referents, and allusions.”

Humorous cartoons, therefore, have been an integral part of our journalism, the media and American popular culture. Nonpolitical cartoons, moreover, have become enormously popular with the development of the color funny papers of major newspapers, and printed book presses.

Perhaps the greatest and most distinctive cartoon picture book illustrator for children in America was Theodor Geisel, better known as the fictitious Dr. Seuss. Indeed, Dr. Seuss' inimitable artwork and wit have had a profound influence on contemporary American popular culture, and his quaint and outrageous ideas have given a new dimension to the cartoon picture storybook. In fact, Dr. Seuss or Theodor Geisel, as a children's book author, “revolutionized the very idea of what writing for children should be, and [he] wrote and illustrated over forty world famous books” (Sendak, 1995). Furthermore, Dr. Seuss' expressive and daffy drawings and unfettered imagination and work expanded to include important, political and thoughtful social commentary as well as personal satire.

Dr. Seuss' work, which has had enormous appeal, and is still popular today, is basically meant for children, but many of his odd stories, like *The Sneetches*, are also suitable for adult understanding and entertainment, and are inextricably a part of our cultural landscape.

In other words, *The Sneetches*, a landmark in illustrated cartoon books, which turns weird pictures into a strange story, is intended to instruct not only children but adults as well about the problems of being prejudiced or different. In fact, Dr. Seuss' penchant for wry humor and his ability to starkly explain how

discrimination – and even racism – can adversely affect individuals and *all* American remains unsurpassed.

Dr. Seuss creates a visual frame of reference through his amusing and quirky characters; and the idea and fallacy of being intolerant and prejudiced against others comes vividly to life. Dr. Seuss' framework can best be explained by Lucuis J. Barker, Mack H. Jones, and Katherine Tate (1999, p. 5), as they write:

A frame of reference is a set of general assumptions about the nature of the subject or experience being investigated, what concepts or categories of analysis are the most useful for understanding it, what level of analysis should be adopted, and what questions should be answered in order to develop the most useful understanding of that what is being investigated.

Dr. Seuss' assumptions and intentions are clearly outlined at the beginning of his sassy story of *The Sneetches*. In addition, Dr. Seuss' wildly imaginative and satirical account of the sociopolitical conditions of our time, notably the intractable problem of race – and human differences – is especially informative. Indeed, his vibrant comic portrait of *The Sneetches* intensifies his dramatization of the stated issues. Moreover, his interdependent and colorful text and grotesque or unusual illustrations of the funny-looking, beak-nosed Sneetches – who appear as yellow, upright-walking ducks on steroids – are given equal emphasis with the sotry's telling and didactic language, which also enhances the text explainability. For example, Dr. Seuss (1989, p. 3) writes:

Now, the Star Belly Sneetches
 Had bellies with stars.
 The Plain-Belly Sneetches
 Had none upon thars.
 Those stars weren't so big.
 They were really so small
 You might think such a thing
 Wouldn't matter at all.

Nonetheless, the Star-Belly Sneetches became a distinct and dominant group in the society of beach Sneetches. And in this sense, Dr. Seuss, a seemingly sophisticated cartoonist for children, describes how one race or species can dehumanize others by pressing forward the supposed superiority of their own kind, as did the arrogant Star-Belly Sneetches in this story. Perhaps they attributed this to

their higher cultural and psychological values. Further, the intolerance and bias of the cantankerous Star-Belly Sneetches are easily substantiated by their unfavorable opinion and prejudgment of the Plain-Belly Sneetches.

On this note, it is interesting to point out Dr. Seuss' excellent molding and blending of words and cross-cultural analysis and comparison of the different Sneetches. He asserts that the distinguishing characteristics of the Star-Belly Sneetches are a product of the ethnocentrism. This fact, Dr. Seuss believes, is responsible for why the Sneetches with stars fear and are uncomfortable with the Plain-Belly Sneetches – that is, those particular misfits who don't look like them, or fit their image. And if it is also true that the Sneetches without stars are uncomfortable, or are at least ambivalent about their separate and miserable existence, would it not be surprising to think that the Plain-Belly Sneetches perhaps hated themselves, or even wanted to be like the Star-Belly Sneetches – their cursed rivals or contemporaries.

Of course, throughout history, unrestrained discrimination, preconceived notions or separatism, and prejudices have caused a fair amount of pain human suffering. Therefore, by examining the hostility that the Plain-Belly Sneetches engendered, perhaps one can understand the unwanted discrimination may minorities still face in America. In the sophisticated and moving Sneetches story, one is classified or stereotyped unfairly judged on basis of having a star on his or her stomach, which tells us about their exact physiological traits.

Moreover, what exactly is race or the basic physical characteristics of all humans? Science writer James C. King (1981, p. ix) tells us that “the concept of race is an attempt to describe the manner in which individual variation within and between populations is related to heredity, development, and environment.” This definition, however, does not explain precisely how the members of one so-called race prefer *only* themselves over others.

Incredible though it seems, Dr. Seuss explains the characteristics of *The Sneetches* with grandeur and dignity, while pointing out the detrimental effect of ‘same-kind’ preference. Toward this end, we must understand that race and racism have been analyzed by numerous scholars, most of whom view it as an irrational form of behavior. It is based on the need to identify scapegoats like the Plain-Belly Sneetches to justify their snobbish existence and irrational hatred and aggression against others – perhaps to relieve their racial guilt or inferiority complex. The Star-Belly Sneetches' actions also tended to be in *consonant* direction. However, one must ask: Can terrible guilt drive a curmudgeon Sneetch or human person mad?

The Star-Belly Sneetches' resentments were gradually replaced by feelings of extreme prejudice, stemming from the notion that the Plain-Belly Sneetches were a distinctly different and supposedly inferior sub-group of

Sneetches. The unpopularity of the Plain-Belly Sneetches, on whom unfairness and all sorts of evils could be blamed, with impunity – and where they were sporadically persecuted and personally restricted – was quite evident in the outlandish story. For instance, Dr. Seuss (1989, p.7) explains:

When the Star-Belly Sneetches had frankfurter roasts
Or picnics or parties or marshmallow toasts,
They never invited the Plain-Belly Sneetches.
They left them out cold, in the dark of the beaches.
They kept the away. Never let them come near.
And that's how they treated them year after year.

Although contact has been made among the races in the United States to a certain degree through the painful process of integration – to reduce elements of prejudice and discrimination, especially in establishing common, nationalistic goals – it is through political socialization and improper learning that we reject our fellow brethren, like the Plain-Belly Sneetches' repudiation by the Star-Belly Sneetches. And this attitude became prevalent and incorporated into their Sneetch-Beach society.

Moreover, indirect personal or tactile contact between the Sneetches – like in human society – was not effective in reducing the Star-Belly Sneetches prejudices, as they continued to discriminate against the Plain-Belly Sneetches. Additionally, some iconoclastic scholars have claimed that racism, prejudices, and discrimination are permanent. For example, Professor Derrick Bell (1992, p.12), in support of this thesis has written:

Minorities will never gain full equality in the country. Even those herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary "peaks of progress," short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance. This is a hard-to –accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it, not as a sign of submission, but as an act of ultimate defiance.

If Bell's dire assertions are correct, attempts to chronicle or explain the motivation of those who hate and perpetuate our racial problems are critically important. Dr. Seuss' thesis regarding the Sneetched must be examined, and considered, if for no other reason than to explain how children or the offspring from adults can learn this same kind of destructive and counter-productive behavior over successive generations.

The Star-Belly Sneetches' form of hatred and displeasure ranged initially from disgust to intolerance and was based solely on the dislike they had of the Sneetches without "stars on thars." However, in an effort to be more like the dominant Sneetches, the Plain-Belly Sneetches took action to 'remake' themselves through the magical machinations of visiting outsider, namely, Sylvester McMonkey McBean, and his wonderful and peculiar Star On, Star-Off Machines.

Beside looking like Dr. Seuss' grey, cat-like and mean-spirited Grinch that stole Christmas, in Whoville, the cunning McBean, who gives an immediate impression of deviousness, was able to artificially produce the same brilliant stars on the Star-less Belly Sneetches, much to the chagrin of the original Star-Belly Sneetches. Afterward, when the fantastic deed was done, the disparaged and former Plain-Belly Sneetches happily and boisterously proclaimed:

We're exactly like you! You can't tell us apart.
We're all just the same, now, you snotty old smarties!
And now we can go to your frankfurter parties.
(Dr. Seuss 1989, p.12)

African Americans and other minorities have long tried to change, to adapt, to remake themselves, and work within the constraints of the dominant society like the Plain-Belly Sneetches. However, it seems there are those who can't stand to see others get ahead – or to share power. In essence, not all people are treated the same way. The fact of the matter is, our society restricts those who are different from the dominant group.

Indeed, the attainment of stars on the former Plain-Belly Sneetches did not mean the end of their problems or persecution. Therefore, removing the source of the problem, or changing oneself, does not always mean a reduction in prejudice or discrimination. Sometimes it takes a change in attitude.

This is why the resentful Star-Belly Sneetches, for a considerable monetary price charged by the wily and shifty Sylvester McMonkey McBean, in turn and undaunted, decided to remove their famous Belly Stars, saying wistfully and defiantly, "We're *still* the best Sneetches and they [the former Plain-Belly Sneetches] are the worst" (Dr. Seuss 1989, p.13).

This part of Dr. Seuss' story illustrates accurately the burden many minorities are faced with when they try to advance socially in the dominant culture, or to be accepted, as they are sometimes pulled back down, marginalized, or knocked off their hard-earned perch. The Plain-Belly Sneetches can perhaps relate to this. After the original Star-Belly Sneetches finally had their illustrious stars removed by McBean's Star-Off Machine, they bragged and "paraded about... with snoots in the air," indignantly stating:

We know who is who! Now there isn't a doubt.
 The best kind of Sneetches are Sneetches
 without! (Dr. Seuss 1989, p.18).

Taking advantage of the situation, the happy-go-lucky rouge, McBean, after cleverly bargaining and taking all the unsuspecting Sneetches' money, concluded that the simple-minded, beak-nosed populace that "lived on the beaches," would never learn, or be willing to tolerate each other, because of their vanity and self-hatred. And as the sly Slyvester McMonkey McBean drove away in his splendid and sensational car and Star-On, Star-Off Machines, he amusingly declared to himself, "No. You can't teach a Sneetch!" (Dr. Seuss 1989, p.22).

However, having lost most of their wealth, and despite words to the contrary, the indomitable Sneetches finally realized that it really didn't matter if they were different. In Dr. Seuss' (1989, p.24) optimistic words:

...McBean was quite wrong. I'm quite happy to say
 That the Sneetches got really quite smart on that day,
 The day they decided that Sneetches are Sneetches
 And no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches.
 That day, all the Sneetches forgot about stars
 And whether they had one, or not, upon thars.

Will such a day in human history and race relations ever come? Dr. Seuss' zany and irresistible Sneetch characters reveal his careful observation and analysis of race, especially for the future in America. He takes the position that a significant difference does exist between us all, although his wacky sensibilities playfully tell us that we should never be afraid to address or entertain the question of race in the United States.

And it is this later discussion at the very end of the principal book, *The Sneetches*, which is one of the most interesting parts of the eccentric story. The late Dr. Seuss managed to explore the question of race, and race-related problems, polarizing racial politics, and intolerance in our heterogeneous society. Nonetheless, tolerance prevailed in the story in the end.

More importantly, Dr. Seuss challenges our basic assumptions – that we cannot get past our prejudices, or transcend race – and that discrimination is insignificant. Fortunately, as King (1981, p. ix), in *The Biology of Race* has pointed out,

During the past two decades the United States has become officially committed to policies of racial integration in education and

of fostering equality of civil rights and economic opportunity for all citizens. These policies constitute a clear repudiation of many [prejudicial] practices of the past and run counter to the beliefs of large segments of the population.

Finally, anyone who reads the off-the-wall, but morality-filled and plausible, *The Sneetches*, should feel that the story and its moral are timeless. In terms of human comprehension and human interaction or intervention, one would have to conclude that the question of race and racism will always be a part of American culture. However, it does not mean that in a diverse society such as ours, we can't get along, and work together as a cohesive whole, and as part of the human race. In short, we are all humans – the same people – regardless of our color, racial, religious and cultural differences.

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Tom T. Hall and Critical Junctions in Country Music

Popular culture media forms are altered by societal trends, by major events, and also by the appearances on the scene of particular individuals. No less than with industries and organizations, charismatic or otherwise notable personages cause major changes in media forms. The focus of this paper is upon the work of one such individual, Tom T. Hall, and its transformational effects upon the Country Music Industry.

Tom T. Hall wrote over 500 songs and recorded half that many. In addition to attaining over fifty chart records, he won a Grammy, forty-six BMI Awards, and designation as country music's "Songwriter of the Year." President Jimmy Carter called Hall "a poet with a guitar, who knows how to capture the spirit of America with his words and music." George Jones referred to him as "by far the all-time greatest songwriter/storyteller that country music has ever had." Acclaim, however, is not the essence of his impact.

Rather, Hall's greatest achievement was to help Country Music escape its regional isolation in the southern mountain area of the United States and become nationally based. His lyrics provided an escape route for a music that had become trite and void of serious content and was consequently rejected by non-regional audiences. Still, Hall did not abandon the style of the music, nor did he reject its central geographic locus—Nashville, Tennessee with its Mother Church of Country Music, the Grand Ole Opry. Instead he introduced both to greater audiences across the country.

The Nashville Scene in the 1950s and 1960s

Country music's popularity was confined to the American South in the post-World War II years. These were years in which the South became an estranged partner in the system of American Federalism. While the Civil War had given the region a special separateness, the years from reconstruction to World War II found certain accommodations between North and South built around an understanding that the race issue would not become part of the national political agenda. Instead of a new war of armies, a civil rights war erupted with mass protests, acts of civil disobedience, and bloodshed. The White South found itself ostracized and estranged once again, and country music, never fully accepted by America as a whole, shared that ostracism.

Of course, before the War, during the twenties and the Depression years of the thirties, southern mountain music performers often mixed and mingled with

other folk performers and with Jazz musicians both White and African American, often sharing the same stage. Their song lyrics spoke to conditions of poverty, degradation, and unfair governmental policies. Often their songs were presented in an open atmosphere as performers joined others, riding the rails and seeking handouts in a land of disappearing jobs until World War II altered conditions.

When the War ended, the nation became engulfed in a cold and hot war with the Soviet Union and was also alerted to threats (both real and imaginary) of Communists among our own population. Certain politicians—notably Wisconsin's U. S. Senator Joseph McCarthy—went on a quest to expose the Communists within. He reveled in pointing his finger at popular media artists, notably those in Hollywood, but also persons who performed music which had centered its themes on injustices in the American economic system. Folk singers and others were singled out, i.e., Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson. A community of musicians who had only seen "the People" as their audience, now began to split apart. Some artists sought shelter and comfort by denying old associations; others betrayed old associates.

Nashville, too, wanted shelter and comfort. An emerging Nashville establishment of country music built around traditional Southern mountain music may have made a tacit accommodation with the forces of McCarthyism. Performers who could have easily followed the trail of the folk singers left that trail and began touring exclusively with troupes of the Grand Ole Opry. Nashville Country performers would not be found on the same stage as a Seeger. Johnny and Jack and Kitty Wells would not be found on a college campus stage with the Weavers. Hank Snow would tour with George Morgan, Faron Young or the Louvin Brothers, but never with Joan Baez or Woody or Arlo Guthrie.

Nashville Music was off limits to the "Communist witch hunters" as it proclaimed to all the United States that the White South was patriotic. One of the themes of the music was a loyalty couched in the waving of the flag. While folk and jazz were the musical forms of various kinds of political protests, Nashville's country music ceased to carry messages of discontent with America. Quite to the contrary, singers like Merle Haggard proclaimed that he was not a protestor, but rather, proud to be an "Okie from Muskogee," and he warned that "If you're running down my country man, you're walking on the fighting side of me."

If poverty was considered in the lyrics of a song, the poverty was not a critique of an unjust economy. Rather, the references seemed to lead to conclusions such as, "yes, I'm poor, but at least I'm proud," or "I may be poor but I'm my own man," or in the words of Bill Anderson's "Poor Folks": "We was poor folks livin' in a rich folks world, sure were a hungry bunch, if the wolf had ever come to our front door, he a had to brought a picnic lunch...but every night we had food, and mama set the table with love." The nostalgic rhythms made poverty seem almost romantic.

The music ceased to see drinking as a social disease, but rather as a commodity for fun and male bonding. Similarly if one was “In the Jail House Now” as Webb Pierce sang, it was because he had just a little too much “fun.” The dominant theme of the music became heartbreak and reconciliation. Nashville country singers also had repertoires of gospel songs, and each segment of the Grand Ole Opry ended on a religious note. Like the bad mix of politics and religion on the American political scene, Nashville music and politics were blatantly separated during this period. The lyrics of the music became void of serious content.

By the time Hall arrived in Nashville at the beginning of the 1960’s, the performers were beginning to realize that they could not participate in inappropriate racial stereotypes, and some lyrics changed. A very popular Bob Wills song, “Take Me Back to Tulsa,” dropped the insulting line, “darkie raise the cotton, white man gets the money,” and replaced it with “little man raise the cotton, big man gets the money.” The music was not political. It tried not to offend anyone—especially its mainly white audience. There were no civil rights songs, no set of the Opry ended with the religious song, “We Shall Overcome.” Before the Public Accommodations Act of 1964 was promulgated, the Opry was an all-white organization—on stage, back stage, and in the audience.

Tom T. Hall Meets Country Music

Tom T. Hall’s music encompassed many of the elements of the country music of the fifties and sixties. His mark as a country music performer and songwriter was two-fold. First, he carved out a special niche as a storyteller using traditional country music accompaniment and a traditional country voice. Secondly, and most importantly, he introduced political themes into country music—heavy, controversial, political themes. As a storyteller, he accumulated his life experiences and unusual uncanny perceptions of the experiences of others while he translated the pathos of ordinary souls into messages that resonated with universal qualities. As a political messenger, he yelled out loudly and clearly that there were many things that were not right in American society.

Hall drew musical pictures out of images he had seen in his life. Born on a farm in Tick Ridge in eastern Kentucky, on May 25, 1936 Hall knew life as a struggle from an early age.¹ His father Virgil eked out a living working in a brick factory, farming, and preaching. His mother died when he was thirteen. Although he quit school a year later, Tom was an avid reader, determined to be a writer²; but he had a long way to go before he hit the bookstore circuit.

Many of Hall’s song lyrics recall memories of his early days. “Don’t forget the coffee Billy Joe” (1973)³ reflects on the day to day struggles of a kid helping his family survive by running to town and trying to make a deal on logs, or on the sale of an animal. An uncle introduced him to show business as he was

taken around to various local towns as an assistant in setting up motion picture shows:

Oh we rode the dusty trails together
 At the Saturday Morning Picture Show
 The dusty trails are gone now
 And it hurts to hear it said
 Pinto the Wonder Horse is Dead
 ("Pinto the Wonder Horse is Dead," 1970)

He was drawn closely to music by Floyd Carter, a guitar picker who became his idol. Carter died of tuberculosis at the age of nineteen, the same summer Hall's mother died. In one song Floyd Carter became Clayton Delany ("The Year Clayton Delany Died," 1971):

I made Clayton a promise
 I was going to carry on somehow
 I'd give a hundred dollars
 If he could only see me now

As a teenager Hall formed a small band and was also a disc jockey on local radio stations. "Mecca" for Hall was Nashville, and at every opportunity, he listened to WSM radio and the Grand Ole Opry. After joining the army, Hall continued with his music. His song "Salute to a Switchblade Knife" (1970) recalls leave time carousing the bars of Germany and the troubles that GIs could get into if they were not careful.

A return stateside was a return to small time music gigs and more work as a disc jockey. However, after experiencing a degree of modest success with the recording of a song or two, Hall made his career definitive by moving to Nashville.

In Nashville he received a small weekly salary as a songwriter and began to pump out songs Nashville style, but with his own storytelling twist. He also discovered that his singing was a marketable quality, and a recording career began:

Remember how I used to
 Drink and play guitar
 And I'd get up and sing for
 All those folks at Jody's Bar
 Well I found out it ain't too bad

The way I pick and sound
Nashville is a groovy little town
(“Nashville is a Groovy Little Town,” 1969)

The impact of Tom T. Hall would have been very limited had he been only a storyteller. A country singer with a new style and a new manner of presenting lyrics with his voice was always welcome on the Nashville scene, but Hall ventured where others had not. He crossed the political barriers that had fenced in country music for over two decades.

Others with country roots had crossed these barriers and taken their messages national—but they had done so by leaving Nashville and their country roots. Some had simply become “cross over” artists such as the Everly Brothers and Elvis Presley; others such as Kris Kristopherson, Willie Nelson, and Johnny Cash had purposely turned on Nashville’s rules to become “outlaws.” Still others, like Emmy Lou Harris, tied their identities to “folk music,” separating their new music from traditional country music. Hall could have rejoined the folk music communities, as his lyrics were the lyrics that were being performed by artists at Woodstock, but he remained true to his roots. His style and his place of performance remained Nashville. The impact of what he did is best told by examining some of his songs.

Crashing Taboos: The Political Tom T. Hall

Hall’s work, unlike that of all other Nashville country artists before his time, openly commented on America’s social, political, and environmental troubles. In “America the Ugly” (1970), the lines take a photographer from another land on a tour of the Bowery, Appalachia, enclaves of child and old age poverty, and environmental degradation. Hall asks if this is the future that we want. Other sides of “Ugly America” are depicted by another traveler who goes from town to town. In the first town no one cares about a hanging, in the next, people are laughing at a “poor crippled man,” while in the third, a peaceful “nice” town, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Disheartened, the traveller sings: “So I washed my face in the morning dew/. . .And kept on moving along” (“I Washed My Face in the Morning Dew, 1968”).

The country’s anti-war movement as well as the political movement to hold President Nixon accountable for his misdeeds never really swayed Nashville. Quite to the contrary, it was to Nashville that Nixon turned in seeking out his “middle American” support during the Watergate crises. Nixon was the featured guest at the grand opening of the new Opryland park and theater. Hall’s answer was “Watergate Blues”(1973) and a parody on Nixon in “The Monkey Who Became the President” (1972). The best examples of Hall’s peace songs include “100 Children,” (1970) and “Mama Bake a Pie, Daddy Kill a Chicken” (1970).

“100 Children” has a ring almost like “We Shall Overcome,” as a listener imagines crusading children marching down streets carrying signs and confronting jeering police at barricades.

Hall pleads the children’s case for pure water and uncut forests, for praise for the good, and for brotherhood. While his tone is hopeful here, it turns ominous in “Mama Bake a Pie, Daddy Kill a Chicken. In this song, a young man returns home legless to staring townspeople after doing his duty for the country in Vietnam. Ironically he comments, “And since I won’t be walking I suppose I’ll save some money buying shoes.”

Hall made light of alcoholic beverages in “Day Drinking Again” in 1970, much in the Nashville Tradition. But in 1973 he stepped well out of that tradition with “Pay No Attention to Alice”. The song develops around the experiences of a day in the household of an alcoholic, with food cooked from memory and reflex and not coming out right, the car in a ditch, ashes everywhere and constant apologies. While in the 1950s, songs such as Webb Pierce’s “There Stands the Glass” were censored by disc jockeys for presenting alcohol use negatively, by the time he recorded “Alice” Hall had broken through such barriers, throwing realism directly into the face of a naïve, traditional Nashville:

Alice, put those ashes in the ashtray
I swear woman you’re going burn the house down

Pay no attention to Alice
They say she’s a sot
Sober she’s not
But it’s all that she got

The death penalty was not confronted in any explicit way on the Grand Ole Opry stage; however, it gets Hall’s not so subtle treatment in “Turn it on, Turn it on” (1982). The protagonist, a local “loser” who is constantly put down for being an outsider, goes on a killing rampage as a means of committing suicide, expecting to be killed during the rampage. Instead he is captured, and the state obliges his suicide wish via the electric chair. A contemporary anti-gun message seems hidden in the story line, as the character buys his bullets and immediately kills the hardware store owner. Crime and punishment is also the focus of “Hang ‘em All” (1970)—a popular cry of many “law and order” enthusiasts. The trouble is that “if they hang ‘em all, they going to hang you too.” Hall addressed the civil rights issue as few in Nashville would risk doing. His “I Want to See the Parade” (1970) strongly indicated that Nashville knew there was a civil rights problem in America. Here Hall obliges a mother when she asks if he would hold her little girl

so that she can see the parade. He agrees. "Thank you, mister," is her response. Then the little girl asks, "Why does my daddy hate all these people in the parade." Hall begins to answer, "Well little girl, you see they are different," then he looks at her, noticing that she is blind and replies, "Well, I really don't know." That night he kneels and prays to Jesus, "Would You hold me up, so I can see the parade."

"Getting along," and accepting differences is a theme throughout two albums for children. The "Song of the One Legged Chicken" (1974) is a plea for tolerance and the acceptance of people with physical handicaps:

Do you like true stories well I do
And that's why I'm singing this song
A song about a one legged chicken
Who lives in the straw on the floor of my barn

When the egg hatched, the veterinarian told the narrator that the little chicken was "better off dead," but the narrator dissented. The chicken grew into a happy creature who now goes cocka-doodle doo, and leaves her benefactor an egg every day. Hall also writes and sings about all the different animals on the Fox Hollow Animal train and how they get along, as well as about another chicken who has befriended a duck. They know they are different, look different, and do different things, but they are very good friends, and when they speak they go "Quacka-doodle doo" (1974).

Hall's concern for environmental degradation can be heard in "100 Children" and "American the Ugly" as cited above. It is also the theme of "Everybody Likes to Hear a Bird Sing" (1974) from one of his children's albums:

Some people buy spray
And they spray it on the land
They kill all the little
bitty bugs that they can
The birds eat the bugs
And it makes them sick
I wish we didn't have to do that

Interestingly, however, Hall never recorded his most recognized song, "Harper Valley P.T.A.," It was performed by Jeannie C. Reilly and sold over four million copies. In the song, a school girl and her widowed mother are criticized by the "social elite" for their life style—wearing mini-skirts, having a drink in public, etc. At one point, the mother marches right on into the P.T.A. meeting and puts it "in their face," revealing, point by point, the hypocrisy in each member's private

life. "Hypocrites with a capital 'H'." It was the 1960s, and the song hit the chord that America was hearing loud and clear outside of Nashville.

Bottomline: Impacts on the Way to Becoming a Footnote

Tom T. Hall's impact was direct: Nashville gained a new respect. Additionally, Hall helped Nashville to build a new Opryland theme park and a new Grand ole opry house. Television crews became a permanent fixture on the Nashville stage, and artists were courted by the music producers and managers based on the two coasts. Nashville went to New York and to Los Angeles. Hall's own forays into urban sophisticated America gave him renown and made him money, but he was never incorporated into the new society that began to surround country music in the eighties and nineties.

Inexplicably, Hall was not only left out of the the new scenes, but was almost purposely left behind. While his writing persisted, his role as a performer gradually faded, and he took on the persona of a retiree of sorts. He traveled a college circuit as a speaker with good friends Miller Williams and Kurt Vonnegut talking about the things he used to sing about. His songs would be recorded occasionally but they were not played on major country radio stations and they did not sell well. He knew more hits through other singers. His own performances were not in conformity with a new sterility that was imposed on country music by the outside producers, whose quest was always the bottomline, the maximum profit. The new producers controlling Nashville discovered that once there were national audiences open to them, they would have to struggle not to offend those audiences.

Once more country lyrics emphasized the simple, the non-political. Hall's style of singing was replaced with a oneness of beat and rhythm that would permit line dancing for persons who could care less about the impact of lyrics. Perhaps the new songs had to conform to desires of tavern owners to sell more beer to the dancers. Tom T. Hall has become a footnote on today's scene, overlooked by a national music form that he greatly influenced. Maybe this is a fate he could not escape. However, those that write the history of popular culture must record his important roles in the transition of country music from its moribund southern cultural isolation in the 1940's, '50's, and '60's into a popular culture form that is today very national if not international in its base.

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Notes

1. Books by Tom T. Hall:

The Acts of Life. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1986.

Christmas and the Old House. Atlanta and Memphis: Peachtree Publishers, 1989.

The Laughing Man of Woodmont Cove. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1991.

The Songwriter's Handbook. Nashville: Rutledge Hill Press, 1976, 1987.

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What a Book. Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1996.

2. Biographical information regarding Tom T. Hall was drawn collectively from his autobiography cited in the text (and below) as well as a variety of sources including "The Authorized Tom T. Hall Page,"

http://www.cnct.com/~tomthall/bio_intro.html, TTH Enterprises, P.O. Box 1246, Franklin, Tennessee. Included on the page is the "Tom T. Hall, Mercury-Nashville Biography" of October 1995; Jim Cox, "Songs from Sochoppy," *No Depression*, V.1, no. 4, Summer 1996; Kurt Wolff, "Tom T. Hall, Storyteller, Poet, Philosopher," *No Depression*, V.1, no. 4, Summer 1996. Other sources utilized for materials in this essay include: Les Bridges, "Tom T. Hall: When the Women Hiss, He Says...", *Rolling Stone*, June 21, 1973, p.22; Noel Coppage, "Tom T. Hall," *Stereo Review*, August 1974, pp. 58-61; Jack Hurst, "Harper Valley Man Digs One More Grave," *The Sunday Showcase*, February 23, 1969, p.5; "Lookin' at Country with Loretta Lynn," *Newsweek*, June 18, 1973, p. 66; Robert Lorenzi, "The Hemingway of Country Music," *Country Style*, October 1979, pp.20-21; Peter McCabe, "He Finds Poetry in Ordinary Mortals," *New York Times*, March 4, 1973, II, p. 30; Lynn Van Matre, "What Sort of Picker Reads Emily Post," *The Chicago Tribune Magazine*, August 24, 1975, p. 14-32.

3. All songs are written by Tom T. Hall and published by Hallnote Publishing, and New Keys Music. Lyrics are used with permission of Tom T. Hall. Dates are for his songs as they appeared in albums.

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Studies in Popular Culture

Studies in Popular Culture, the journal of the Popular Culture Association in the South and the American Culture Association in the South, publishes articles on popular culture and American culture however mediated: through film, literature, radio, television, music, graphics, print, practices, conditions of life. Its contributors from the United States, Canada, France, Israel, and Australia, include distinguished anthropologists, sociologists, cultural geographers, ethnomusicologists, historians, and scholars in mass communications, philosophy, literature, and religion.

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All manuscripts should be sent to the editor care of the University of Louisville, Department of English, Louisville, KY 40292. Please enclose two double-spaced copies and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Black and white illustrations may accompany the text. Our preference is for essays that total, with notes and bibliography, no more than twenty pages. Documentation may take the form appropriate for the discipline of the writer; the current MLA style sheet is a useful model. Please indicate if the work is available on computer disk. The editor reserves the right to make stylistic changes on accepted manuscripts.

Introduction

As with every issue of PCR, diversity dominates Volume 10, #2. In this issue, we continue our practice of presenting cutting edge scholarship on Popular and American Culture in words and format that can be understood by scholars across the disciplines whether the authors are discussing opera or architecture, film or folk music, religion or politics, all of which are included in this issue.

On one end of the musical spectrum, Wheeler Winston Dixon, who will be the keynote speaker at our year 2000 conference, provides cutting edge criticism of Philip Glass' contemporary opera *Monsters of Grace*, and at the other, William Thompson examines the contributions of Tom T. Hall. Three articles deal with translations of literature to film. Tina Harris' "Interrogating the Representation of African American Female Identity in the Films *Waiting to Exhale* and *Set It Off*" provides an interesting counterpoint to Qun Wang's "Positionality, Film and Asian American Literature," while Craig Frischkorn does his own interrogation of the first filmic translation of a Henry James work. Gwenda Young's study of Jacques Tourneur's war films provides yet another commentary on the popular culture of Hollywood.

The influence of Popular Culture on children comes under scrutiny in Earnest N. Bracey's "American Popular Culture and the Politics of Race in Dr. Seuss' *The Sneetches*" and in Becky L. Smith's "What Disney Teaches Our Children about Leadership" and Ronald R. Roach takes us to an earlier time in his examination of archetypal metaphors in *The Shadow* radio show. Liza Hansen explores the imaginative possibilities in architecture in "Spaces of Seduction and Desire: Temples of Pleasure." Satish Sharma studies the merging of religion and popular culture in "Bhakti as a Popular Religious and Cultural Movement," while on a very different note, William Petty discusses the prurient (verging on perverse) possibilities in the reading of popular fiction in his analysis of Nicholson Baker's novels *Vox* and *The Fermata*. Finally, rounding out the issue, the new faces and ethics of tourism are examined in Jeffrey Alan Melton's "The Trouble with Tourists," and Jon Trombold's "High and Low in the Himalayas: John Krakauer's *Into Thin Air*." Remember that our Millennial Conference will be held February 4 through 6, 2000. See the Call for Papers included or visit our website.

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Popular Culture Review

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