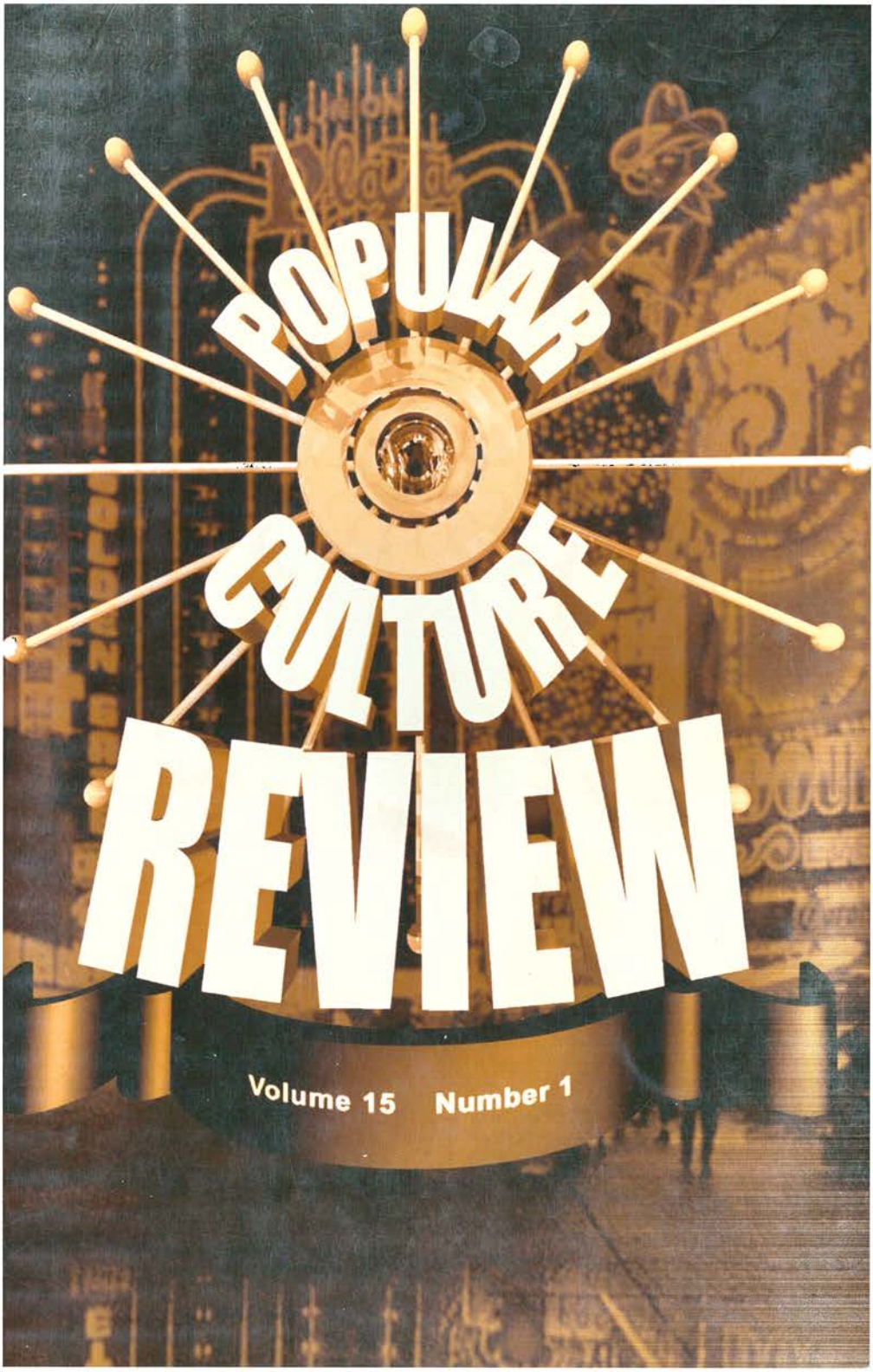
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From the Editor

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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Introduction

Things are changing at *PCR*, as you have undoubtedly noticed after viewing our exciting new cover by noted Australian artist Laurens Tan, his first in what we hope will be a long series.

Sadly, we have lost my long-time Associate Editor, Dr. Juli Barry, who became too overwhelmed by other obligations to continue in that capacity. I've been closely associated with Juli since she was a student and am grateful to her for more things than I can count. She will continue on the Editorial Board, but I will miss her.

Happily I was able to secure the capable services of Amie Norris and Mindy Hutchings, both of whom I first met in the classroom and knew I could rely on. Amie takes over as Assistant Editor and Mindy as Circulation Director, or rather Circulation Goddess, as she prefers to be known. The latter is a new post and one that was sorely needed. Both have more than lived up to my expectations and I congratulate them. In fact, the Introduction to the articles which follows was written by Mindy.

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There's Something About Academic Endeavor

As I write my first Introduction for *PCR*, I cannot help but notice the wide range of subject matter which seems rather daunting at first. Upon much closer inspection, however, I see that as varied as the authors and their ideas seem to be, all is not chaos. Once the articles were distilled into their essence, a pattern emerged. From my vantage point as a reader of *all* of the material, it was obvious to me that the issues presented in this edition were swirling around the central theme of the self: self versus Other, creation of the self, and expression of self. At least for the most part, that is. There are always exceptions to the rules.

Furthermore, I have observed that in the true spirit of social inquiry, the majority of the articles use the medium of human artistic expression to advance their arguments. Various forms of the written and spoken word are represented through music, movies, television, and tall tales. This is truly the wonder of discussing popular culture: anything is fair game!

In the first movie-based essay, Richard A. Voeltz shows us that Hollywood is "Still Dreaming of Africa." He gives us a short history of Hollywood's interest in Africa (which appeared as far back as 1929), offering his insightful critique on the way to his destination: discussion of the film *I Dreamed of Africa* (released in 2000). He spends the bulk of his time discussing this movie and how awful it was, concluding: "Hollywood will not give up on making cinematic meditations about bored, rich, yet soul-searching and sensitive, white people questing for fulfillment and a new life among the photogenic landscapes of Kenya and Africa."

In "The Ethos of Cool vs. The Ethos of Chill," Steven Carter talks about how language and changes in language aid the expression of self and the creation of identity, especially in the postmodern world. In particular, it is important to note that the words we as individuals use are critical to the formation and display of our "social selves."

Robert Sickels' "Pastoral Dreams in Innisfree, Ireland, U.S.A." is full of ageless themes: death/rebirth, the prodigal son, myths of god/goddess, and the myth of the wonders and joys of the pastoral world. In this case, he argues that Americans tend to hold the view that the past was better than the present and we see it through pastoral, green-tinted glasses, longing to "cleanse" ourselves "of the damage caused by . . . time spent in a complex industrial civilization." In the end, the questions remain. In this post-9/11 world, do we still believe in the fantasy? Have we lost our naiveté? Or will we become ever more sentimental about the past, yearning for a simpler, nicer world?

Lynda Walsh's presentation of Dan De Quille's hoaxes is a historical story from *Pop Culture Review*'s own backyard: the wilds of nineteenth-century Nevada. De Quille used his masterful tall tales as a form of resistance against changes being imposed on the West under the guidance of authority from the eastern United States.

In another blast from the past, Jacqueline Foertsch uses the movie, *War of the Worlds*, in her essay "Bombs Away and Smash Hits at Home" to argue that the 1953 cinematic version of H.G. Wells' literary work epitomizes the fright of the Cold War. In turn, she presents the idea that we were fighting against those who were alien to us and therefore Other. Ultimately this produced the fear of invasion of our national identity bordering on a feeling of personal invasion when the "insulated, protected state, a condition of living within boundaries" was broken. In other words, technological change and what we now know as "globalization" broke this country out of its shell, a fearful process indeed.

On a much different note, we are then introduced to a discussion about shopping. The act of shopping is an expression of self, yet it is also entertainment. Because of this, shopping also has a dark side. To borrow a metaphor from the *Wizard of Oz*, someone is behind the curtain, behind the scenes, manipulating our feelings and desires. Read Mark Moss' "Shopping as an

Entertainment Experience" and you will never think of the local mall in the same way again.

G. Christopher Williams offers the first of the two musical offerings in this issue. In "Losing Himself in the Music," he says that Marshall Mathers (aka Eminem aka Slim Shady) is the quintessential postmodern artist as he creates and manipulates his identity through the musical expression of "I, me, and he." More than one persona is needed for best personal expression, and his works are an expression of self, an extension of self which produces a blurring of "authentic self" and the self of his art.

The other music-based essay highlights the punk artistry of the Dead Kennedys as ultra-contemporary vocal protest art. In the words of Dennis Russell from his work, "STARS AND STRIPES OF CORRUPTION," the "Dead Kennedy's works represent a frontal assault on what the group perceived to be a heartless, dehumanizing, militaristic Reagan administration that was buttressed by hypocritical and bigoted fundamentalist religion."

In the sole offering based on television, "The Language of *COPS*," Milford A. Jeremiah says he created a "study of language in its social context." He now presents his findings in a brief commentary on the socialization of police officers to their job as evidenced through their language, samples of which were harvested through observation of the television show *COPS*.

And finally we have the "Carpenter Trio." The pieces of B.R. Smith, Shea G. Craig, and J. Robert Craig should be read as a unit. As the authors requested, here is the summary of their work in their own words:

> We decided to write the John Carpenter papers to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the release of his seminal work, *Halloween*, in 1978. Several recurrent themes across Carpenter's work appeared to us. B.R. Smith discusses one of these resonant themes: the origin of the evil mankind is forced to face throughout Carpenter's work. In his discussion, Smith finds "that evil is over and over again portrayed as an actual, even tangible, force," and that the institutions designed to protect us often only further advance the interests of the dark force. In his paper, Shea G. Craig uncovers the often-utilized theme of identity theft as a permutation of the invasion of the individual. As he tells us, Carpenter hammers this loss of trust and identity into certain of his titles, while showing us that mankind needs to learn to work together to solve its problems and survive the pending menace. Both papers note that, for Carpenter, evil may be defeated, but only temporarily. One piece of the "Carpenter formula," according to J. Robert Craig, is his depiction of the "Hawksian Woman" as a member of the group of people forced

to confront a malignant evil. The formula has undergone subtle changes over the years, but Carpenter asserts in his most recent release that relying on women to take charge of the solution to the problem will have only the same result as when men are at the helm of the forces opposing various forms of evil. Our hope is that with these pieces, we will have uncovered a variety of tropes used by John Carpenter that have received only scant analysis thus far. We find Carpenter's work always workmanlike and intriguing, and we look forward to his next release.

As always, your observations are appreciated. And remember: send in those papers! Please address any questions and comments you may have (paper submissions, article standards, or circulation issues), to the email addresses which can be found on the inside cover.

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Still Dreaming of Africa: Hollywood and the Hallucinatory Power of Kenya

As a herd of elephants wallow across a river, the camera slowly and lovingly draws back to reveal a magnificent landscape that dwarfs man and beast. Thus the film *I Dreamed of Africa* (2000) introduces Kenya as it proceeds to tell the story of how nature preservationist Kuki Gallmann and her husband Paolo (played by Kim Basinger and Vincent Perez) created a home out of a derelict 100,000-acre cattle ranch in Kenya. Gallmann's struggle to save the African wilderness provides the sorry narrative for this film (more on that later), but the theme of Africa's vastness, beauty, brutality, and mystery appears constantly, and if any drama at all is to be found in *I Dreamed of Africa*, it is visual. Hollywood and the camera love Africa. It always has.

Hollywood had noticed the hallucinatory power of Kenya as far back as 1929 when director W.S. Van Dyke spent seven months there and in nearby Uganda and Tanganyika (now Tanzania) filming one of MGM's first talkies, *Trader Horn* (1930). Van Dyke dazzled moviegoers with images (which, by the way, were recycled for countless other Hollywood African films) of everything from yawning lions and thundering herds of wildebeest to exotic tribal ceremonies including bare-breasted African women. This highly profitable film sparked wonder and wanderlust in the mass population. The film tells the story of two men—legendary ivory trader Alfred Aloysius Horn (Harry Carey) and his naive protégé Peru (Duncan Renaldo of later *Cisco Kid* fame), who has to have won the prize for wearing the biggest sombrero pith helmet in any African movie—and their struggle to reclaim a beautiful white woman (Edwina Booth) who was lost in the jungle as a baby and raised by indigenous tribes. *Time* magazine proclaimed *Trader Horn,* which did receive an Oscar nomination for 1930/31's Best Picture, to be "Incomparably the best jungle picture . . . will stand high among the pictures of this or any year."[1] Van Dyke went on to use his immense stockpile of footage in 1932's *Tarzan the Ape Man,* which he shot mostly in Hollywood studio sets. The success of these films undoubtedly encouraged other studios to adopt an African theme, but without the visual authenticity and cinematic *gravitas* of *Trader Horn.* Consider the film *Round-up Time in Texas* (1937) an undistinguished film starring Gene Autry and set in "South Africa." Gene is summoned to South Africa from Texas by his brother Tex: " . . . discovered a rich diamond mine in the Valley of Superstition. Need horses badly, but impossible to buy. Bring at once as many as you can round up." To which Gene responds, "We're riding fellas, it's South Africa or bust!" He and his sidekicks did not have to go far however, since the South African town of Dunbar looks exactly like the standard Hollywood Western back-lot, complete

with a saloon and men in cowboy outfits. African reality is provided by a set of African buffalo horns and an African shield and spear hanging on the walls of the saloon. Everyone speaks either with an American accent or an American imitation of Cockney–except the "natives," who speak "injun."

> **Gene Autry**: Where did you get that belt?
> **Namba**: Me trade-um knife to native boy for belt, baas. . . .
> Two, three, four moons. Meet-um boy on the river. Like-um
> belt, make-um quick trade.

Gene Autry comments that "the rhythm of that tom-tom is very much like the American Indian", and again, "That was a drum-signal of some kind. The Indians back in Texas use the same method to send their messages." There are also the requisite lions and gorillas, ignoring the fact that gorillas are not native to South Africa.[2] In 1967, Paramount/Vantors released *Africa Texas Style*, starring John Mills and Hugh O'Brien and directed by Andrew Marton. This British production tells the story of a Kenyan settler who hires two Texas cowboys to help in his scheme of wild game ranching. The film does have excellent location visuals in Kenya, but has a very boring script. *Hatari!,* the Howard Hawks directed film released in 1962, is basically a western set in Tanganyika where the story evolves around John Wayne and Hardy Krugar who play international hunters who capture wild game for zoos. Red Buttons provides comedy relief. There are lots of animal capture sequences with Land-Rovers roaring across the African plain, but critic Joseph Gelmis in 1970 really got to the heart of this film: "Hawks was taking his friends and cast and crew on a trip he wanted to make personally, and the film is both the incidental excuse for and the record of that experience."[3] In 1937, the British studio Gaumont released *King Solomon's Mines* based upon the popular adventure story by H. Rider Haggard and also set loosely in southern Africa. This version gave top billing to the American actor Paul Robeson, the most popular black actor that the cinema had produced so far. Robeson's leading role in the film was enhanced by the addition of a number of songs that allowed him to demonstrate his vocal prowess.[4]

Films such as these and others produced an intense interest in Africa, particularly Kenya, among American film audiences and helped to produce, with some variations, the standard Hollywood African genre film that always featured stunning visuals. As Christine Pittel observed, "From then on, Africa became the location for stories about people getting in touch with the 'primitive' part, or just the basic truth, of their own souls."[5] If one could not physically make the African quest with a Hemingwayesque safari, there were always the white hunter films such as *Mogambo* (1953) directed by John Ford and starring Clark Gable as a big game hunter and trapper caught between the attractions of Grace Kelly, the beautiful, repressed wife of a British anthropologist, and Ava Gardner, the earthy,

bitchy, stranded (an Indian prince-playboy failed to show in Kenya) New York showgirl who will bag her man at all costs. (At the same time in real life, Ava Gardner was beating a tattoo on Frank Sinatra who would fly to Kenya to see Ava while on location for the film and was known around the set as Mrs. Ava Gardner.) With an authentic African setting, the film featured a run-in with a rhino and a close encounter with a deadly gorilla as well as an escape from a "native" uprising. *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (1952), based upon several Hemingway stories, features Gregory Peck as a wounded, soul-searching novelist and adventurer deep in the African bush who stares at vultures and looks back at his life and many loves while being attended by Susan Hayward. Here we have a true Hollywood portable Hemingway, which includes the Spanish Civil War (memorable moment from that war: Ava Gardner dying, while Harry [Gregory Peck] bellows repeatedly, "Stretcher bearer! Stretcher bearer!"), safaris, and the boy getting his first rifle and becoming a man. *Something of Value* (1957), directed by Richard Brooks and starring Rock Hudson, Sydney Poitier, and Dana Wynter, is based on Robert C. Ruark's best selling novel about the Mau-Mau rebellion in Kenya as seen from the perspective of a white settler and a "good" African who gets involved with the Mau-Mau. A "buddy" film that unconvincingly attempts to see both sides in the case of the ritual murders of the 1950s, it does depart somewhat from the sweeping beauty of Africa mode which would be in keeping with Ruark's penchant for a blood-and-guts view of Africa. *Born Free* (1965), based upon the book by Joy Adamson, tells the story of a Kenyan game warden and his wife who raise three lion cubs, one of which, Elsa, presents them with a family. Irresistible scenery and animal shots, as well as the title song, save this African weepie. In 1987's *White Mischief*, directed by Michael Radford, against the spectacular landscape of Kenya's Happy Valley (Wanjohi Valley), we witness the decadent British colony of aristos descend into drunkenness, debauchery, and murder. In 1990, Clint Eastwood directed as well as starred in *White Hunter, Black Heart*. Filmed on location in Zimbabwe and London, he plays John Wilson, a brilliant, driven film director (loosely based on the legendary moviemaker John Huston and the filming of *The African Queen* [1951], a film that contained real African footage and actually worked as a mixture of comedy, adventure, and character) who turns his new film project into a grand personal adventure hunting a wild elephant. More searching for the basic truth of one's soul stuff that comes across as not very convincing. *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996) tells the story of a pack of lions who feasted on humans as if they were Meow Mix® in the Tsavo region of Kenya during the construction of a bridge in 1898. They stalked and killed 135 people. As gruesome as the film gets it never shows how exactly a lion eats a human being: belly first, then buttocks and thighs. The engineer in charge, Patterson (Van Kilmer with the absolute worst Scottish accent), brings in the enigmatic professional hunter, Remington (Michael Douglas sporting something that is supposed to resemble an American

southern accent), to kill the beasts, but these lions exhibit a supernatural knack for knowing what is coming. Actually, the same man-eating lion incident was the basis for *Bwana Devil*, a 1952 inept action film starring Robert Stack, notable only as the first film in 3-D advertised with the slogan, "A lion in your lap." Again, in this primitive test, these two men have to discover the basic truth of their souls. But in the more enlightened era of Hollywood's exploitation of Kenya, movies have centered not on the power of the primitive but on the beauty of endangered wildlife. The 1988 film *Gorillas in the Mist* used the lush forests of Kenya's Aberdare mountains as a stand-in for Rwanda and told the story of primate researcher and crusader Dian Fossey (Sigourney Weaver), who fought to save the mountain gorillas and was murdered for her efforts. And finally there is the *ne plus ultra* of Hollywood Kenya: *Out of Africa,* the sweepingly beautiful and romantic 1986 Oscar-winning Best Picture starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford. David Watkin's cinematography to this day has fixed our most passionate notions of the African landscape. "The air of the African highlands went to my head like wine. I was all the time slightly drunk with it," wrote Karen Blixen (who used the pseudonym Isak Dineson), whose memoir of her farm in Kenya inspired the film. This Hollywood epic was enormously influential in several areas, as Christine Pittel has observed: "Images of Streep and Redford on safari slow dancing under a blanket of stars or sailing above wild herds in a biplane turned the film into a massive hit, launched fashion trends and single-handedly transformed tourism into Kenya's top industry."[6]

Out of Africa was well strafed by critics who saw the film as visually gorgeous but ideological vicious, creating a misty-eyed, nostalgic Banana Republic Travel and Safari Company/Ralph Lauren Safari Clothing image of white colonial Kenya.[7] Yet Hollywood continues to be hooked on the hallucinatory power of Kenya, producing *I Dreamed of Africa* (2000) fourteen years after Streep and Redford buzzed Kenyan wildlife in a biplane. It is definitely not revisionist cinema, for it purports to tell the story of Kuki Gallmann (Kim Basinger), a young divorcee who attempts to find a "different rhythm of life" (in fact that phrase is repeated at least three times in the film, something even the most comatose moviegoer would notice) when she and her husband Paolo (Vincent Perez) move to a ranch in Kenya. The screenplay by Paula Milne and Susan Shilliday is based upon the biographical novel by Euro-Africanist preservationist Kuki Gallmann. The story begins in Venice when Kuki and her rich and snobby friends are coming back from a late-night party and are run off by road by an oil tanker truck. Confined to her hospital bed for weeks with a severely crushed leg, we learn, through Kuki's frequent voice-overs, that she feels unfulfilled in her idle and routine life with her mother and son. "I've stopped growing," she tells her mother (Eve Marie Saint). This sentiment is temporarily alleviated by the attention of the handsome driver of the car that night, Paolo, who indicates that the truck was responsible for the accident. But whose idea was it to

get a nightcap at Harry's Bar? When Paolo proposes, they decide to make a fresh start after their marriage and leave Italy. It is not often that a woman would end up marrying the man who might have been at least partially responsible for months of pain and suffering. Oh well. The new way of life that Kuki and Paolo find is a 100,000-acre ranch in Kenya badly in need of repair. Paolo leaves frequently on big game hunts with his buddies, which are fueled by several cases of Scotch. Paolo tells Kuki that there is a different rhythm here and that he got rid of his watch when he arrived in Kenya. Kuki is forced to deal with snakes, elephants, hungry lions (who kill her dog), poachers, and poisoned water. She eventually learns to love the land, as her constant squabbles with Paolo reveal. Paolo needs the sense of adventure and danger that he finds while on safari. "Out there, there is just the moment. I need that," he whines to Kuki. However, when the wilds of Africa begin to take a personal toll–Paolo is beaten up by poachers, then dies in an accident while she is pregnant; and then her son Emanuele, who had developed a fascination with snakes while quite young, is bitten by a venomous snake and dies–Kuki must decide the extent of such devotion. Africa has forever changed her and with an unmitigated holier-than-thou attitude, she decides at the end that she must save Africa, or at least her small piece of it, with her own private militia. Unsporting Bruce Kirkland of the *Toronto Sun* summed up the film even more succinctly: *"I Dreamed of Africa* purports to the true story of what happens when a family of Euro-trash dilettantes buys a farm in Africa and befriends the wild animals. They buy the farm, all right, in more ways than one. And the Hugh Hudson creation ends up becoming a bloody nightmare. If this insipid nonsense is reality, then both life and cinema are road kill."[8] Hugh Hudson, the director, had made his reputation with the elegiac, lush, and highly praised *Chariots of Fire* (1981), later he took a shot at an African film, *Greystroke, The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1983), which received much less praise and box office. *I Dreamed of Africa* is no *Chariots of Fire.* Kim Basinger was just coming off her Academy Award-winning performance as the Veronica Lake clone in *LA Confidential* (1997) where she was indeed magnificent, although she probably should not have been the one to win an Academy Award in that film. She chose *I Dreamed of Africa*, I suspect, to demonstrate that she was more that a quivering mass of blond-crowned, well-curved flesh who could only play hookers. And perhaps her animal rights background played a role in Basinger agreeing to do the film. After the reviews of the movie and its total collapse at the box office, Basinger most certainly regretted her decision.

Indeed, this straightforward retelling of Kuki Gallmann's life in Africa received some of the worst reviews imaginable. Here are some choice quotations from reviews:

"Kenya is portrayed as a sort of rough resort, and the thorny questions behind issues like conservationism vs. cultural insensitivity don't get looked into."—*Oregonian*

"Enjoy all the scenery while you're yawning."—*South Florida Sun-Sentinel*

"I'm beginning to suspect that Basinger's Academy Award winning turn in *L.A. Confidential* was a fluke."—*Palo Alto Weekly*

"They don't revoke Academy Awards, do they?"—*Kansas City Star*

"Watching *I Dreamed of Africa* is like watching paint dry–except that the paint never actually gets dry."—*Orlando Sentinel*

"Could be likened to the pace of a funeral dirge."—*Movie Parables*

"A Meandering Mess."—*Film.com*

"*I Dreamed of Africa* may very well be the lowest descent in Hell I've taken thus far in my years of cinematic experiences."—*Ain't It Cool Movie Reviews*

"Even in the most picturesque segments of *I Dreamed of Africa*, a film that often has the feel of an epic travelogue, something is missing."—*New York Times*

"A dream of a substantial production; a wisp of a movie that dissipates the moment you leave the theater."—*Miami Herald*[8]

In addition to the bad filmmaking, reviewers were also quick to pick up on neo-colonialist, neo-imperialist, and racist themes in the film; fifteen years of deconstructing *Out of Africa* saw to that. Roger Ebert wrote that, "It's strange to see 'I Dreamed of Africa' at a time when the papers are filled with stories of white farmers being murdered in Zimbabwe. Here is the story of an Italian couple who move to the highlands of Kenya in 1972, buy a ranch near the Great Rift Valley and lead lives in which Africans drift about in the background, vaguely, like unpaid extras. Is it really as simple as that? The realities of contemporary

Africa are simply not dealt with."[10] For Erin Oke, using Africa as a substitute for Kenya, where the film actually takes place, ". . . smacks of the imperialist mind-set that set up Africa as the 'dark continent' in the first place and then set out to colonise and 'civilise' it." Oke continues, "The Gallmanns mostly hang out with and [sic] endless series of big game hunting, private plane-flying white folk and send their son off to a British-run prep school where he can learn to play cricket."[11] Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that "Kenya, the new family's destination, looks in Bernard Lutic's cinematography as beautiful as everyone hoped it would be, and soon enough they settle into the African colonial-style equivalent of a fixer-upper, complete with devoted servants who conveniently happen to live in the neighborhood."[12] Winston Ntshona (he previously played Gordon Ngubene, the South African black gardener whose son is killed in *A Dry White Season* [1989]), has the only real African-speaking role as a sunglasses-wearing chief who says how much he has learned from European missionaries. Or from Haro-online.com/movies: "There are only small vignettes on African life in a slow moving film where little happens. . . . Also, although the film takes place a matter of decades ago, everything looks like it came out of the earlier part of the century. If Teddy Roosevelt passed in the background on safari, it would be completely believable. The lack of Africans (hey, it is Africa after all) is also strange."[13] Kim Basinger does not help with lines such as: "I am surrounded by Africa. I am surrounded by life." Or such witticisms as "I am at peace." "I am alone." "He is my son. He is my friend." Basinger "delivers most of her lines in a sedate drone," writes Brenda Sokolowski, "that's supposed to convey bliss, although one wonders whether she got her paws on a stash of Valium during filming. Most horrifying of all are the melodramatic exceptions, as when, sitting atop a jeep, she lifts her hands to the sky and cries, 'Africa!' It's the grown-up equivalent of driving by cows and yelling "Moo!"[14] Wesley Morris is equally as acerbic:

> In 'I Dreamed of Africa', Kim Basinger gives a performance that practically decrees that Banana Republic go back to its safari-wear roots. Wandering through the veldts and grasslands, Basinger is an aristocratic Earth mother wrapped in linen, Khaki and the occasional scarlet jungle-print sun dress, tilling the muddy earth, shouting down ill-behaved pachyderms as well as the poachers who slaughter them . . . all the while making sure the light catches the highlights in her hair.[15]

In one memorable scene, Kuki's mother, played by veteran actress Eva Marie Saint, jumps out of a stuck Land Rover into some mud and exclaims, "Kuki, my new Guccis!" All in all, *I Dreamed of Africa* comes across like a celebrity episode of *National Geographic Explorer* or a television episode of

ABC's *Survivor: Africa* that actually was filmed in Kenya. A Christian movie review website did term the film, "Entertaining and beautiful," but issued a caveat about the film being too "New Age. Kim Basinger believed (in the movie) that we become everything once we die. The trees, etc."[16] What could have Hugh Hudson and the producers of this mistake been thinking?

Maybe they thought that since true life stories of white, western women confronting "untamed" Africa—*Born Free*, *Gorillas in the Mist*, and of course *Out of Africa* come to mind—have received the Hollywood epic treatment, why not have *I Dreamed of Africa* receive the same lush and exotic setting? There is even a scene where Kuki buzzes the wildlife and soars over the Kenyan landscape in a plane containing the coffin of her late husband ala Meryl Streep and a live Robert Redford in *Out of Africa.* Nothing appeals as much to Hollywood as a tried and tested sequel. But *I Dreamed of Africa* only proved that vainglorious directors and stars such as Hugh Hudson and Kim Basinger should stay out of Africa altogether. Kuki Gallmann herself still lives on those 100,000 acres of land at Ol Ari Nyiro ("the place of dark waters" in Masai) where through the Gallmann Foundation she has launched a crusade to conserve African wildlife and traditions. (In the film, sadly, the animal conservation issue gets totally lost.) She has also become a self-appointed spokesman for Kenya and has acquired Kenyan nationality. The centerpiece of the foundation, her memorial to Paolo and Emanuele, is the Laikipia Wilderness Education Centre, where more than 1,000 children a year–principally African children–come to observe and learn about wildlife. "The majority of Africans," Kallmann says, "have never seen an elephant, and those who live in close proximity to the animals will probably regard them as a threat to their crops."[17] It was to promote the work of the foundation that she agreed to turn her book into a film. When the book came out in 1991 she says she received more than two dozen film offers, but refused them all:

> I felt that what has happened to me was too dose. There is a dignity in a book; it is a conversation with one person. But hundreds of people watching on a big screen, chewing gum and eating popcorn–I didn't know if I wanted that. But eventually I grew to the understanding that I'm a spokesman. A film can talk to an audience and make them aware.[18]

In fact she regards the film "as a commercial for Kenya," which is truly ironic: the film company was unable to get insurance coverage for the stars to work in Kenya, so the principle cinematography was done in South Africa–although Hudson did use the Ol Ari Nyiro for some location scenes.[19]

A commercial for Kenya indeed. Whatever the motives behind them, movies shot in Kenya, or even set in Kenya but shot somewhere else, have the

effect of making moviegoers want to go there themselves, and see the actual places in Kenya that inspired these movie-induced dreams of Africa. On Nairobi's outskirts at the foot of the Ngong Hills, Blixen's fieldstone house still stands as the Karen Blixen Museum, resplendent with mahogany paneling, mosquito netting, and other props left behind by the filmmakers. In nearby Tsavo West National Park, there's the luxurious Finch Hatton's camp that has large, river-adjacent tents fitted with kilim rugs, Victorian dressing tables, and hot and cold running water. Tourists can similarly follow the tracks of the characters, estates, and sights of films such as *White Mischief* and *Gorillas in the Mist.*[20] And for those totally gripped by the vistas in *I Dreamed of Africa*, guests can stay at Gallmann's Mukutan Retreat on the Ol Ari Nyiro ranch. Here is a description provided by the tour operator Boston Overseas:

> Lodging is provided by three traditional dwellings, perched at the edge of the gorge and patterned after African rondavels. Each hut offers luxurious accommodations with double beds, a fireplace and a private veranda overlooking the cliffs. Each is dressed with Swahili and Lamu furniture and built of local stone, papyrus and native woods. Kuki's new luxury tented camp will be making its debut in 2001. The paradox of the Retreat is that it remains exquisitely civilized, yet it is the antithesis of civilization. There is no electricity in the Mukutan; the obtrusive hum of an electric generator is forbidden. Power is collected by solar panels, although most illumination is by candlelight. . . . The bellhops are camels, carrying luggage to the cottage doors. Mukutan proprietor, Kuki Gallmann, has painstakingly modeled the Retreat to the penultimate African destination. Every object is a hand-selected part of a perfect puzzle that delivers the Africa of lore.[21]

All of this for $3570 double occupancy for 4 nights. While the profits do go to the foundation, one wonders if the real purpose behind the film *I Dreamed of Africa* was the commercial tie-in with the Kenyan tourist industry–just a very nice picture post-card in the end. By the late 1980s, Kenya had started to lose its mystique, mostly from too much corruption, poaching, and traffic. By the nineties the real swank safari camps were in post-Mandela South Africa.[22] Maybe *I Dreamed of Africa* would help to improve the tarnished image of Kenya and East Africa in general and improve the tourist trade.

Hollywood and the camera have always loved Africa in both high and low varieties–from *Africa–Texas Style* to *I Dreamed of Africa.*[23] Whether or not Kuki Kullmann herself played a role in the construction of this genteel,

reverential, holier-than-thou, high-toned, boring pastiche of a film, one thing is certain: Hollywood will not give up on making cinematic meditations about bored, rich, yet soul-searching and sensitive, white people, questing for fulfillment and a new life among the photogenic landscape of Kenya and Africa.

Cameron University Richard A. Voeltz

Notes

1. Quote from dust jacket of VHS tape of *Trader Horn.* MGM/UA Home Entertainment and Turner Entertainment, 1994.
2. Peter Davis, *In Darkest Hollywood, Exploring the Jungles of Cinema's South Africa.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996, 15-16.
3. Quoted in Leslie Halliwell, *Halliwell's Film Guide.* Fourth Edition, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983, 381.
4. See Davis, 16-17, for a description of the 1937 film *King Solomon's Mines.* There have been numerous cinematic treatments of the story.
5. Christine Pittel, "Into Africa", *Movieline.* October 2001, 38.
6. *Ibid.*, 38. Blixen quote, 38.
7. For a summary of this colonial nostalgia see Richard A. Voeltz, "The Ways We Use the Past: The Historical Facsimile of the Banana Republic Travel and Safari Company," *Connecticut Review,* Vol. XIII, No. 1, Spring 1991, 27-32.
8. Bruce Kirkland, "Cheer for lions in I Dreamed of Africa," http://www.canoe.ca/JamMoviesReviewsI/idreamedofafrica_kirkland.html.
9. Quotes taken from http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/IDreamedofAfrica-1096837/.
10. Roger Ebert, "I Dreamed of Africa," http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/2000/05/050502.html.
11. Erin Oke, "I Dreamed of Africa," May 4, 2000, http://www.exclaim.ca/index.asp?layid=22&csid1=205.
12. Kenneth Turan, "I Dreamed of Africa–A Dream of Africa, Indeed," May 5, 2000, http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/latimes/search.html.
13. "I Dreamed of Africa," http://www.haro-online.com/movies/i_dreamed_of_africa.html.
14. Brenda Sokolowski, "I Dreamed of Africa," May 11-17, 2000. Vol. 9, Ed. 19, http://www.anchoragepress.com/archives/document3634.html.
15. Wesley Morris, "Safari fashion a big part of "I Dreamed," May 5, 2000. http://www.sfgate.com/search/.
16. Gabe Rodriguez and Esther Melsha, "I Dreamed of Africa," Christian Spotlight on the Movies, http://christiananswers.net/spotlight/movies/2000/idreamedofafrica.html.
17. "Bury my heart in Kenya," an interview with Kuki Kullmann, April 18, 1999, http://www.sundaytimes.co.za/1999/04/18/lifestyle/life04.htm.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. Pittel, 37.
21. "I Dreamed of Africa...," Sunday September 1, 2002, http://www.infohub.com/TRAVEL/SIT/sit_pages/7192.html.

22. Ted Botha, "Safari ala mode," *Conde Nast Traveler*, March 2002, 176+.
23. *Nowhere in Africa* (2003) represents the most recent addition to cinema's love affair with Africa and Kenya in particular. German writer-director Caroline Link's adaptation of Stefanie Zweig's book about her German-Jewish family's escape from the Nazis to safety in Kenya offers a new twist and some poignant moments but still relies on many of the same in-movie-Africa themes: daughter befriended by the family's Kenyan cook, wise natives, mysterious rituals, and travelogue cinematography. And a movie based upon the memoir of a white woman in Africa is hardly original.

The Ethos of Cool vs. the Ethos of Chill: Generation Y and the Waning of Affect

I

In 1989, the sociologist Todd Gitlin attempted to take "the temperature of our time" by dividing postmodern American popular culture into "hot" and "cool" categories. A partial list includes:

Cool	*Hot*
Urban/Multinational	Local-Global
Office	Home
Head	Heart
MTV	CNN
Laurie Anderson	Queen Ida
Detached	Engaged
New York/LA	Montreal/New Orleans
Michael Graves	Christopher Alexander
The Three Davids (Hockney, Letterman, Byrne)	The Three Abbeys (Hoffman, Edward, Road)[1]

Rather than plumb the whys and wherefores of Gitlin's criteria for cool and hot postmodernism (in fact, Gitlin is content to let them speak for themselves), thirteen years later I strongly question whether we should still apply the concepts of "cool" and "hot" to the cultural narratives of postmodernism. Indeed, in the sixties Marshall McLuhan had already appropriated the cool/hot dichotomy in referring to different "temperatures" of mass media. Gitlin himself drops names that also hug the cusp of the postmodern era: Abbie Hoffman, Edward Abbey, and the Beatles' album *Abbey Road.* Moreover, associating cool with the head and hot with the heart would have elicited knowing nods in many historical epochs in Western civilization, never mind postmodernism.

Gitlin's list included American age groups from teens to late twenty- and early thirtysomethings. Narrowing the focus to Americans born circa 1977 and after (the beginning of so-called Generation Y), I want to supplement his dichotomy with my own, one that contrasts the ethos of cool (as a noun, verb, or adjective) with the ethos of chill, or chilling (as a verb or verbal).

Whether or not the difference between the ethos of cool and of chill is one of degree or kind is arguable (the transgenerational *word* cool is still commonly used, of course: when TV's popular cartoon character Bart Simpson

dreams that he's dead, he says, "Cool"). Like Gitlin's, my (working) dichotomy is an abstraction ladder.

From top to bottom:

Cool	*Chill*
Lexically positive	Lexically negative
Lexically multi-dimensional	Lexically two-dimensional
Construction of a self	Deconstruction of a self
Motivated by choice	Paralyzed by choice
Masculine	Masculine/feminine
"Love" (one-on-one)	"Friendship" (group-defined)
Entertained by music	Anesthetized by music
Dancing as an innocent parable of sexual relations	Dancing as an obscene parody of sexual relations

As a part of speech—as the linchpin of Baby Boomer American youthspeak—"cool" was far suppler than "chill" would become in the postmodern era. Cool could apply to a haircut, a person's clothes, the length of his or her eyelashes, a quick classroom retort, a new color of ink—not to mention a multitude of behaviors, feelings and beliefs.

The many-layered dictionary definitions of "cool" are generally positive:

> *adj.*: Giving or suggesting relief from heat: a cool breeze, a cool blouse . . . Marked by calm self-control: *a cool negotiator* . . . *Slang*: Excellent, first-rate; *has a cool sports car had a cool time at the party* . . . *Slang*: Entire; full; *worth a cool million* . . . *v. (tr.)*: To become calmer: *needed time for tempers to cool. n.* A cool place, part, or time: *the cool of early morning*. The state or quality of being cool. *Slang*: Composure; poise; "*Our release marked a victory. The nation had kept its cool.*" — *Idioms: cool it. Slang*: To calm down; relax.

"Chill," on the other hand, generally denotes the negative:

> *n.* A sensation of coldness, often accompanied by shivering or pallor of the skin . . . A checking or dampening of enthusiasm, spirit, or joy; *bad news that put a chill on the celebration*. . . . A sudden numbing fear or dread. *adj.* Moderately cold; chilly: *a chill wind* . . . Not warm and friendly; distant: *a chill greeting* . . . Discouraging; dispiriting: *"Chill penury repressed their noble rage"* (Thomas Gray). *v. (tr)*: to make discouraged; dispirit. (*intr.*): to be seized with cold.

Although both cool and chill function lexically as multiple parts of speech, in everyday parlance cool literally speaks to a wider range of social protocols. It serves as a noun ("Don't lose your cool"); an adjective ("That's a very cool idea"); and as a verb ("Cool it"). Chill, on the other hand, functions almost exclusively as a verb or verbal: "Chill out," "We were just chilling"). This distinction is significant. As a lexical expression of thought and feeling, cool constitutes—or constituted—a three-dimensional cultural dispensation; in contrast, chill's cultural mandate consists of one, or at best two dimensions. As a transitive verb, moreover ("cool it"), cool signifies a form of action; "chill," one of *in*action, collective or otherwise. And while the "it" in "cool it" could indicate a mood, a behavior, and/or an attitude, as a meaningless discourse particle the "out" in "chill out" indicates *nothing*. Indeed, for young people of the high postmodern era (the nineties and beyond), to chill can mean to kick back, relax, hang out, wind down—in short, do little or nothing—but "do" it in a number of different ways which I'll elaborate on in a moment.

Like Jean-Paul Sartre's famous existential waiter in *Being and Nothingness*, who can only *be* a waiter because he *acts like* a waiter,[2] millions of post-war era middle-class American youths, bereft of the self-defining affective challenges of a) war or b) severe economic deprivations, found it necessary to construct a new kind of social self. For many, "playing it cool" evolved from a relatively superficial matter of lifestyle (fashion, taste in music, use of slang) to a full-blown ontological project that had significant consequences for one's interpersonal relationships. Indeed, even before the sixties ended, psychologists were already insisting upon a return to "authentic being" in the social habits of young Americans. According to Sidney M. Jourard, writing in 1971, this meant

> . . . taking the first step at dropping pretense, defenses, and duplicity . . . an end to 'playing it cool,' an end to using one's behavior as a gambit designed to disarm the other fellow, to get him to reveal himself before you disclose[d] yourself to him.[3]

Unlike Jean-Paul Sartre's existential *exemplum* in a smoky Montparnasse café, who only embodied a waiter's somatic gestures (a bow, a subtle dip of the chin, the presentation of the wine), young Americans of the fifties and very early sixties attempted to *reinvent their affect* by adopting a cool, calculated standoffishness.

In youthful Baby Boomer romantic relationships, the ethos of cool was particularly attractive to the fledgling male ego. Better for a guy to go it alone than to let women—as one of my college chums once put it—"fit you with the brown helmet." Next to drawing a low number in the Vietnam draft lottery, what the collegiate middle- and upper-middle class white males of my generation (I was born in 1943) feared most was *Nice boys lose*, that dreaded mantra chanted in

the post-midnight, giggly privacies of women's dorm rooms and sororities from coast to coast.

But American cool constituted much more than this. Even before Dwight David Eisenhower lent his signature to a decade, J.D. Salinger's fictional Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* had already endeared himself to millions of impressionable young readers by embracing a broader-based ethos of cool, not as a doomsday weapon in the civil wars of young love (Holden had no love life), but as a *Weltanschauung*. In an ontological flip-flop that Jean-Paul Sartre would have appreciated, Holden was more afraid of *showing* hurt than of *being* hurt. In all of Holden's relationships, it wasn't better to have cared and lost than never to have cared at all. Rather, it was cooler to forget it all than lose the inner compactness which could be associated with, and substituted for, strength and self-reliance. Salinger understood the unhealthiness of such an attitude, since it's clear that Holden is telling his story to a psychiatrist who, in real life, would've found a way to impress upon the tormented teenager the perils inherent in the construction of a private, not to mention a social, self.

In recent times, the contemporary ethos of "chill" has helped undercut—perhaps even annihilate—conventional (i.e., pre-postmodern) conceptions of self, authentic or otherwise. For the cultural commentator Fredric Jameson, "waning of affect" is directly connected, not to self-destruction, but self-deconstruction:

> As for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older anomie of the centered subject may also mean, not merely a liberation from anxiety, but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling.[4]

Certainly there's nothing new about the "disappearance of the self" as an overarching issue in modernist Western philosophy, literature, and culture. What is new—i.e., what's postmodern—is the notion of a *willful* deconstruction of a social identity. Ihab Hassan writes,

> [P]ostmodernism suppresses or disperses . . . the 'deep' romantic ego, which remains under dire suspicion in post-structuralist circles as a 'totalizing principle.' Losing itself in the play of language, in the differences from which reality is plurally made, the self impersonates its absence even as death stalks its games. It diffuses itself in depthless styles, refusing, eluding, interpretation.[5]

In the mid-nineties, Robert Avila, an economist for the Futures Group of Glastonbury, Connecticut, spoke for thousands of ordinary American parents

from coast to coast when he observed of his niece's "plurally made" sense-of-self, "She said she used to be a punker, and now she's a new romantic and she dresses like something out of 'Gone With the Wind.' Pick and choose your lifestyle to suit your current mood and fashion." This is something new—a "Chinese menu approach for their lifestyles,"[6] as Avila goes on to say of Generation Y.

"Lifestyles"[7] remains a contentious term for old-school lexicologists, who object that it "elevate[s] habits of consumption, dress, and recreation to a primary basis of social classification."[8] No matter. Transcending (but not necessarily eschewing) questions of social interactions, and in a wink of twenty-first century noetic time, the famous Sartrean existential dictum, *man is what he wills*, threatens to morph into its postmodern shadow-self: *man is not what he wills*.

Everybody knows that today's denizens of a 500-channel society are addicted to, as David Brooks puts it,

> . . . a numbing and seemingly endless progression from one option to the next, all without the benefit of a chart, logistical or moral, because there are simply too many choices and no one to help sort them out. We have nothing to insulate ourselves against the perpetual temptation to try one more choice, rather than to live with what is on the screen in front of us.[9]

Living in the midst of a trivial infinitude of TV channels, shampoo and soda brands, running-shoe models, fast-food items and t-shirt designs is one thing. But the stakes we face in twenty-first century American culture are more serious than this. Brooks, a commentator on National Public Radio, makes the commonsensical observation that

> . . . [a] person who limits himself or herself to one community or one spouse is going to have deeper bonds to that community or that spouse than the person who experiments throughout life. A person who surrenders to a single faith is going to have a deeper commitment to that one faith than the person who zigzags through in a state of curious agnosticism.[10]

Until the societal upheavals of the sixties, and in spite of walls erected between persons by the ethos of cool, an older, more deeply rooted societal ethos of one-on-one personal commitment still hung on. What's changed in the intervening years isn't so much the rules of the game of youthful socialization as the game itself. For young people born in the seventies and eighties, bonding within groups seems to be at least as important, perhaps more so, as bonding between persons.

The name of today's game, in other words, isn't so much *being there* (individually) as it is *being there for each other* (collectively).

II

Not long ago one of my non-traditional (re-entry) university students shared a disturbing personal anecdote with me. Her ten-year-old daughter had come home from school in tears one afternoon. When asked what the problem was, she said, "Mom, you and Dad have to get a divorce." Pressed to explain, the girl revealed that she was being mercilessly taunted in school because she happened to be the only student (boy or girl) in her class with two parents living at home. This so aroused the scorn (and, of course, the envy) of her classmates that the only solution, she felt, was for her parents to go the way of the parents of her peers. Damaged by divorce as all children are, these kids were clearly doing the very human thing of attempting to pass the hurt on to someone else—in this case, to my student's distraught daughter.

Admittedly, this is an extreme case. More commonly, as social psychologists routinely point out, what happens is that children of divorce learn to cope on coming of age by avoiding deep commitments—sometimes by not marrying at all. Indeed, over the years, but particularly during the past ten years or so, I've had a number of female students tell me that they wanted to have children "as long as I don't have to get married."

In recent decades, signs and portents of a postmodern youthful ethos of chill may be found in the etymological "de-evolution" of the meaning(s) of words expressing states of extreme emotion. In today's vulgate, for instance, passion connotes raw, one-dimensional sex, not the multi-dimensional states of feeling of yesteryear. According to Peter N. Stearns, even during my parents' generation:[11]

> Dictionary definitions of 'emotion' . . . [were becoming] increasingly bland. Noah Webster had spiced his definition with terms like 'vivid' and 'passionate,' but by the 1950s his heirs were equating emotions with the blander word 'feelings' and were noting that varying strengths of feeling might be involved in emotion.[12]

Platonic friendships among postmodern kids of the same *and* opposite sex are far more plentiful than they were in the Baby Boomer era, when the antediluvian ethos of "falling in love," with all its romantic agonies and ecstasies, was still the ultimate. To achieve this goal, and according to the psychology of passion a la the medieval *Romance of Tristan and Iseult* and its literary progeny, what Boomers "needed" was the *presence* of parents to throw roadblocks in front of their romances and therefore give them deeper and more delicious meanings. But

in an era where the *absence* of either a mom or dad or both[13] is very nearly the rule rather than the exception, kids are obliged oftentimes to parent each other by substituting friendly support and kindness (so conspicuously missing in many of their lives) for the deeper and more dangerous personal commitments of romantic love.

A few months ago I invited four of my best students out to lunch to celebrate the end of the school year. All were females; all had taken multiple courses from me here at California State University, Bakersfield. They were quite attractive in varying degrees: two were pretty, one very pretty, the fourth stunningly beautiful. All four were "between boyfriends" and—what interested me—seemed in no hurry to find new ones.

Momentarily bereft of significant male others, these girls were spending their leisure time doing with each other—not sexually but socially—exactly what they'd been doing with their boyfriends. They went to bars and played pool; they crashed parties; they "chilled" at one another's houses and apartments, drinking beer and margaritas, smoking pot, and watching videos, even playing Monopoly, originally a Baby Boomer game. They were, in short, group "dating" each other, without the passion (and the pressures) of heterosexual romance. As we ate, I noticed how one girl casually rested her elbow on another's knee—a simple and touching gesture of friendship, not eroticism (these same girls walked arm in arm out of the restaurant when we left). All four were children of divorce.

A few days ago we went out to lunch again. In the intervening year, these and other students (both girls and boys, but mostly girls) had visited my office on numerous occasions to talk about literature and, as kids so often do these days, freely discuss personal problems with their professor—something I wouldn't have dreamed of doing forty years ago as an undergrad. I wasn't always comfortable with these confidences, but I was willing to listen and, when asked, give advice.

Three members of my cadre had since gone back to former boyfriends, two of them on "a friendly basis," which apparently included sex, since there were once again living together. A week earlier the edgiest, most up-front (and troubled) girl had confided in me, "My boyfriend and I just enrolled in the FWHS Club." When I naively asked what FWHS stood for, she replied, "Friends Who—" and broke off, blushing. "Gotcha," I said.

That all these pairs of kids had once cared for each other romantically hardly seemed to matter. (One told me that she and her boyfriend had simply *agreed* not to "get romantic" again). They were still a group, and what impressed me now, listening to them talk back and forth, was that things hadn't really changed all that much since the last time we chatted over salad and sandwiches. Old boyfriends in tow, they still played pool, drank beer, smoked pot, and crashed parties, as if both boys and girls were interchangeable parts in a smoothly-running human "machine for living."[14] Then it struck me: Today's youth feel the need to

give equal value to everything in their lives. It's not that they don't care; neither are they particularly immoral or amoral. They simply don't have the wherewithal—or the inclination—to prioritize their feelings. Caught on the horns of the cruelest of dilemmas, *they're suspicious and afraid of the very emotions they desperately crave.*

Consider, too, the hideous "music" that kids born in the seventies and eighties grew up with—rap, heavy metal, speed metal, death metal, grunge. When cultural critics point to the amorality and/or obscenity of contemporary song lyrics, they miss the point that words are redundant to the real "meaning(s)" of postmodern popular music. What really matters is in the mind- and body-numbing sound, which, like the drugs millions of kids take while listening to their favorite groups, is meant to anesthetize emotions, not enrich or enlarge them. For the most part, today's mass-marketed music converts young people into passive serveomechanisms: extensions of high-tech aural engineering without which the vast majority of rock groups would vanish overnight.

Over the most recent lunch with my cadre, I asked them if young people still slow danced on social occasions, as my generation did. They looked at each other, then at me, with puzzled expressions. "I don't know how to slow dance," the beautiful one said. "Neither do I," two others said in unison. The fourth merely shrugged disinterestedly and took a bite of Cobb salad.

I was flabbergasted and saddened: *How hard can it be to learn how to slow dance?* Then I realized the real question wasn't *how* but *why*. During the early sixties, social psychologists had begun to take note of a significant sea change in the way young people fast danced. As the bop and the lindy gave way to the twist, the mashed potatoes, the funky chicken, the pony, the swim and other dances, kids stopped touching each other. By the early seventies, dance-genres themselves had disappeared: everybody simply did his or her own thing. But this was only the beginning of the transformation of dancing into an anarchic anti-genre in American youth culture, particularly in urban areas, where lifestyles of the young are traditionally more freewheeling and liberal, of course, than those of their rural counterparts.

No longer a (relatively) innocent parable, dancing has now become an obscene parody of sexual relations. By any (vestigial) standard of civilized behavior, what often goes on during the teenage parties and dances of today is shocking: butt-waving, crotch-grabbing, and the kind of pelvis-thrusting—not sideways but frontways—that would've put the early Elvis Presley to shame. In some cases, dancing *is* sex, as I learned the other day online. On a tip from one of my students, I pulled up a video of an eighth-grade dance in the East where a male student buried his hand in the pants of his partner as they gyrated up and down the dance floor. As I witnessed this gross tableau, I couldn't help thinking that these kids were *ridiculing* raw sexuality, perhaps because to them it represents, along with drugs and televisual technologies, a blind alley in their

search, not so much for meaning (a concept associated with the ethos of cool), but feeling.

No doubt innumerable American teens and twentysomethings of *all* racial, ethnic, and economic persuasions will object, and rightfully so, that their lifestyles, values, and aspirations bear little or no resemblance to what I've delineated so far. Equally legitimately, it will be objected that bitter complaints against rebellious, disrespectful youth have been registered since ancient times (*vide* Socrates's grumblings about the younger generation of the late fifth century, B.C.).

The problem—i.e., the *postmodern* problem—is that "rebellious" and "disrespectful" are the wrong words to describe tens of millions of twenty-first century American kids. What's most apparent about their social behavior (including dancing) is that so many appear to have little or no feeling for custom and ceremony, much less decorum. It's impossible to disrespect or rebel against something that you're incognizant of.

The teenage parties of my generation were usually structured in a triadic manner. First came casual conversation (it was *never* cool to hurry things, particularly if you were male). This icebreaking ritual lasted an hour or so, when everyone's "cool" was allowed to melt a little. Second came fast dancing (and first touching), as the party gradually moved into full swing. Finally, around ten o'clock Johnny Mathis records were put on, lights were dimmed, slow dancing commenced, and things were allowed to become romantic to a lesser or greater degree.

In contrast, the essence of chilling is anti-ritualistic. The ubiquitous contemporary phrase "hanging out" is quite illuminating, insofar as it indicates looseness: a lack of form, purpose, and direction in the social activities of young people. Everything happens at once in today's parties: there's no beginning, middle, or end. Kids show up, wander off, return, only to wander off again. Some drink, some dance, some smoke marijuana, some disappear into bedrooms or disappear altogether. . . .

In the past few months, three members of my cadre celebrated birthdays. "Celebrated" is really the wrong word, however, since all three, independently of each other, voiced real displeasure at being a year older. They seemed a bit resigned—which made perfect sense to me. For many Generation Yers, particularly children of divorce, the future threatens to become a broken mirror of their parents' past. It's as if parents have already used up their children's futures, transforming the coming years into hand-me-downs no one seems especially eager to wear.

And so these kids are sad: sadness being, perhaps, the only form of affect in their lives that has yet to wane.

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Notes

1. Todd Gitlin, "Postmodernism Defined, At Last!," *The Utne Reader* (July/August 1989), p. 56.
2. Sartre writes:

> Take, for example, the waiter in the café. His movement is quick and studied, a little too precise, a little too rapid. He comes toward the patrons with a step a little too quick. He bends forward a little too eagerly; his voice, his eyes express an interest a little too solicitous for the order of the customer. Finally there he returns, trying to imitate in his walk the inflexible stiffness of some kind of automaton while carrying his tray with the recklessness of a tightrope walker by putting it in a perpetually unstable, perpetually broken equilibrium which he perpetually re-establishes by a light movement of the arm and hand. (*The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. Robert Denoon Cumming [New York: Vintage Books, 1965], pp. 151-152.).

3. Sidney M. Jourard, *The Transparent Self*, revised edition (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1971), p. 133.
4. Frederic Jameson, "Excerpts from *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*," in *A Postmodern Reader*, ed. Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 319.
5. Ihab Hassan, "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Spring 1986), p. 505.
6. Qtd. in Irene Lacher, "The Era of Fragments," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1994, E1.
7. The word "lifestyle" was coined by the psychologist Alfred Adler.
8. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), p. 1040.
9. Qtd. in David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), pp. 245-246.
10. Brooks, p. 246.
11. Both were born in 1912.
12. Peter N. Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth Century Emotional Style* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), p. 302.
13. According to the 2000 census, 2.4 million American grandparents were full-time caretakers of their grandchildren.
14. When I asked them what their favorite TV show was, not surprisingly all four replied, "Friends."

Pastoral Dreams in Innisfree, Ireland, U.S.A.: a Re-examination of John Ford's *The Quiet Man*

In 1952 John Ford finally made *The Quiet Man*, which he had wanted to make since the early 30s, at which the time the short story by Maurice Walsh, upon which it is based, first appeared ("The Quiet Man," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 11, 1933). Since its release, it has been his most widely loved film. There are surely many reasons for this, but perhaps the most obvious is that it was a very personal film for Ford, and, accordingly, he spent much more time and energy on it than he did on projects he made quickly and primarily for profit (i.e., *Rio Grande* 1950). In *The Quiet Man* his care and attention to detail come through on the screen. The performances from all concerned are exemplary, but especially impressive are Maureen O'Hara, Barry Fitzgerald, Victor McLaglen, and John Wayne, who, in the unenviable position of playing straight man to a cast of quirky characters, gives what many (myself included) feel is the performance of his career.

However, the public's love for the film has not always been shared by film critics. In fact, with the exception of reviews at the time of its release and brief discussions in larger general studies of Ford's work, very little has been written about *The Quiet Man*. What has been included in larger works is scant; the film is often mentioned in passing, as if it is little more than a bridge to fill the gap between heavy analysis of the Cavalry Trilogy (*Fort Apache* [1948], *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* [1949], and *Rio Grande*) and *The Searchers* (1956). It's not that the film isn't liked by scholars—I think the opposite is true—it's just that it doesn't appear to fit into the narrative focus of the larger theories concerning Ford's work. As a result, the film is often dismissed as merely representing Ford's overly sentimental nostalgia for Ireland, a land of story and myth. But the film is much more than it appears and its drawing on an imagined pastoral past in which life was kinder, simpler, and gentler makes it powerfully appealing and resonant for even the most jaded contemporary audiences, who are drawn to the film despite (or maybe because of) their knowledge that Ford's romantic and sentimental vision of the past surely never existed as depicted and can certainly never be rekindled in our present world.

Admittedly, on the surface *The Quiet Man* appears to lack the complexity of Ford's more critically renowned works. Nevertheless, *The Quiet Man* is in many ways typical of Ford's work from his major period, which began with the release of *Stagecoach* in 1939 and ended with *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* in 1962. It contains several of the characteristic elements of his work during this time (religion, bars, fights, etc.) and shares thematic concerns as well. What makes *The Quiet Man* unique, however, is Ford's reversing his

sociocultural point of view from much of his previous (and later) work; it's a rare film in his canon in which the protagonist happily ends up exactly where he wants with very little compromise, including no acceptance whatsoever of urban industrialism. Remarkably, considering the film takes place in Ireland and not the American West, close examination reveals that the cultural conflict between urbanism and agrarianism is just as present here as it is elsewhere in Ford's work. Just as in other films of his major period there is a clear winner in the battle between urban and rural; in *The Quiet Man*, however, the winner is the rural agrarianism of our most sentimentally pastoral dreams. Although it takes place in Ireland, *The Quiet Man* is nevertheless an American fantasy, with Ireland serving as the mythical frontier land beyond city limits that Americans, even today, desperately want to believe still exists. We should pay much more attention than we've been willing to pay to this remarkable film.

Tellingly, the film begins with a train cutting across the amazingly beautiful Irish countryside (Ford was accused of having painted the fields, but if he did, he never admitted it [Gallagher 283]). The train recalls the stagecoach at the beginning of several Ford films, including *Stagecoach* and *Fort Apache*. Regardless of the similarities, that it is a train and not a stagecoach changes things. In Ford's other works, the stagecoach is a sign of an encroaching era, a precursor of quickly approaching industrialism. But a train, especially in *The Quiet Man's* idealized rural landscape, signals that the industrial age has already arrived. By starting with a train Ford has placed us in a time, though not necessarily a place, in which we can assume the idea of a further frontier has been long since dead.

This opening scene features a literal manifestation of what Leo Marx calls "the machine in the garden," which he illustrates by citing a July 27, 1844, Nathaniel Hawthorne journal entry, in which Hawthorne records his thoughts during a morning reverie. In it, Hawthorne joyously, and seemingly without irony, recounts the sound of a train barreling through the idyllic rural landscape. This scene served as a precursor to the eventually common literary trope of a machine's sudden appearance in the landscape, famous examples of which include Thoreau's hearing a train whistle along with a hawk's cry in *Walden*, *Moby-Dick's* Ishmael seeing a whale's skeleton morph into a New England textile mill before his very eyes, Whitman's flawless intermingling of seemingly contradictory industrial and rural imagery in "Song of Myself," and the steamboat smashing through the middle of Huck and Jim's raft in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Marx writes that Hawthorne's notes "mark the shaping of a metaphoric design which recurs everywhere" in American literature (15-16). Not only does this metaphoric design occur in American literature, it recurs throughout the films of John Ford.

Although Ford's parents were Irish immigrants, he was nevertheless born in America and, accordingly, spent his cinematic career grappling with his

interpretation of the conflicting urbanism and sentimental pastoralism at the heart of American culture. However, in *The Quiet Man*, industrialism, the traditional "evil" in Ford's work, is barely present, instead remaining as a specter in the background, haunting Sean Thornton's (John Wayne's) memory and driving his search for rural peace in Ireland. The film's setting is in many ways "Ireland" in name only, as it's a place so fantastically free of difficulty and complexity that it could exist only in the dreamland of the silver screen. As a result, the train, rather than interrupting Thornton's pastoral idyll, instead functions as delivery device, his last contact with the industrial world he is fleeing. As such, the train doesn't even go all the way to Innisfree; revealingly, it stops five miles from town and returns the way it came. In *The Quiet Man* the machine is unable to fracture the pastoral garden of the Irish countryside.

It has been argued, erroneously in my opinion, that Ford's films are often guilty of what Marx calls sentimental pastoralism, in that the hero is seemingly able to reconcile himself with his surroundings and live the kind of idealized life romanticized by Emerson and Thoreau—a life somewhere in between, in which the Fordian hero establishes a transcendent relationship with the opposing forces of pastoralism and civilization. Never has this interpretation been more inaccurate than in the case of *The Quiet Man*. *The Quiet Man* does indeed intentionally illuminate the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture, but not in a reconciliatory way; peace and harmony occur in the green fields because there are no planes, trains, or automobiles present to cut their way through the fertile landscape. In *The Quiet Man,* Ford's Ireland is a fantasyland, untouched by the horrors of industrialism, and therefore the ideal place for Sean to retreat from the pain and hardship of his life in that most complex of technological civilizations, the American East.

After arriving at the train station, Thornton meets up with Michaeleen Og Flynn (Barry Fitzgerald), who volunteers to take him to Innisfree, which he does, significantly, in a horse drawn buggy. It's as if Sean is going back in time and away from technology. As the buggy goes through the countryside, the viewers are treated to as visually sumptuous a series of Technicolor shots as have ever been filmed. The fertile countryside seemingly drips fecundity. The landscape is characterized by innumerable shades of green, a stark contrast to Ford's famous shots of Monument Valley, but representing much the same thing: a place in which refuge from the pressures of modern civilization is readily available. We hear a voice-over of Sean's long dead mother describing Innisfree and the family's ancestral home, "White O' Morn." Sean has come home, returning to his rural roots, which have become a kind of Mecca for him. He goes to the Widow Tillane (Mildred Natwick) in order to buy White O' Morn, which she now owns. When asked why he wants the property, he says, "Because to me, Innisfree means heaven." Having never been to an industrial city, the widow doesn't agree, but as Tag Gallagher writes, "to Sean (and to us, after World War

II), this land of simplicity and community, where horses and bicycles are the means of transport and life is close to the soil, seems Shangri-La" (279).

We soon find out that after Sean's father died his mother took him to America in search of a better life. Although it's never confirmed (although it's suggested that Sean's earlier boxing career took place in the 1920s), the film appears to take place in the 1930s. This is probably accurate for two reasons: 1) The original short story upon which it is loosely based was first published in 1932; and 2) setting it in the 1930s would mean that Sean's mother's departure for America would have coincided with the great Irish emigration of the late 19th and early 20th century. Although it's not specifically said, we can infer that Sean's mother was frustrated with the seeming lack of opportunity provided by traditional Irish farm life. For several generations of European immigrants (as it is today for many Latin, Asian, and African immigrants), America was the crown jewel in the eyes of the world's opportunity seekers. The industrial age's amazing technological advancements made America seem as though wealth was available for the taking, if people could just get there. Even after Sean's return, it's assumed that he made his fortune in America; as Will Danaher (Victor McLaglen) mistakenly says, "Sure he's a millionaire, like all the Yanks." However, the truth is that although jobs were certainly available for European immigrants, they didn't afford the kind of financial opportunity they thought would come with work in America's burgeoning industries.

Machines changed working conditions dramatically, but great numbers of human beings were still needed to work in unison with the machinery to ensure adequate production. As such, immigrants did America's dirty work, working long hours for little pay, no benefits, and horrible living conditions. While some immigrants did literally go from rags to riches, far more came to America only to live under a kind of industrial slavery in which their labors were poorly rewarded and they had little chance of getting ahead in the long run. We find that Sean's life in America was that of a classic early twentieth century European immigrant. He spent much of his youth and adult life, prior to his career as a boxer, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, "Steel City, USA," a quintessential industrial Eastern city, "living in a shack near the slag heaps," working with "steel . . . in pig iron furnaces so hot a man forgets his fear of hell, and when you're hard enough, tough enough, other things." Although his experiences made him tough, they didn't make him wealthy; more importantly, they didn't make him happy. Sean's lust for the pastoral is fueled by the dehumanizing alienation caused by living in an utterly indifferent technologically advanced industrial society. We can view *The Quiet Man* as essentially picking up where *Stagecoach* left off; like the Ringo Kid (also played by Wayne), Sean Thornton's only choice is to retreat into a fantasyland beyond the harsh realities of life within America's borders.

Despite Sean's retreating to the romanticized Ireland of his youth, the place isn't at all a realistic depiction of Ireland, which, despite being an

essentially agrarian country, has historically had just as many problems (e.g., the potato famine), if not more (inadequate health care, disease, high alcoholism, etc.), as the most industrialized of "civilized" countries. But *The Quiet Man's* version of Ireland is an idyllic fantasyland representative of Ford's cinematic vision of an America that may never have existed but that Ford, and American audiences then and now, sorely desired. The California of the Joads' dearest fantasies exists in this Ireland; it's the land where Wyatt Earp can raise his cattle without interference from encroaching industrialism, where no cavalry is needed because there are no threats, either from Indians or urban social forces, where towns like Shinbone would never have needed the legend of the man who shot Liberty Valance because neither stereotype, Ranse "the good Easterner," nor Liberty "the bad Westerner," would have come to town. Here, Tom Doniphon and Hallie, "the good Westerners," would have lived happily ever after, untouched by real world realities. Ford's Innisfree is literally a utopian lake isle, remaining forever a pastoral fantasy land, untouched by industrialism and permanently outside the realm of American (or any country's) history.

It is entirely intentional that Sean Thornton sees his future bride for the first time while riding into town with Michaeleen. As mentioned earlier, the beauty of the landscape, which Lindsay Anderson perfectly describes as "presented with a pre-Raphaelite relish for sharp and varied colouring, as well as a kindred romanticism of view," is unsurpassed in Ford's cinema. And into this dreamscape comes Mary Kate Danaher (Maureen O'Hara), "a fairy-tale shepherd girl, auburn hair, scarlet skirted, dressed in two shades of blue, driving her sheep down the rocky dell, yellow gorse in the foreground, the countryside opening out greener in the distance . . . " (25). For Sean, and ultimately for the viewer, Mary Kate is the physical manifestation of why he came to Ireland in the first place; he came for the beauty of the land and the hope of the better, simpler life it offers, and Mary Kate, shepherding the Danaher flock in the countryside, is representative of both.

Before the plot gets into high gear, Ford gives us a whirlwind tour of Innisfree. From the train station, Ford moves "to countryside to town to church to pub, meeting trainmen, coachmen, priests, aristocrats, squires, the IRA, drinkers, field hands, [and] Anglican clergy" (Gallagher 279). Innisfree, with its strong community and rigid adherence to what we recognize as traditionally small-town values, contains all the best of what Ford romanticizes in his other works, and none of the bad. Although the characters are stereotypes, they are stereotypes of an acceptable kind; there is no threat from any outside sources with the exception of Sean, who will ultimately prove that he was literally born to belong in the community. Innisfree is a town eternally untainted by the hazards of industrialization, which results in its being appealing to even jaded contemporary audiences.

It's during Sean's first trip to the local pub that he reveals to the town folks that he is the long absent grandson of Old Sean Thornton. He's welcomed as one of them by all save Red Will Danaher (Victor McLaglen), who is infuriated that the Widow Danaher sold White 'O Mourn, which borders his property, to Sean and not him, even though it's Sean's ancestral home and he has more right to it. Therein lies our conflict. Danaher, Mary Kate's older brother, will in his anger over the property sale refuse to allow Sean to marry his sister.

The conflict between the Danahers and Sean superficially appears to be a simple variation on the tripartite relationships present in many of Ford's movies, including Wyatt, Doc Holiday, and Clementine in *My Darling Clementine* (1946), Owen Thursday, Philadelphia, and Michael O'Rourke in *Fort Apache*, and Tom Doniphon, Hallie, and Ranse Stoddard in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, to name just a few. As Leonard Frey notes, the triangulated relationship is, at its most basic level, in keeping with the classical regeneration theme, in which the old god and young god vie for "possession of the goddess, whether of futility or vital essence or simple beauty" (71). But within the contexts of *The Quiet Man* the triangle takes a dramatically different path. Stereotypically, the goddess ultimately passes from the senior figure to the younger one, representing the cycles of the season, regeneration through rebirth. But the "old god," whether he is Owen Thursday, Doc Holiday, or Tom Doniphon, must die, symbolically if not literally. In order for there to be rebirth there must first be death. But such is not at all the case in *The Quiet Man*; in a reversal of mythical patterns, Ford lets the old god, Danaher, live in peace with the young god, Sean Thornton, and his goddess, Mary Kate. The mythic narrative being played out in *The Quiet Man* is that of the prodigal son. Sean has left his homeland and will not be accepted back into the community until he wins a ritual battle against a male elder, the reward for which is a marriage match within the family. There is no regeneration because there is no death, although there is a hell of a fight. The ultimate extension of Ford's idyllic vision of a pastoral life is realized in Innisfree, a magic land in which everything is eternally in bloom.

Once the film's set-up has been established, the resolution is seemingly inevitable, but it's Mary Kate Danaher, a stereotypically (in Ford's movies) domestic woman who is, nevertheless, not without certain complications. In fact, she's Ford's most well developed and interesting female character. When Sean first arrives at White O' Morn, his newly purchased home (complete with thatched roof), he notices smoke coming from the chimney; someone uninvited has been in his home. Upon entry, he notices an inviting fire in the hearth and a neatly ordered pile of leaves and such; someone has been sweeping and tidying in his house. He catches Mary Kate behind his bedroom door; as she tries to run out he grabs her and almost gracefully twirls her towards him, embracing her in his arms and planting a big, long kiss on her lips. In stereotypical cinematic fashion, we see Mary Kate's hands at first opening up rigidly, but then slowly coming to

rest on Sean's back as she feels his passion and returns his kiss. Due to the fabulous photography, the sexual tension initiated by previously exchanged looks, and the great effect of having the wind blowing open and shut the shutters and doors in the cottage, it's a marvelously romantic scene, one of the most famous in cinema history. However, it's purely a masculine fantasy; in countless films the man merely has to kiss the woman, invited or not, for the woman to succumb to his undeniable charms, which is exactly what happens in *The Quiet Man*. But it is after their marriage that the real difficulties set in. There is in *The Quiet Man* the problem of Mary Kate's dowry, which Will denies her because he thinks he has been tricked (he was, and by a priest no less) into allowing Mary Kate to marry Sean.

Mary Kate was said to come with her belongings and a dowry of 350 pounds in gold. Will allows her things to leave, but not her gold. To Sean, who though not a millionaire appears to have acquired some means in America, the money is not an issue. He thinks that Mary Kate's desire for the dowry is merely greed, which he associates with all that he detests about the motivation for industrialism. In an industrial society money is the key to success, and after not achieving it as a steel worker, Sean Thornton turned to his fists and became a successful boxer. But he didn't fight for the love of the sport; he fought, as he says, "for the purse, for dirty money." In his last fight, Sean, fueled by his desire for fortune, fought so savagely that he killed his opponent, at which time he left the ring and returned to Ireland. In adhering to the age-old adage, Sean believes that money is the root of all evil and that his wife's pursuit of the 350 pounds is indicative of corruption. But he is dead wrong.

In his films Ford valued the importance of traditions perhaps more than any other singular thing. The onslaught of urban civilization made the pace of life such that tradition, and the social continuity it provided, was lost. Unbeknownst to him, Sean has fallen prey to the pace of life dictated by an industrial society. He resents the courting rituals the Irish value so highly as they are just too slow for an American. He laments that he can't just pull up in a car outside of Mary Kate's house and honk for her to come running. Through deception he is able to avoid most of the courtship rituals, but Mary Kate won't let the dowry go. It's the principle of the thing. Of course no one can put a value on a life, but the dowry symbolically does just that, making Mary Kate's hand in marriage worth something. Sean says the money doesn't matter, but it does to Kate, although not the amount. Without a dowry Kate is symbolically worthless, and, by extension, that her husband doesn't care means that Sean too thinks she is worthless. Accordingly, Mary Kate refuses to engage in sexual relations with Sean, as without her dowry she doesn't think she's really married. As he's planting roses, Mary Kate asks why he isn't planting food. "No potatoes?" she asks, to which Sean coolly replies, "No children."

For a time it appears as though Innisfree's endless productive cycle is in danger, as Sean remains thickheaded throughout the body of the movie. Of course he finally comes to his senses and realizes that he must publicly show his love for Mary Kate and try to get the dowry from Will Danaher. He must first retrieve Mary Kate from the train station; believing he thinks her worthless, she has left him for parts unknown. Upon arriving at the station, Sean, who has for the most part been a model of decorum throughout the movie, forcibly pulls Mary Kate out of the train car and then literally drags, kicks, and pushes her five miles across the countryside to her brother's farm with half the county in tow, cheering him on. For contemporary viewers, familiar as we are with the damage caused by abusive relationships, it's somewhat unnerving to watch Mary Kate take this abuse, but even more so when we see her smiling all the while. As uncomfortable as it makes us, it nevertheless fits within the context of the film: Sean has publicly shown that he wants her love and that he'll fight for it; she is indeed worth something.

Upon arriving at the Danaher farm, Sean throws Mary Kate at Will, essentially giving her back, saying, "no dowry, no marriage." Faced with these terms, Danaher has no choice but to give Sean the money, which he does. Mary Kate and Sean promptly walk over to a burning furnace, which recalls Sean's time spent in the Pittsburgh steel mills. Mary Kate opens the door and Sean throws the money in. Mary Kate shuts the door on the money and, symbolically, on Sean's remaining connections to American industrialism. He has been cleansed, and, as such, he can now join in full the agrarian community of Innisfree. Mary Kate turns her head and walks away, shoulders out and head held high in pride, saying that dinner will be waiting for him when he gets home, whenever that may be. Sean now willingly fights Will Danaher, only now it's okay, because he's fighting for his place in the heart of a pastoral paradise instead of for profit in an industrial society.

The Quiet Man can be attacked as being essentially little more than a macho fantasy in which the little woman remains a domestic goddess, forever at home, cleaning, cooking, and willing to satisfy her man in whatever way he desires. However, when seen as an essential part of Ford's evolving sociocultural cinematic vision, it becomes a critically important film. Gallagher says that "Sean Thornton is a typical Ford hero trying to moderate intolerance," but I think not (283). Sean Thornton is fighting the stain on his character caused by his time spent in the industrial city of Pittsburgh. Through a healthy dose of typical small-town traditions and values, Sean is able to cleanse himself of the remnants of the damage caused from his time spent in a complex industrial civilization. He doesn't mediate because there are no opposites needing to be reconciled, nor is there any intolerance to moderate; all is pastoral bliss. He was born a pastoral hero, and he only needed to return to his roots to rediscover himself.

The Quiet Man is the most unabashedly joyous film John Ford ever made; as such, it's aptly reflective of the heightened post-war optimism characterizing his films in the late 40s and early 50s. Though set in Ireland, the film is a vision of an idealized pastoral existence, an existence longed for by other Fordian heroes, but never to be achieved within the historical realities of America's geographic borders. But in Innisfree, John Ford created his ultimate pastoral paean to the possibilities of an agrarian life, if only things could have remained as Jefferson envisioned, a yeoman society devoted to a life on the land. The film remains Ford's most popular because it speaks to the possibilities of an agrarian America still dreamed about in an era in which it's all too clear that even if such a place could exist, there's no chance in hell of its ever being realized. We know we can't go back to our imagined simpler past, but there's comfort to be had in our fooling ourselves that said past really did happen in accordance to our sentimental fantasies. When last we see Sean Thornton and Mary Kate Danaher, Sean is working in the garden when Mary Kate leans over and whispers in his ear. They jump up and begin running towards their home, giggling like innocents, no doubt heading for their bedroom, in which they'll produce the heirs to the throne, a new generation in Innisfree's eternal line of yeoman gods. For once, in a Ford film, his pastoral vision is comically realized.

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Dan De Quille and the Scientific Hoax as a Technology of Resistance

Dan De Quille (William Wright) was a Nevada journalist and one of the first technical writers in the postbellum West. He maintained a solid reputation among his contemporaries for trustworthy mining reports and regional histories—no small feat considering that he was also America's most successful scientific hoaxer (Drury 213-4). More than merely pranks or ethical aberrations, De Quille's hoaxes help illuminate current questions about the popularization of science and technology in the postbellum West and how it helped to build a tense relationship between Westerners and the Eastern governmental/industrial complex.

De Quille and his colleague on the Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise*, Mark Twain, both wrestled with science and politics in their writings. On the one hand, they evinced excitement at the increasing order and control that science and technology were helping pioneers to extend over the Wild West; on the other hand, they were both nervous about the ends toward which the federal government and Eastern industry were appropriating Western resources and industrial technologies. Twain dedicated *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to demonstrating the catastrophe of trying to force technological progress on unindustrialized cultures. De Quille used his late-life novella *Dives and Lazarus* to dramatize the sufferings of silver miners at the hands of a federal government that persisted in enforcing the gold standard. Science and society were inextricably connected in their social journalism and fiction.

De Quille's activism on these issues has recently drawn scholarly attention. In his survey of Western innovation in industrial practices, Dave Igler points out that De Quille publicized the fact that the mines were destroying acres of precious old-growth forest (12). Igler goes on to argue that these easily exploited natural resources in the West, coupled with the business acumen of San Francisco entrepreneurs, created a second industrial revolution in America; this assessment revises previous assumptions that the West was always a passive victim for predatory Eastern business and governmental programs. De Quille's hoaxes are further evidence for Igler's thesis that the West was actively mounting projects of resistance against and transformation of traditional Eastern commercial practices. The hoaxes were ingenious rhetorical technologies that threw a monkey wrench in the attempts of Eastern businessmen and government scientists to own the West. Not only that, but the hoaxes also exploited the East as a market on which the West was sold as an untamable and limitlessly rich wilderness.

Treating De Quille's hoaxes as serious business also helps raise the profile of this prolific early Western author. Although reports from contemporaries indicated that De Quille's literary star was projected to dwarf Twain's (Dwyer 3-4), the intervening 100+ years have reversed that prophecy. Richard Dwyer and Richard Lingenfelter have attempted to remedy the inequity by producing an extensive biography of De Quille (1990), which amplifies Lawrence Berkove's excellent preface to his 1988 edition of De Quille's novella, *Dives and Lazarus.* In both of these portraits, De Quille appears as a cluster of contradictions: a devoted and supportive father and husband who nonetheless left his family for nearly forty years to prospect and to write in the West; a reputedly genial and non-confrontational friend who was also known to pick fights in bars for practically no reason; a dedicated journalist, by all contemporary reports the workhorse of the *Territorial Enterprise*, who was fired at least twice from that paper for being too drunk to work for weeks at a stretch; and, a tolerant and well-read socio-political theorist who turned out shockingly virile anti-Semitic and anti-Chinese statements in his later life. De Quille's hoaxes provide another conundrum, introducing us to a media prankster who was also one of the most respected authorities on all things Western. Berkove solves this dilemma by suggesting that De Quille's hoaxes had "no ulterior purpose beyond entertainment" (20), thus readers were easily able to separate his hoaxes from his serious journalism. However, it was not always that easy for readers to make the distinction, as attested by the survival of many credulous responses to De Quille's hoaxes. After all, hoaxes are not parodies or satires. By imposing on readers' good faith, they create alternate realities that readers inhabit until disillusioned. De Quille consciously refined this capacity of hoaxes for creating textual reality into a technology capable of altering the balance of power between government-sponsored scientists and Eastern businessmen on the one hand, and Western prospectors on the other.

In my dissertation *The Rhetoric of the Scientific Media Hoax*, I argued that scientific media hoaxes are effective social technologies for constructing resistance to dominant scientific institutions and ideologies. Framed as stories of "real" scientific discoveries or technological innovations, these news articles are actually ingenious rhetorical machines patterned after contemporarily popular technologies. During the heyday of scientific media hoaxing in the nineteenth century, the hoaxes mimicked energy-transforming machines of the day like the steam engine. Instead of taking in coal and producing steam power, the hoaxes took as their fuel reader's assumptions about ethnoscience—or, pervasive lay attitudes about science. Then, the rhetorical mechanics of the hoax transformed these assumptions into an embarrassed awareness of their instability. More recent media hoaxes like the Sokal affair, in which a physicist hoaxed cultural studies scholars, still mess with readers' assumptions about rhetorical genres and reality, but according to a different paradigm. Sokal's hoax, and other current hoaxes like

fake virus warning emails and UN petitions, are patterned after the technology of the computer virus rather than the steam engine as they use the very information systems they infiltrate to disseminate a very different message than the one intended by the system administrators. But whatever the pattern for the hoax, the embarrassment it produces always comes with an indirect social message. For a scientific media hoax, the indirect message is always some version of the following: "You think science will save us from ourselves, but it's only an illusion." The "reality" that the hoaxer wishes to instill in place of the illusion of popular science in the American imagination varies with the political and social agendas of each hoaxer.

In the nineteenth century the big scientific media hoaxers were Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, and Dan De Quille. Poe wished to embarrass his readers for their patronage of scientists instead of artists. He also wished to substitute for the dominant Baconian model of scientific inquiry his own imaginative model as outlined in *Eureka.* Mark Twain had a slightly different axe to grind in his scientific hoaxing. He wished to sensitize readers to their subscription to the ideal of American progress through industrialization—an ideal which, as graphically illustrated in the "Sand-Belt" chapter of *A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court*—actually resulted in the colonization and destruction of non-Western cultures. Twain's social project in his hoaxing was not entirely humanitarian, however. He also wished to establish himself, instead of the American scientist, as the only true oracle through which readers could divine the social reality of America.

The hoaxing of Dan De Quille evolved even past Twain's on the social continuum. After Twain returned East, De Quille stayed on in the West for almost thirty years and wrote probably a few dozen hoaxes about science and technology. Capitalizing on a relatively unregulated news media, De Quille used the four major and several minor scientific media hoaxes he wrote from 1865 to 1880 to create and defend his ideal West from Eastern commercial appropriation.

De Quille was fascinated by all things scientific, but especially by mining. Most of the newspaper clippings preserved among his papers are on geologic, metallurgic, and mining matters. He also kept up with news about climate and weather, chemistry, physics, astronomy, and "pseudoscientific" news about ESP and other psychic phenomena (ctn. 2).[1] In addition to staying abreast of general scientific developments, De Quille also wrote extensively and seriously on mining for the *Enterprise* and for local mining journals like the *Mining Industry and Tradesman* and the *Engineering and Mining Journal* (Wright *2:* 16). For these publications De Quille wrote not only histories and reports of the mines in the Comstock Lode, but also mining culture articles about "dowsing," or mineral-divining, and the "Tricks of Miners" (ctn.1 fldr. 51). He was taken seriously by mining engineers at all levels. His clippings contain several favorable reviews of a proposal he apparently drafted for an improved method of

constructing canals. His greatest work, *The Big Bonanza*, was published in 1876 to accolades not only in the territories but also on the East Coast, and it is still considered the "bible" of Comstock mining history. De Quille's friend and colleague, editor Wells Drury, attested to De Quille's preoccupation with mining journalism:

> ...his conscience never swerved from the firm conviction that the true calling of a first-class newspaper is to publish items concerning prospects, locations, mines and mills, shafts, tunnels, drifts, ore developments, stopes, assays and bullion outputs. All other matters to him appeared inconsequential and of no material interest. If there was a murder, a sensational society episode or a political contest, any of them were welcome to space after his mining notes were provided for. (211)

In addition to his mining reports, De Quille wrote popular science news in at least three distinct registers: a "high style" that academically reported scientific history and discoveries, a more sensational "wonders of the world" style reserved for pseudoscientific and curious natural phenomena, and finally a humorous style in which down-home pioneers confronted marvelous scientific findings in Nevada with a mixture of "gol-dang" amazement and shrewd appreciation. De Quille's humorous register is easily identifiable even today, as in the following job description for the state mineralogist of Nevada published in the *Enterprise*: "He is to discover earthquakes and provide suitable means for the extermination of the same; also, for book agents, erysipelas, corn doctors, cerebro-spinal meningitis, and the Grecian bend" (ctn. 1, fldr. 8).

The impact of De Quille's many-layered scientific writing on his hoaxing cannot be underestimated. Clearly, if he often wrote humorous pieces, his readers knew him to be just as capable of spinning a yarn as giving them a "true" report of what was going on in the mines. While Mark Twain helped his readers out by writing his humorous pieces under that nom de plume but signing his serious journalism "Sam Clemens," De Quille granted his readers no such boon. C. Grant Loomis writes in his extensive survey of De Quille's modes of journalism, "With no distinction between a true story or a fanciful one, he inserted the real and the false item into his daily public offering" (30). However, according to contemporary reports, this intermittent reinforcement only served to cement De Quille's reputation as a scientific "savant" with his readership. Attested De Quille's friend C.C. Goodwin, " . . . what he wrote, everybody believed implicitly. This or that expert might make a report, and men would say, 'He may have been mistaken.' This or that owner of heavy shares might express

his opinion, and men would say: 'Maybe his interests prejudice him.' But everyone believed Dan" (214).

De Quille's hoaxes imposed significantly on the implicit trust of his readers. These articles had a serious tone closer to his high-register technical writing. The only difference was that their subject matter was a complete fabrication of De Quille's fertile imagination. In a careful assay of De Quille's hoaxes, C. Grant Loomis found four major media hoaxes and twelve other minor squibs having to do with fantastic discoveries in geology, biology, or paleontology, all completely made up, most appearing in the *Territorial Enterprise* between 1867 and 1878. A complete list of these can be found in Loomis's article "The Tall Tales of Dan De Quille." In addition to Loomis's twelve, I have found a copy of one other hoax and mention of three more: these are the "Mountain" or "Highland Alligator" hoax, which drew a letter from the famous fossil collector Edward Drinker Cope; a hoax remembered by C.C. Goodwin having to do with the "excessive" water in the Comstock mines being an offshoot aquifer of Lake Tahoe; a hoax Wells Drury reported about a perpetual-motion windmill; and a hoax about a scientist hatching a live bird from a genetically engineered egg.

While De Quille's first hoax, "The Wonder of the Age: A Silver Man," ran to four columns in the San Francisco *Golden Era* and was copiously packed with evidence, it seems to have fooled no one, judging by the complete lack of reader or editorial response in the local papers over the following weeks. However, his next three major hoaxes received media attention from the East Coast and abroad. His "Solar Armor" hoax described an inventor who froze himself to death in Death Valley with a wet-sponge cooling suit that worked a little too well. It was reprinted in the London *Times* and the London *Daily Telegraph*, and some contemporaries claimed that a London reporter recommended the armor for British troops doing their maneuvers in the heat of India's jungles (Goodwin 216).

De Quille's "Traveling Stones" hoax concerned mysterious rocks that would come to huddle together in a clump when scattered within a few yards' radius. The hoax persisted for almost 30 years as De Quille wrote retractions and then retractions of those retractions, as he presented phony letters from miners and pioneers who claimed to have really found the curious magnetic stones. Finally, the "Eyeless Fish" hoax described blind fish living in the hot water at the bottoms of mines. This hoax is an archetype of De Quille's hoaxing strategies and the targets within the Eastern industrial-governmental complex at which he aimed them, so it is worth taking the time to examine how and why it worked so well.

The "Eyeless Fish" story appeared as "Mystery of the Savage Sump" on 19 February 1876 and began as follows:

> A most singular discovery was yesterday made in the Savage mine. This is the fnding of living fish in the water now flooding both the Savage and Hale and Norcross mines. The of the vertical shaft. The fishes are eyeless, and are only about three fish found were five in number, and were yesterday afternoon hoisted up the incline in the large iron hoisting tank and dumped into the pump tank at the bottom or four inches in length. They are blood red in color. (ctn. 1, fldr. 120)

The rhetorical mechanics deployed throughout the rest of this hoax are typical of De Quille at the height of his hoaxing career. They include moves like the fabrication of eyewitnesses, arguments for the existence of these fish by analogy to real fish living in Kentucky caves, a *refutatio*-type strategy of anticipating reader objections to the story and rebutting them, an "emperor's new clothes" type argument that "anyone who knows anything about science will immediately know that these fish are real," and a clever performance of the codependence of belief and doubt in which De Quille portrays himself as a doubter who was eventually convinced of the existence of the fish by the sheer weight of accumulated evidence.

These rhetorical tricks must have been quite successful, as the hoax ended up being reprinted extensively and attracting high-level scientific attention. De Quille pumped the public enthusiasm for the fish with three and possibly four follow-ups. A New York paper, probably the *Sun*, for which De Quille was a regular Western correspondent, reprinted the story verbatim (ctn. 1, fldr. 120). Reactions to the story by local papers, on the other hand, were split, and the argument quickly derailed into the issue of water in the mines signaling the depletion of the Comstock Lode. The Grass Valley *Union* reprinted the story and reflected, "We regard those fish as evil omen, so to speak. A big cavern full of water will not probably contain much silver ore." The paper went on to warn that those San Francisco merchants who were already refusing to take silver "trade dollars" had better mend their ways before silver production fell off dramatically and silver became more dear than gold (ctn. 2, scrapbk. 2).

The San Francisco *Stock Report*, on the other hand, seemed to catch on to the hoax and therefore did not appreciate the alarmist rhetoric of the Grass Valley *Union*. The *Stock Report* writer worried that the *Union* was not alone in its naïve conclusion-jumping about the "canard" printed by the *Enterprise*:

> That the story was a palpable "yarn" on its very face to all who understand the conditions of the great mines on their lower levels does not in the least prevent its gaining credit among people who do not understand those conditions, and as the obvious inference is that where there are fish, eyeless or

> otherwise, there must be water, the story was calculated to injure the mine. A joke is a joke, but such a joke as this becomes serious in its consequences in proportion as it is successful. (ctn. 2, scrapbk. 2)

Two points about this media reaction are important for our purposes of examining De Quille's hoaxes as a technology of resistance. First, both editorials prove that De Quille's hoaxes were immediately related to current political debates by contemporary readers. The "joke is a joke" comment by the San Francisco *Stock Report* editors reveals a belief that what was printed in the papers imposed on people's good faith and could have serious repercussions nationally. De Quille counted on this very effect of the news media, as we will see shortly. Second, the "trade dollars" issue mentioned in the *Union* reprint is important for framing De Quille's politics. "Trade dollars" were a controversial minting of heavy silver dollars by the U.S. Mint in 1873 in order to shoulder the standard Mexican peso out of currency in the Far East, where America was interested in expanding her market share. According to numismatist Anthony Vigliotta, some of these "trade dollars" trickled back to the States, which they were never meant to do and, coupled with a drop in silver stock prices in 1876, created an unfortunate surplus of silver currency, especially on the West Coast. This glut led to employers abusing their employees by paying them the undervalued trade dollars, which were refused by many merchants, as indicated in the *Union*'s response to the "Eyeless Fish" hoax. Of course, the trade dollar and "free silver" issues in the West are complicated economic and political problems that cannot be done justice in a short space, but De Quille's intervention in them with his hoaxing will form the conclusion of this paper.

De Quille followed up the "Eyeless Fish" hoax with at least three installments, all of which appear to be from the *Enterprise*. The first offered local "eyewitnesses" to the fish and made further arguments for their existence based on analogy to other animals that weathered extremes of temperature. The next two installments continued on this tack. One included the textual authority of a forged "letter" from Maurice May of Franktown, Nevada, claiming that at Washoe Lake lived a little gray version of the red eyeless fish; Mr. May surmised that in the journey through the subterranean water tunnels, the fish must have become blind. He also stated his intentions to sue the Comstock mine owners for stealing distant Washoe Lake's water and fish (ctn. 2, scrapbk. 2). The final installment, continuing in this tongue-in-cheek vein, may not be De Quille's but certainly sounds like it. It takes issue with the Grass Valley *Union*'s jeremiad and reassures readers that the only subterranean sea-life they need fear is the "mining shark." "This is a terrible creature, with a stomach and throat extended enough to swallow a city at a gulp. This fish has grown very fat since the Comstock was discovered, and the only redeeming thing in his character is the fact that he

prefers his own species for food" (ctn. 1, scrapbk. 120). The article turns into a comic allegory about how San Francisco and Eastern mining interests were scamming Nevadans.

De Quille's mature hoaxing tactics in the "Eyeless Fish" earned not only a wide readership for the hoax but also, more importantly, a request from Spencer Baird, curator of the Smithsonian Institution, for a specimen of the fish preserved in alcohol. Thomas Donaldson, Baird's secretary, wrote to De Quille: "If the statement in the slip enclosed be true, a very important discovery has been made." De Quille's scribbled commentary on the back of the envelope to this letter is significant. He wrote: "A Sold Professor—The 'Eyeless Fish' biz."

This was not the only of De Quille's hoaxes to attract Eastern scientific attention. In 1880, De Quille apparently wrote another hoax, still unlocated, called the "Highland Alligator," about a 7-foot-long alligator living in the mountains of Nevada.[2] This hoax prompted an eager response from no less a personage than famed evolutionary paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope. Cope addressed his letter to "Wm. Blackheath," the supposed finder of the alligator, care of the *Territorial Enterprise*. The text of the letter expresses some doubt about the truth of the reports of the alligator, but nonetheless, Cope's eagerness to get his hands on any part of the alligator, even the "dirty and broken" skin, is almost cloying. After all, Cope could not be too picky about which stories he believed if he wanted to prove Darwin's theory of evolution and beat out Othniel Marsh as the premier naturalist of the late nineteenth century. De Quille annotated the envelope to this letter, beneath the address, "A Professor who was sold on the 'Highland Alligator.'"

De Quille's commentary on the duping of these Eastern scientific professors, whose expeditions and collections were funded by the American government, is crucial for understanding the larger project of his scientific hoaxing. He exults that he has "sold" these government representatives the "business" of eyeless fish and mountain alligators. The economic metaphors are not accidental. At the time of De Quille's hoaxing, Nevada's resources were being bought up cheaply by the national government in Washington. This national "yard sale" included the begging, buying, or stealing of Nevada's fossils and minerals by government-paid collectors like Baird and Cope. So, De Quille found a great deal of satisfaction in hoaxing Baird and Cope into "buying" thin air for a change. That "sell" in De Quille's mind leveled the playing field a little for the pioneers against Eastern money and political power. His hoaxes constituted a creative resistance to nationalism and a creative exploitation of the East as a market for the West as a scientific wonderland.

De Quille also used hoaxes as a mechanic of resistance against the American government on another front: the free silver movement. Nevada was made a territory in 1861 by Lincoln so that its burgeoning silver yields would serve the Union and not the Confederacy during the Civil War. The silver

financed a great deal of the rest of that war as well as foreign trade afterward, as noted above with respect to the "trade dollar" debate in the "Eyeless Fish" hoax. However, in spite of the boon the vast silver resources of Nevada had provided the nation, the U.S. stuck to the gold standard after the Civil War, a policy that increasingly hurt Nevada during the series of depressions that wracked the country from the 1870s until World War I. Silver languished at various unpredictable fractions of the price of gold, making paying for debts and basic necessities with silver dollars nearly impossible. Proponents of "free silver" wanted the U.S. Mint to allow the stamping of as many silver dollars as there was free silver in Nevada, at a constant rate of 16 silver dollars to one gold dollar. This would have helped miners and small businessmen in the West recover somewhat from the depression. But the U.S. government refused, and miners believed it was because big businessmen and bankers, who would suffer if the debts they held were easier to pay back, had undue influence with the government (Wright 2: 32-33).

De Quille wrote vehemently in favor of free silver. Lawrence Berkove finds that in his journalism on the subject, De Quille polarized everyone into "the millionaires versus the masses, plutocracy versus democracy, remorseless Shylocks versus the 'race of hardy frontiersmen,' evil versus good" (Wright 2: 33). It was in this phase of his life that De Quille, who had been multi-culturally educated and tolerant in his fiction and non-fiction to this point, suddenly wrote bitterly against Jews and the Chinese, whom he believed were conspiring with the gold-standard supporters against the miners.

This passionate defense of the miner against East Coast political and business interests dovetails with De Quille's hoaxing practices. As mentioned with respect to the "Eyeless Fish" and "Mountain Alligator" hoaxes above, De Quille enjoyed "selling" big East Coast professors on stories that his uneducated miner friends at the saloon would never take seriously for more than a day or two. The professors were outsiders, Nevadans were insiders, and the hoaxes dramatized that divide. The same dynamic held when De Quille first retracted his "Traveling Stones" hoax in 1879. De Quille claimed to have been driven to the retraction by a relentless barrage of demands for the stones from foreign scientists and Eastern showmen and businessmen. Perhaps De Quille's motivation for retracting the hoax was rather the public humiliation of, and thus a symbolic victory over, these prestigious outsiders. He concluded, "If this candid confession shall carry a pang to the heart of any true believer we shall be glad of it, as the true believers have panged it to us, right and left, quite long enough" (Dwyer 22).

De Quille's hoaxing is not an indirect criticism of the role of science in American life, as were Twain's and Poe's. De Quille was a lay scientist and wrote as enthusiastically about the progress of science and technology in the West as anyone. The target of his hoaxes was the East Coast commercial appropriation of what Western miners and pioneers broke their backs for—a problem that he

also worked out in detail in his free silver journalism and in his final work of fiction, *Dives and Lazarus*, an allegory of the pilgrim's progress of a poor prospector beyond a rich gold merchant. De Quille's hoaxes were his private and public vendetta against the powerful Eastern interests victimizing his longtime friends and neighbors.

This portrait of De Quille's hoaxing acts as a corrective to prior assessments of De Quille's hoaxes as lighthearted games (Wright 2: 20). The editors of the *San Francisco Stock Report* cut to the core of the issue when they criticized the "Eyeless Fish" for starting a dangerous rumor about the future of silver in the West: "A joke is a joke, but such a joke as this becomes serious in its consequences in proportion as it is successful" (ctn. 2, scrapbk. 2). A hoax becomes epistemologically and politically serious when many people start believing it. That De Quille was serious about people believing his hoaxes is evident in the copious sequels he wrote to his hoaxes. He persisted in defending some of them for as long as thirty years. He used scientific rhetoric, not only in his hoaxes but also in his mining histories, to build the West that he wanted to live in and that he wanted to project to the East. He playfully exploited the authority he had earned with his readers through legitimate mining reporting to construct for them and for outsiders a West full of wonders. If, in the process, he caught some important Eastern scientists and businessmen in his net, all the better for his project of championing the pioneer as a scrappy folk hero triumphing over the silk-vested Eastern fat cat.

In the end, the legacy of De Quille's hoaxing moves beyond the valiant but losing fight he waged against the East and the gold standard. His hoaxing practices utilize the foundational strategies developed by Poe thirty years prior, adapting them to a popular science rhetoric that demonstrated through its matter-of-fact language the control that American science had extended over nature in the intervening thirty years. In addition, De Quille's hoaxes clearly demonstrate their inheritance of Twain's conception of the hoax as local political activism. But De Quille was an innovator. He developed rhetorical strategies of hoaxing—like forged testimonies and sequels—that specifically exploited the power of print to build reality over time. His legacy to us is the idea of the West as a perpetual frontier where the possible and impossible regularly change places through the translation of scientific rhetoric, as a liminal realm that divulges its mysteries only to those who go there and write about it. With his hoaxes, De Quille—just as significantly as other, more canonical Western writers like Twain and Bret Harte—conditioned his readers to believe that the West was a region of American experience where words, in fact, made the world.

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Notes

1. All De Quille references in this paper, unless otherwise attributed, are from the Dan De Quille Papers at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, call number BANC MSS [P-G 246].
2. The letter is dated 18 September, either 1880 or 1888. A search of the *Territorial Enterprise* for both of those years up to that date revealed no story about a "Mountain Alligator" or "Highland Alligator," but it could very well be that Cope was looking at a paper a year or two older.

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Bombs Away and Smash Hits at Home

Among the many horror films of the early Cold War period depicting the Russian enemy as Martian invader, Hollywood's 1953 cinematic version of *The War of the Worlds*[1] deserves special attention, not only for its complicated figuration of the Russian threat, but also for its remarkable reflection of the tactical and ontological shift in the war- and peace-making endeavors which characterized that era. Perhaps because *War* was a remake born of generic, geographic, and temporal transplantation, the status of H.G. Wells' Victorian scientific romance in 1950s Technicolor Hollywood as "alien" itself served perfectly to complexify the question of just how different the Russian Other really was. I will argue below that this confusion as to the Russian's identity resulted from the equally confusing and frightening transition from old to new definitions of war: tactically, we observe a shift from traditional grenade-and-trench warfare to world-conflagrating atomic capabilities, from a hand-to-hand combat approach to the need to distance oneself so far from the enemy that one is ultimately capable of visiting nuclear Armageddon upon its cities and its children. And yet, ontologically, mid-century warmakers recognized, simultaneous with this distancing, a seizing together of disparate and contesting nations, born in part from globe-constricting advances in technology and from the fashioning of a postwar enemy out of what was once a powerful ally, the forging of new political and economic bonds with the most hated foes of World War II.

Thus war in the pre-bomb era can be described as an insulated, protected state, a condition of living within boundaries that *held*, that enabled us to lob a grenade or mortar shell "over there" without necessarily and immediately incurring like damage and blood loss over here. The closely held race to complete and detonate an atom bomb—yet also the environmentally devastating effects of even one bomb and its overture of above-ground home-based tests—made it clear to those involved in creating, dispatching, or celebrating the bomb's destructiveness that we had entered a new era. Now these boundaries had dissolved; our fate was entangled with an unknowable other's, and to our rapidly expanding arsenals we were forced to add a last-ditch "weapon"—diplomacy, the befriending of an enemy we had successfully distanced enough in previous decades to bomb or consider bombing at enormous cost.

If, in light of the bomb's wide-reaching capabilities, we acknowledge that one's home territory can never again be "immune" from the biological and psychological threats of nuclear war[2], we observe then a situation of *violence* giving way to one of *illness*; a traditional air raid on London or Dresden in the earlier years of the war left the effects of violence behind it: broken glass, dead bodies, blood and gore. While it is true that germ warfare has been used in battle

throughout the 20th century, the poison gases used in World Wars I and II were a contained, limited phenomenon. The bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while beginning in violence, ended in illness, spreading radiation sickness and elevated cancer rates over large and unpredictable distances, inflicting emotional and psychological devastation on a national scale, and fueling a worldwide Cold War paranoia which produced the bitter fruits of McCarthyism and Stalinism and forced a nuclear stockpiling that has hindered East-West international relations ever since.[3]

This shift from violence to illness mirrors a linguistic phenomenon observed as we consider the connection between illness and metaphor.[4] Susan Sontag has argued that metaphor *is* illness, a weakness of language and language users we must work to overcome. Geoffrey Galt Harpham's later study agrees with Sontag's, that metaphor—the "grotesque crushing together" of discordant tenor and vehicle—is illness in language, but for Harpham it is a condition we, who use and are trapped by language, will never recover from. Borrowing from Roman Jakobson, Harpham distinguishes metonymy (literary "realism") from metaphor (literary "symbolism") and posits the metonymic as the realm of relative "health" in language. The separation between "us" and "them" characterizing violence (above) resembles the separation of the realist metonymic—where "boundaries are firm and objects are solid as they are in 'the world'" (Harpham 123)—while the blended fates of "us" and "them" defining nuclear "infection" replicates the metaphoric in language. Thus our third and final transition: from the metonymic status of separately discernible objects (guns and butter, U.S. and U.S.S.R.) whose boundaries remain intact and thus spare both from mutual destruction, to the metaphoric condition of blended, melting images that almost hurt to imagine (bomb as phallus, bomb survivor as walking dead). Yet the chaos of this unnatural dissolution can force a resolution into successfully executed metaphor (Harpham 124), a recognition of shared properties (the bomb *is* like a phallus, the Russians *are* a lot like us) which completes the mechanism of the metaphoric device and, in the nuclear instance, allows the aversion of catastrophe.

Paramount's 1950s version of *War of the Worlds* reflects these traumatic world-felt transitions at the level of the political, the ontological, and the linguistic; though as was the case with world events themselves at the time, this cinematic transition is not smooth, singular, or complete at any stage throughout the film. Instead the film lunges back and forth between the opposite poles of this transitional space; though, more precisely, it ranges up and down a continuum on which we may plot at least three points, three manifestations of this shifting worldview—an ultra-metaphoric, an ultra-metonymic, and a middling, ambivalent position which combines properties of each pole and where the film spends a good bit of its time. *The War of the Worlds* stands out among the slithering hordes of monster films created during the 1950s as being one of the few to have

major studio backing, creative directorship, and the budget necessary to aim for something well above its formulaic counterparts that emerged contemporaneously from smaller studios. Thus it is a film which was especially subjected to the economic demands of the cinematic marketplace but which also enjoyed the national distribution and critical acclaim that mark it as an important comment on this era.

The Martian invaders who terrorize the story's little California town are the most vivid indicators of where the film is on this continuum at any one point. At its most metonymic, the Martian is completely alien and only Martian, as removed from us as the minuscule bacteria which play a significant part late in the film; and continuing the film in the tradition of its predecessors as science fiction, as the fantasy and escapism that enliven a restless pre-teen's Saturday afternoon. Midway on this spectrum of associations, the Martian metaphorizes into the Russian enemy; we will see fairly obviously that the most interesting layer of stylization added to this mid-20th-century remake of a Victorian novel is the casting of the Martian as the other "red menace."[5] In its most metaphoric incarnation, the Martian is first and foremost not Russian but human, that is, as "just like us" as a film during this era dared suggest and therefore deserving of the same respect for its life as we hoped it would grant our own.[6]

The Martian depictions on this continuum are complemented or countered by various American-made efforts to combat the communist and nuclear threat posed by the Soviet Union in this period—science, in the figure of Doctor Clayton Forester; the military, figured in a host of generals, colonels and infantry men who turn the California town into a battle zone; and religion, here represented not by any particular sect or clerical figure but by "God, in his wisdom," presumed to be on our side during all wars. Appropriately, the doctor and his camp of protagonists contend with the Martians in their ultra-metaphoric state (the state of illness as opposed to violence) and the military men with them in their middling, "red menace" state. In their most heinous and unknowable, ultra-metonymic state, the film surrenders the besieged town to the hand of God (as Wells did to his London setting in the original text), saving a few Californians from horrible doom, yet, as I will argue later, losing much more than is gained in the metaphysical bargain.

As I inquire here into the nature and meaning of the alien presence in mid-century Martian films, so too has this alien's enigmatic "vehicle"—not its spaceship but its cinematic package—been pondered and discussed by critics who would know and love it better. The Martian movie has been described as a child of the horror films of the 1930s and 1940s (vampire, mummy, and wolfman movies), as horror's diametric opposite, as a subset of the larger sci-fi genre which during the 1950s and 1960s included everything from documentary to sitcoms, and as situated somewhere between horror and sci-fi, borrowing from both but maintaining at least one attribute fairly consistently—its ever-engaging

hybridity.[7] I argue that the dilemma surrounding the what-isness of these films resembles significantly the ontologic uncertainty postwar western filmmakers (and filmgoers) found themselves confronting with regard to the nature of "the Russian," the bomb, and the post-Hiroshima world they had been reborn into.

We can already discern in the highlights of this debate an opposition emerging between horror—with its exotic figures, its Gothic overtones, and its struggle between good and evil—and sci-fi—with its sleek, robotic characters, their equally sleek and robotic mindsets, and its gung-ho investment in the power of futuristic technology. While horror recalls the past, the fascination and revulsion of old-world freaks and "characters," sci-fi lunges hungrily and with great perspicacity toward the future. While horror looks within, meditating obsessively on the goodness and evil found in both its heroes and villains, sci-fi abandons the centrality of character altogether, developing action sequences that move with lightening speed. While the monsters of horror films are "evil," the creatures of sci-fi films are simply, mindlessly destructive.

Thus, while Edward D. Wood, Jr.'s *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1958) blithely surrenders Vampira's graveyard to a sky full of flying saucers,[8] few other films have followed such an eccentric and disorienting path.[9] Much in the two genres seems to repel each other like opposite charges: while they were close enough in the 1950s to remain a subject of debate and delineation today, they have been branching steadily ever since, exemplified in their current extremes by the slasher (*Friday the 13th*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*) and possession (*The Exorcist*, *The Omen*) films as the latest in horror and everything from action films (*Terminator*, *Robocop*) to domestic utopias (*Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*) to mind-bending dystopias (*Blade Runner*, *Liquid Sky*) as millennial sci-fi.

Yet during the period in which horror and sci-fi opposed but also conversed with and bilaterally influenced each other, they produced, due to the exigencies of the political world surrounding them, what I argue is indeed a hybrid of both—the Martian or alien-invasion flick. In positioning this genre of film thus—both between and born of the opposing, earlier genres—I am recalling to a significant degree Vivian Sobchack's argument which constructs a continuum similar to the one I suggest above, with positions for horror and science fiction genres corresponding to my ultra-metaphoric and ultra-metonymic distinctions, respectively, and a centrally designated "alien" film which contains both "monster" and "creature" subgenres, between which, I argue[10] the Martian film is best registered:

Ultra-Metaphoric ---------- Ultra-Metonymic
(Martians = "us") (Martians = Russians)
(Martians = Martians)

Horror ----- (monster) --- alien --- (creature) ----- science fiction

Sobchack's continuum aligned with my own enables an even more detailed comparison: horror is concerned with the inner world: 1930s and 1940s horror with the ethical struggles of the individual, and modern-day horror with the inside of the body in all its sexual, menstrual, and visceral "fearfulness."[11] As I argued at the outset, the metaphoric is the realm of the collapsed boundaries, the failed biological or social system permeated by foreign matter and made profoundly sick. Likewise, horror, as is argued by recent queer and feminist theorists, is the most radical of the genres we entertain here—populated by "freaks" and "queers" which invite us to thoroughly reformulate our understanding of the "norm;"[12] and I have also previously argued that the most radical of the three Martian equations is the one that would have suggested an identity between "us" and "them" which, stated too loudly, would have in its day jeopardized not only the film but the careers of all associated with it.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, science fiction, noted for its optimistic faith in progress and technology[13] is the happiest, most escapist of the three genres; the ultra-metonymic, removing the Martian figure from the whole of its political and ethical relevance, is also escapist, reverting and diminishing the film to an adolescent's diversion.[14] In many guises, science fiction is a conservative genre,[15] while the ultra-metonymic, as I will show below, is a reactionary position for the film to occupy. I will save comparison of the middle positions on these two continua for my closer reading of the film; as I mean these positions to define not a single center point but a chaotic and interrogative interaction with innumerable points between the poles, it is necessary to stop occupying single positions and start moving through the fascinating episodes of this important film.

Early in the story an ungainly meteor-like hunk of rock crashes into the California desert near the town of Linda Rosa, creating a huge crater and an even larger local sensation. A small cadre of "ambassadors" drives out to the still-dormant rock and unloads white flags from the bed of their pickup, bent on establishing contact with the strange visitors. It is a scheme to become famous and well-thought-of, yet it almost immediately backfires. The three townsfolk, among them a Mexican national now assimilated to at least a certain degree, observe another, quite different shape emerge from the meteor, this one streamlined and metallic, casting its red globular eye upon them; yet they advance with their flags anyway. Significantly, one shot reveals the men bathed in the red glow from the glaring eye, suggesting not only the fever of atomic radiation sickness but also the "contaminating" effects of aggressively promoted communist ideology as well.

Frightened by this febrile episode, it is, significantly, the ethnic figure that questions the effectiveness of U.S. diplomacy in containing or converting this powerful unknown:

Mexican Man: Maybe these are not men, not like us.
White Man #1: Everything human doesn't have to look like you and me.
White Man #2: If it's men from Mars, we ought to let 'em know we're friendly.
MM: Don't fool around with something when you don't know what it is. . . .
[advancing on "meteor" together]
MM: How they going to understand us?
WM #2: We'll talk in sign language.
WM #1: They'll understand us, all right.
MM: Sure, sure. Everybody understands, when you wave the white flag you want to be friends.

The nervous chuckling that underscores the Mexican's final line and the immediate response to this "flag-waving" (a fatal zap from the Martian ship) betrays not only the Mexican's misgivings about the truth of his statement, but the film's own critique of U.S. assumptions that the rest of world would "speak English when we got there"—would accommodate itself to western semiotic systems of communication and peace-making as it combated the communist threat on multiple international fronts. Thus, at this moment, the film appears to endorse a sympathetic, "metaphoric," view of the "red menace," presenting the Martians as hostile and unreceptive, yet suggesting that it is not they but those approaching them with the wrong message who are to blame for the bad relations between them.

Interestingly, the layers of embodiment of the Martians themselves reinforce the mixed-mindedness of the film's take on what the Martians are: while they crash to earth in a clumsy, mess-making blob which embeds itself in the desert landscape and is mistaken at first for a harmless meteor (the metaphoric), the second layer of its revelation partakes deeply of the metonymic—metallic, cool, long, and narrow, streamlined as a laser in its ability to locate its enemy and destroy it. Yet even this "Ford Fairlane" make and model of Martian manifestation is not its core formation but a second powerful means of transport, defense, and destruction. The final form the Martian takes, to be discussed shortly, reconstructs it once more, not as foreign and machine-like but as practically identical to originary "American" (earthly) life forms—slimy, slippery, amphibious, and viral, recalling once more the metaphoric, the shared structure and permeable boundaries that enable the conditions of both contagion and cure.[16]

In contrast to this initial ambassadorial encounter between the Martians and three townsmen is a later episode in which the Martians are once again approached and turn their beams of destruction on the hapless diplomat. In a

sensational trench scene generals hunch over maps dotted with Martian landing sites, while the uncle of Doctor Forester's love interest, Sylvia Van Buren, ignores the generals' warnings and approaches the Martian starfleet. Significantly, Uncle Matthew is a Protestant minister, yet his role as a cleric is distinctly opposite to the presence of religion as I describe it elsewhere in this study: that is, the presence of "God, in his wisdom," stepping in to defeat the Martians in their ultra-metonymic state. In contrast, Uncle Matthew espouses the ultra-metaphoric reading of the invaders, that the Martians are not to be feared for their differences but welcomed, even admired, since "more advanced than us, they should be nearer the Creator for that reason."

The minister approaches the advancing fleet, reciting Psalm 23 as he goes, with violin music swelling in the background. Like the three townsmen, he is vaporized where he stands. Sylvia, from the generals' bunker, begins screaming; the outburst excites the anger of the Martians who destroy the bunker and military men (everyone, in fact, except Clayton and Sylvia) and wreak several miles of havoc in the surrounding countryside. In direct opposition, then, to the indictment of hawkish U.S.-Soviet relations suggested in the first approach scene, in this second scene, a "brotherly love" policy is associated with a well-meaning but benighted elderly (old-fashioned and outdated) element in foreign policy and with the hysterical reactions of women out of their element. It is thus cast into serious doubt and in fact blamed for the escalation of the Martians' hostilities and the damage that follows from it.

In both these scenes, the question of to what degree these invaders are like us is further confused but ultimately answered by the horror influences found here: differing importantly from the mindless destroyers of classic sci-fi, these invaders do indeed seem to have a will, an intent, and a taste for blood. They do not merely sweep down a path, heaven help whoever may be walking in it, but aim their destructive forces at those who have threatened them. In both scenes they are made to seem, because their victims are so overpowered, as embodiments of evil, but I would point out that the "evil" invader is an important step up from the "mindless" one in the register of enemy subjectivity. Fully graduated from the robotic and mechanical, these Martians demonstrate behavior that can be described in ethical, thus *human* terms, settling momentarily on the understanding that these monsters are exactly like (whatever is worst in) the rest of us.

Following the attack on the bunker, Clayton and Sylvia escape to a nearby farmhouse and set up a scene of marital contentment which shields them, however momentarily, from the dangers about to engulf them. Sylvia finds some eggs to fry, Clayton sits at the kitchen table, enjoying the domestic fantasy. When the Martians approach again, it is an actual penetration of this haven, as several ships nosedive into the ground near the cottage and cave in one of its walls. At this moment, Clayton leaves Sylvia to find an escape route through the damage,

and the momentary separation of the two opens up a third, triangulating position for the Martian invader, a fellow pretender to Sylvia's affections.[17]

By now the metal ships have extended long metal tentacles crowned with one-eyed heads into the cracks and fissures of the ruined house. Sylvia, turning to find one such head violating her with its stare, begins screaming; Clayton severs the head from its phallic extender which retreats, limp and vanquished, into the "pubic area" of the hovering ship. Yet the battle is not over, since an actual Martian creature has left his metal ship and slithered into the house. Its slimy, amphibious appearance is most evident in this scene; it is depicted as a creature lacking the protective skin that keeps its biological soups and juices from spilling out—a domino theorist's worst nightmare. The "big scream" of the film is the shot of a slimy, webbed Martian hand reaching out and clawing onto Sylvia's shoulder. Horrified, she turns her head and freezes, her stunned expression no doubt eliciting a roar of delight and sympathy from original audiences; finally she can make the noise necessary to bring Clayton running, who beats off the extended (again, phallic) hand with his own phallic substitute, a club of wood he pulls from the wreckage. Put off thus, the Martian flees back into the darkness, not to be glimpsed in such naked form again.[18] Rescued from her oily suitor, the female character, positioned as prize between the two contending male forces, has nevertheless effected an important fraternity between Clayton and this terrifying other: both respond in "ordinary" fashion to Sylvia's charms, continuing the latter in its Martian-as-Russian manifestation—the unwelcome but recognizable visitor, if not welcome challenger or even just "one of the boys."

The early shot of the townsmen bathed in the Martians' red glare, which suggested an infectious communism that warranted fear and cautious relations, is rewritten at this point in a scene that again backs away from it challenge to U.S. diplomacy. Clayton has joined his stuffy academic colleagues at a well-funded university somewhere north of the initial attack, who are in the process of directing an atomic launch at the Martian troops. In fact, the detonation, much like the early above-ground tests in New Mexico and Nevada, is a social event for the surrounding community, witnessed by dozens of patriotic onlookers and chronicled by hordes of eager reporters on the bomb beat of their respective print and electronic media. We see a handful of official detonators making their way to the firing site in jumpsuits of silver foil, no doubt some miraculous anti-bomb material which will protect them from atomic blast and fallout. Clayton and Sylvia wear clumsy plastic eyewear and a voice booms authoritatively over a loudspeaker: "Two minutes to bomb time. If you have no goggles, turn away."

The hilarity of this scene as a model for civil defense aside, we must realize that the film is not only camping up and trimming down bomb preparedness for the sake of a smooth plotline but is in part buying into the vestigial notion of immunity, particularly U.S. immunity, from a weapons technology we created and therefore hopefully still controlled. Indeed, this

atomic moment, though sloppier and noisier than the trench warfare that preceded it, is no mushroom cloud. It is quite harmless to those present for its detonation and, more significantly, entirely powerless against the protective shields of the Martian-mobiles. The Martians continue on their widening path of destruction, and the scientists must turn to other means to combat them successfully. Thus the Martians, as in the traditional warfare scene, present a "red menace" which must be attacked and vanquished, yet move toward the pole of ultra-metonym, of an enemy so alien and removed from earthly culture that even earth-destroying weapons have no effect upon it.

Ultimately, the Pacific Tech physicists experiment on a vanquished Martian body and discover its immune system to be entirely primitive as compared to that of humans. Although the discovery is important, it comes too late for mere mortals to enact a plan exploiting it; by this time, city after city has fallen, nations lie in ruins, and Sylvia and Clayton become separated during a chaotic urban panic scene. His recollection that Sylvia always said she would seek refuge in church in such an event is significant; Clayton's tour of various impressive, Gothic cathedrals prepares the viewer for the advent of Him, actually the authoritative voiceover of Sir Cedric Hardwicke, revealing what God has caused to transpire:

> Once they had breathed our air, germs that no longer affect us began to kill them. . . .After all that men could do had failed, the Martians were destroyed and humanity was saved by the littlest things which God, in his wisdom, had put upon this earth.

Clayton has by now found Sylvia, in time to witness the "natural" destruction and decay of the Martian menace, thanks to the particularity of earth's biosystem and the aliens' complete immunodeficiency in relation to it.

But recall that in their totally alien (that is ultra-metonymic state) the Martians occupy the film in its most irrelevant genre. No longer the political vehicle of a commie-fearing right or a peace-loving left, the film reverts ultimately to Saturday afternoon sci-fi, to a film that *can no longer be* an allegory of the Russian threat, as Russians share with all humans the same basic bacterial immunities. Neither, even less possibly, can it any longer be read as an allegory of the *nuclear* threat; that is, of the threat posed not by a particular ideology but by global destruction. "Earthlings," i.e. Americans, are positioned in this final moment as not only biologically immune to but divinely protected from the destruction that plagues their enemies, a situation certainly not to be replicated in any atomic version of war.

Significantly, Hollywood, having taken innumerable liberties with the original text, goes back to the novel for a direct quote with which to end.[19]

Through this, the film concludes where the novel does—at the turn of the 20th century in a premodem, pre-atomic, pre-Hiroshima sensibility which much more innocently and ably divided the world into good and evil and conducted wars and constructed political allegory along those solid lines. Although certain elements in the film's final moments suggest a reprisal of the horror influence (the Gothic churches, the "premodern" sensibility), the film ultimately rejects the ethical dilemmas of the classic Jekyll-Hydeian horror hero and falls back on (by falling forward into) an optimistic science (biological supremacy) and a delirious fiction (an "American" God) to create the happy ending this film felt bound to offer. Ultimately, then, the film in its final scenes sacrifices its relevance to the experience of postwar ontological transition, exhausted but also cowed by the careening and traumatic course such a transition was then forcing the warring "worlds" into but which the film itself had also, if only initially, begun to explore and define.

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Notes

1. Pal, George. *The War of the Worlds*. Paramount Pictures, 1953.
2. See Messmer 1988a and 1988b.
3. I describe this shift from violence to illness in greater detail in *Enemies Within* (chapter one). I argue there that the illness-effects produced by atomic warfare have elicited hysterical fears of contamination by invisible enemies, transforming political and biological crises into plague-like disasters. Meanwhile, the contagiousness of life in the postmodern era accelerates the search for cures--not only the medical and political solutions to biological and sociological threats, but also the tolerance and understanding of plague victims in these eras that may preserve and or even improve their situations until successful treatments are found.
4. See Derrida (1981, 1982), Sontag (1989), and Harpham.
5. Several film critics have recognized ideological shadings of the 1950s creature feature, reinforcing our private suspicions that Martians are the flimsiest of stand-ins for the Soviets or Chinese; that, thanks to the bomb, we deserve every horde, mutation, and invasion ever to inflict itself upon us; that big science is at its most dangerous when it is rogue and indifferent to the constraints of government and the military. See Biskind, Hardy, Murphy, and Sontag (1965).
6. The span of my argument does not permit full comparison with the two culturally significant manifestations of this text to have preceded: Wells's original novel, of course, and Orson Welles's October 30, 1938 radio drama which, so realistically presented, sent thousands of Americans fleeing in panic from the Martian threat. Smith surveys politicized readings of the novel (104) in brief but helpful form. Regarding the radio play, we note that Welles sought to situate his "practical joke" at the ultra-metonymic (and thus most politically irrelevant) pole of the continuum discussed here; his final remarks include the reassurance "and if your doorbell rings and there's nobody there, that was no Martian...it's Halloween." Meanwhile, commentators have since pointed out this text's

many cultural imbrications; for example, Cantril indicates that the program merely touched off a volatile mountain of fear and anxiety building up within Americans on the brink of a second world war. Thus the Martians figured, not Russians as they do in this postwar version, but Nazis and Japanese. Meanwhile, Lowentrout cites "the Angst of Secularization" as the cause of panic; he argues that rapidly developing technology (including the phenomenon of Welles's own ultra-realistic broadcast) and the suggestion throughout the narrative that "all was lost" resonated with Americans' deepening fear of a loss of God, triggering hysteria.

7. On the generational relationship between horror and sci-fi, see Lucanio 2-3 and Michel Laclos (quoted in Sobchack 28-29). On their oppositional relationship, see Stuart Kaminsky (quoted in Lucanio 5) and Sobchack. On the alien invasion film as subset of sci-fi, see Lucanio. See also Iaccino.

8. Wells himself was fairly blithe in combining these elements; his Martians have in fact come to earth to gain sustenance from human blood.

9. Curiously, Hardy includes in his description of *Plan 9* reference to "its predictable plot of aliens trying to conquer Earth by reviving the dead as zombies," as I hope to be showing here, *Plan 9*'s singularly hybrid mélange of generic elements is anything but predictable and no doubt an important contributor to the film's cult status.

10. Within the centrally positioned alien genre, Sobchack defines monsters as mutated humans (most often men) who through governmental carelessness or their own hubristic efforts find themselves shrunk or colossalized, sharing their DNA structure with that of a fly or the workings of a bomb. "Creatures," on the other hand, are those mindless teeming hordes or solitary but enormous manifestations of various insects, amphibians, and extinct dinosaurs who antagonize but do not intersect with the human element. The Martian figure, I contend, hybridizes once more and maintains a position between monster and creature that is part mutant-man (itself a borrowing from classic horror) and part mindless "amphibian" (itself a borrowing from classic sci-fi).

11. Horror film analysis has proven a fruitful avenue for recent feminist efforts and includes psychoanalytic readings by Carol Clover and Barbara Creed and a more generalized cultural analysis by William Paul.

12. See Clover (especially chapter 2) Creed, Hanson, Weiss, and White.

13. Considering the importance of science, magic, and religion in science fiction films, Sobchack points out that science, like magic, is "essentially optimistic--a system of belief which is based on the assumption that man is capable of affecting his environment and his own destiny" (59). She opposes religion to this pair, emphasizing religion's "pessimistic" appraisal of man's abilities; yet religion for many faithful contains components of optimism -free will and ensured salvation - and secularists might see little distinction between it and its predecessor, magic. Likewise science and technology create magical effects everywhere in ordinary life and could also inspire a pseudoreligious faith, a sense that we in our new technological prowess have become like gods.

14. This is the difference Susan Sontag observed several decades ago between the "suspense, shocks, and surprises" of classic horror and the "dispassionate, aesthetic view of destruction and violence" in postwar science fictions (1965, 45).

15. Sobchack identifies a problematic strain in sci-fi which is "either conservatively nostalgic about the weakening of historicity...or...primarily celebratory about the

conservative value of space--reveling in its material present-ness, its capacity to 'overtake' time by 'saving' the past as a collection of styles and artifacts . . . " (273). She finds these strains prevalent in the recent blockbusters—*Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*—but faults as well mainstream cold war films for their "fetishization of technology; their arrogant xenophobia grounded on the perpetuation of difference and then need for an alien Other" (301).

Peter Biskind, a prodigious tagger of all manner of cold war film offerings, identifies "therapeutic," "progressive," "corporate liberal," "centrist," and "conservative" films vying for public attention and engaging each other in a debate that mirrored and shaped the political issues of the 1950s. He notes that "Christian allusions occasionally popped up in corporate-liberal sci-fi, but in these films, religion ultimately had to yield to science. . . .In conservative films religion is used to chastise science" (116). Also "right-wing [science fiction] films often used nature to flog culture" (118). We see that in the film under consideration here, religion and nature (the resistant bacterial strains) join forces to humble and disempower "radical" science.

16. For a discussion contrasting the Martian's physical manifestations in novel and film, see Renzi 122-25.

17. Kathryn Hume, reading Wells's original narrative, introduces the theme of triangularity, specifically the Oedipal triangle, in her reading of the Martians as well: "Take the Martians themselves. External forms differ, but functionally they have much in common with the classic, man-eating giant of fairy-tale, a displaced image of the father. . . .In *The War of the Worlds*, such a man-eating giant, armed with a terrifying heat-sword, appears to be wresting the [mother] Earth away from the narrator and mankind" (287).

18. Renzi's strong reading of Sylvia's role (125-27) includes the observation: "The film lets Sylvia, rather than Forrester, respond initially to all three encounters [with the Martian], because, in terms of the former (now archaic) film conventions, the woman is allowed (in fact, expected) to display her emotions" (127).

19. I appreciate Don G. Smith's Darwinian take on even this seeming concession on Wells's part: "Wells' main point is that progress is never assured. The Martians die as a result of their advanced science. Having destroyed bacteria on Mars, they evolve and lose their immunity and succumb to earth bacteria" (106).

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Shopping as an Entertainment Experience

Introduction

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the act of shopping has increasingly involved much more than the simple purchase of goods and services. From its modern manifestation in the arcades and the department store to the overwhelming atmosphere of the mall, the notion of shopping, in its contemporary sense, has come to be an activity of leisure and entertainment that is as important and participated in as going to a movie, having dinner out, or simply strolling in a park (Schor 1: 107). According to a special issue of *Consumer Reports*, more than a third of those surveyed said that they considered shopping their hobby (Twitchell 245). Shopping is now ranked as a primary leisure activity. This means that people go to the mall just as often, if not more so, than doing anything else. "Going out" is often synonymous with going shopping or going to the mall. Americans, according to *The Economist*, spend more time in malls than virtually anywhere else after eating, sleeping, working, and watching television (Bryson 217, 218).

Shopping, in its modern sense, is intimately linked to the rise of leisure. It was after the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance that leisure and entertainment first became codified. The ability to think above the fundamentals of life and to move beyond mere subsistence came with more stability and a better economy.

The creation of shopping as an entertainment experience is a postmodernist phenomenon. It is predicated on the rise of leisure, which in turn, has merged with the unleashing of consumption from its traditional parameters (Sheilds 6). Historically, consumption—or shopping—was heavily regulated as an activity, and the sites and times where consumers engaged in the process of shopping were quite defined (Sheilds 6). For example, until quite recently, one could not shop in Toronto on a Sunday.

It is virtually impossible to conceive of the Western world without some reference to shopping. Thomas Hine feels that this is such a pervasive syndrome that he has coined the term "buyosphere" to define this process. What Hine means by the "buyosphere" is that the popularity of shopping and all of its manifestations, encompassing "physical and virtual places" also extends to a unique "state of mind." Hine suggests that this goes beyond stores and must include everything from websites to fashion magazines (Hine xv).

Prior to the 1840s, most people simply bargained for and bought what they needed–if one could not personally produce the object. But, in contrast to simply buying, shopping requires time, thus it may be considered a leisure activity because of its supposedly unhurried nature. Shopping means looking,

visualizing, caressing. As Anne Freidberg has recognized, shopping is more about desire than need. She writes, "To shop is to muse in the contemplative mode, an activity that combines diversion, self-gratification, expertise, and physical activity" (Friedberg 57).

In the United States, prior to the coming of the department store, people had to depend on dry goods firms and wholesalers to purchase goods (Leach 20). The idea of shopping did not exist until the arrival of the department store. The distinguishing feature here was that entering a shop "entailed an obligation to make a purchase" (Miller 24). Within the department store, potential customers were, historically, encouraged to browse and prompted to take their time and peruse the vast array of goods and services. These stores quickly became, and to a great extent, still are, "places where consumers are an audience to be entertained by commodities, where selling is mingled with amusement, where arousal of free floating desire is as important as immediate purchase of particular items" (Williams 166, 167). By the early decades of the twentieth, century shopping (or buying) had become, thanks to a variety of innovations, much more than simply looking and selecting. Shopping had evolved into a "total experience in which the retailer became a subtle advisor on personal taste" (Harris 184). This was a seminal development for it brought people (women, in particular) into the stores and allowed them the time to peruse, select, sample, and even socialize.

Historically, the market was a place of freedom for women, as well as a place where one could catch up on the latest gossip, speak to relatives and neighbors, and share information. Markets were often environments where a variety of entertainments took place: jugglers, fire-eaters, fortune-tellers, and the like. People could not only socialize, but also be entertained and buy something to eat or drink. During the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth, shopping was considered a male form of entertainment, in which flirting was synonymous with the process. The female merchant was as much an object of desire for the male as the merchandise (Jones 32). Before fixed prices, which were characteristic of the department store, bargaining proved to be quite an entertaining component of the purchasing ritual. As Richard Sennett has written, "Haggling and its attendant rituals are the most ordinary instances of everyday theater in a city, and of the public man as an actor" (Sennett 142). The notion of theatre is a key trope in the spectacle of shopping. It has been a part of making a purchase for quite some time. Especially before the advent of the fixed price and the unstated obligation to make a purchase in a modern store, the idea of haggling over the price, of bargaining, of dickering, was a significant theatrical part of the purchase. Sennett relates that this process took time and thus the vendor not only discouraged rapid turnover but also got to know his or her customers (Sennett 142). What the founder of the Bon Marche could be said to have done was to invert this theatricality and move towards a form of mass spectacle, removing the intimacy of the theatrical process and placing it more in line with the observable

distance of entertainment (Sennett 142-144). Thus, the shopping mall—the modern store—has a long history as an entertainment venue. Retail environments have evolved into major meeting places and significant "social centers" (Harris 64). People came to the department store—and still do—for more than simply the purchase of a good or a service. They met there, had lunch, had a drink, and spent the day. In the 1970s and the 1980s, Bloomingdales marketed itself as the social center for the hip and the young. On Saturday mornings the Lexington Avenue store was packed with trendy singles, as well as celebrities hanging out at *the* place to be (Traub 116-119).

Shopping is now something one can do with their free time, or can fall back on "to do" as a leisure activity. It is accepted as a leisure or entertainment activity, the same as going to a movie or going for a walk. A key determinant in this evolution is the fact that since many parents both work, shopping that can't be done during the confines of the workday has to be done in the evening, or better yet, on the weekend. Shopping—going to the mall, Home Depot, Crate and Barrel, and other stores—has come to be a key entertainment activity on the weekend (Underhill 141, 142). Shopping becomes a very important way for families to engage in leisure time *together*. As Thomas Hine has observed, the "drive to transform into a form of family entertainment is in fact an attempt to adapt shopping to contemporary living patterns" (Hine 189, 190).

Shopping also plays a vital motivation in travel. In the progression from travel to tourism it is important to recognize that some tangible manifestation of this experience had to be documented. The rise of "markers" to indicate travel, such as work of art, a picture, or the ubiquitous T-shirt, serves to remind both those who have traveled and those who haven't that person X was away (Schor 2: 48). In fact, the third often cited reason for travel to New York is to shop (Twitchell 26).

This process apparently amuses locals. As Susan Willis relates, people who live in Maine (close to the famous L.L. Bean store which has become a magnet for tourist) spend time watching families arrive and shop at all hours. She terms this "consumer tourism" (Willis 39). People are increasingly traveling to shop, which takes the notion of the souvenir to a whole new level. Unlike the medieval pilgrims who traveled far to visit a shrine and maybe purchase a mirror or a badge with the picture of a saint (Man 62), these tourists are motivated by the reverse. Planeloads of travelers are now whisked in to destinations simply for the purpose of shopping. Both the Mall of America and the West Edmonton Mall (WEM) are supreme points in the constellation of consumer tourism.

The definitive example of the important role that shopping plays as an entertainment experience is most probably the WEM. As Tracy Davis writes:

> Since its completion in 1985, the Mall has become a leisure centre for millions of suburbanites and tourists attracted by the

> world's largest indoor amusement park, the world's largest indoor golf course, the world's largest indoor wave pool, the only landlocked full-size replica of the Santa Maria, a larger fleet of operable submarines than in the Canadian Navy, and nearly 1000 stores and services (Davis 1).

The WEM has become the ultimate in the fusing of shopping, entertainment, and leisure by evolving into one of the most popular tourist attractions in Canada. The fusion of shopping with leisure and entertainment and vice versa has another, more recent, history that can be summed up in one word: Disneyfication. This idea suggests that shopping, entertainment, and leisure can be rolled into one concept. The notion of "themes" derives from Disney's emphasis on merchandising in the most friendly and non-threatening of surroundings. Today, it can run the gamut from restaurants like the Hard Rock Café to environments such as Playdium. Participation is encouraged not just by purchasing and consuming, but also by being a part of the total environment (Betsky 135-139).

What occurs in this blurring of boundaries—deliberate, in many cases—is the creation of what Guy Julier has termed "retail-tainment sites" (Julier 149). The ultimate extension of this is the entertainment stores or "e-stores," such as Nike Town or the Warner Brothers Stores. These environments are where people go to spend leisure time, but also to buy products. Like Nike Town in Chicago, Ralph Lauren's store in the Rhinelander Mansion in New York City has become a "must-see" site when visiting Manhattan. As Jeffrey Tractenberg has written, although they were not buying, customers at the Ralph Lauren store "looked happier than many leaving a nearby $7-a-ticket movie theaters. Here admission was free. If nothing else, the entertainment value was outstanding" (Tractenberg 7, 8). When these structures start to become tourist destinations and "must-see" places, such as some large and fancy supermarkets (for example, Wegmans in Rochester, New York), the dialectic is complete. No longer are you simply shopping for food, a basic human requirement, but now you can sample the most exotic foods from all over the world in an environment that rivals the museum. One is now entertained at the supermarket. The same can be said for visiting the toy store.

A significant reason for the appeal of these environments is the magical appeal that they offer to people raised on the ethos of consumerism. The magic of Disney is translated, quite readily, to the magic of the Disney store. These developments have been aided by the production of public relations products that reinforce the idea of shopping as a wonderful, acceptable, and almost essential experience. A significant trend in the past few years that accentuates this has been the rise of glossy corporate product magazines that masquerade as information media but that are in reality slick catalogues for various products.

Like the ultimate in mass leisure provided by *People* and *In Style*, Sony, Benneton and other corporations mix advertising into a sophisticated entertainment formula.

The Department Store

Sophisticated retail environments have never been content to simply let the goods lie on the table or on the rack. Very quickly it was realized that to differentiate one's store from the bazaar or boutique, what one had to do was entice the potential consumer by educating and offering more than the basic staples of goods. Almost immediately, the early French department store magnates began to offer a wide array of extra consumption activities, ranging from elaborate window displays to hairdressing salons. The early entrepreneurs knew that they had to come up with something fantastic to entrance and attract the crowds. It was, as Michael Miller has observed, about "seduction and showmanship" (Miller 167). The founder of the Bon Marche, Aristide Boucicaut, was at the forefront of the business of dazzling potential consumers. He had the unparalleled ability to envelope:

> . . . his marketplace in an aura of fascination that turned buying into a special and irresistible occasion. Dazzling and sensuous, the Bon Marche became a permanent fair, an institution, a fantasy world, a spectacle of extraordinary proportions, so that going to the store became an event and an adventure. One came now less to purchase a particular article than simply to visit, buying into the process because it was part of the excitement, part of the experience that added another dimension to life (Miller 167).

The public was captivated by these offerings and came to both expect and see the department store as a place that offered something novel. By the end of the nineteenth century, consumers were coming to the department store to be entertained and enthralled as much as to purchase. To some, the department store became a theatre, to others, a temple. Both within, and increasingly, on the outside, the department store was capable of resembling both (Miller 167).

In America, Marshall Fields was a pioneer in the move to make the department store as attractive as possible to the would-be buyer. Fields was instrumental in giving the department store into a museum-like atmosphere, offering the potential consumer "something more." This "something more" turned the traditional notion of a retail emporium completely on its head. Consumers, and in particular, women, could not just shop, but have tea, a manicure, and even see a fashion show–all within the confines of Fields's palace. By offering these distractions, attractions, and novelties, a day, an afternoon, or even an evening turned into an entertainment experience. In France, Aristide

Boucicaut's Bon Marche had a reading room and an art gallery, and was the site of many concerts, attracting thousands (Miller 167-169). At Siegel-Coopers in New York City, one could not only purchase myriad staples but also view the world's largest photographic gallery and peruse one of the largest pet stores anywhere (complete with lions and tropical birds) (Leach 23). One could now be enthralled by, and at, the department store in the same way one would be by having a night or afternoon out. There were forms of theatre (ranging from fashion shows to window shopping), music (in the form of orchestras, bands and trios playing in various places), dining (stores featured a variety of culinary options ranging from fine dining to quick meals), and of course culture. The most commonly associated comparison with department stores was the museum. The fashion show, which originated in the US about 1907, became a major event in the entertainment life of stores in most major cities and would attract thousands (Leach 102, 103).

The department store—in particular, the American department store—came about at the same time as the birth of the modern museum and thus, it possesses, or at least historically did possess, many attributes of the museum. According to Neil Harris, "like museums, department stores were selective concentrations of merchandise, merchandise grouped by functional categories rather than by age and nationality" (Harris 63). Many department stores began to take on a museum-like atmosphere, complete with "dark wood cases" and "cluttered interiors" (Harris 65). Art exhibits were quite common, as were themed rooms, both of which borrowed heavily from the conventions of the art gallery and the history museum. Department stores were often the first place that patrons saw both modern and American art. The Gimbel brothers, after viewing the Armory show (1913) became "among the most ardent supporters of modern art, buying up Cezanne, Picasso, and Braques and displaying them in the store galleries in Cincinnati, New York, Cleveland and Philadelphia" (Leach 136). The art, the décor, the general international flavour of the stores reflected the fact that they were now competing with museums and virtually every other existant entertainment offering. Department stores came to be seen as "micro-worlds," fairs, places where one could go and sample and see the material history, food, fashion, and culture from all over the world (Harris 65).

Store windows in themselves became huge attractions and were, in some cases, elevated to forms of art. Frank L. Baum, future author of the *Wizard of Oz*, created theatrical scenes of unparalleled creativity. In some cities, the windows were covered on Sundays, out of respect for the Lord's Day, which made Mondays a particularly anticipated day (Leach 57-63, 70). The glass window allowed the shopper or viewer to see their own reflection but it also serves to act as a visible barrier that keeps the contents out of their grasp (Twitchell 235).

As a surrogate for the art gallery, museum, fair, carnival, theater, music hall and restaurant, the department store became the repository of entertainment

needs for many members of the urban middle and upper-middle-class. Just as today, the museum/gallery gift store is the inversion of this equation; the department store offered those who entered through its doors the chance to experience a variety of entertainment offerings.

Marvin Traub, the former chairman of Bloomindales, consciously set out to make Bloomingdales an entertainment mecca. Buyers, merchandisers, and sponsors all worked together to produce themed "extravaganzas" such as "India: The Ultimate Fantasy" and "China: Heralding the Dawn of a New Era" (Traub xiv). Like many great merchandise impresarios, the films he saw and theatres he frequented as a young man influenced Traub. He transformed his memories into stages of consumption. Traub felt that entertainment was a "great education for being a merchant." In order to recapture the exciting feelings inspired by his visits to the great movie palaces, he created that environment in Bloomingdales. "To feel that same sense of wonder today," he writes, "you no longer go to Times Square; instead, you go shopping" (Traub 12, 13).

The Mall

The notion of going to the mall as a way to pursue entertainment built upon layers of leisure, which expanded in every way and form after the second World War. By the 1970s, the mall was a seminal feature of the suburban wilderness, a key pinpoint in the edge cities that sprouted up in regions just outside urban centers. With no downtown core and inadequate strip stores, the mall, as defined by Victor Gruen, became a focal point for a variety of different activities. The mall was designed to mimic or recreate the city or the town, complete with a main thoroughfare, side streets, gathering places, fountains, and central meeting areas (Betsky 126). Like Walter Benjamin's stroller in the arcades, one could casually walk through or down these new urban "arcades" to see and to be seen. This would quickly take the place of the urban window shopper. The mall also quickly became the surrogate public gathering place. The mall today is where people gather daily, not just in inclement weather. The mall provides close parking for mothers with small children and encourages seniors to come "walk the mall" in the early morning hours. Many community activities, such as fundraising, now take place in malls (Betsky126). The mall is where people now go to spend time; teenagers often hang out there instead of cruising the strip (Crawford 15). As Margaret Crawford has detailed, WEM and other "super-malls," such as the Mall of America in Minnesota, have become small cities that are in many cases open almost twenty-four hours. These environments, with their enormous workforces, contain virtually every service from chapels to hotels (Crawford 6). Condensing all one's needs into one place strengthens the trend of merging entertainment, shopping, and leisure. If you build it, people will come (Crawford 15).

Even if one is absolutely against the whole idea of shopping at malls, there could be a mall that would appeal to that individual. Regardless of political or philosophic viewpoints, the mall, in the words of Robert Wilson, fascinates. Wilson writes, "Even people who despise the experience of shopping at malls, thinking of them as hyper-commercial or degrading or as traps to lure the unwary, may find the mall concept compelling" (Wilson 83).

The success of the mall, according to Crawford, depends on a process called "indirect commodification," a process by which nonsalable objects, activities, and images are purposely placed in the commodified world of the mall" (Crawford. 14). What this implies is that anything can become, by association, subject to commodification once it enters the mall marketplace. Not only does this mean that objects fall into this arrangement, but also that the whole environment gets restructured in this way. The mall then transforms everything into a product designed to be sold or to be entertaining. Anything that passes through the doors gets reconfigured in line with shopping as an entertainment experience. A key trope here is the harnessing of the shopping experience "with an intense spectacle of accumulated images and themes that entertain and stimulate and in turn encourage more shopping" (Crawford 15, 16). This is exactly why one encounters merry-go-rounds, Ferris wheels, and a host of other amusements within malls all over North America. A further development of this theme-based approach is found in the redevelopment of places such as Faneuil Hall and South Street Seaport. Culture becomes reconfigured to appeal to both entertainment and shopping (Crawford 16, 17).

The E-Store

Nike Town in Chicago is a veritable museum of popular culture and, more accurately, to the fusion of sports, marketing, and television. On display in museum-like cases are shoes and clothing worn by famous athletes–all of whom are paid Nike endorsers. Hipper than most museums and certainly directly relevant to the younger consumers, Nike Town in Chicago and the host of Nike Towns throughout North America appeal to the consumer-as-peruser of popular culture in the same way that the Hard Rock Café appeals to the aficionado of rock 'n' roll. Nike Town's concept borrows heavily from the heyday of the department-store-as-museum concept, but in a much more sophisticated layout. Nike Town is almost more an "experiential" environment rather than a retail one. The concepts that go into Nike Town in Chicago (such as the shoe models of famous athletes and the video clips) are designed to be a form of theatrical entertainment, a stage for its wares (Pine and Gilmore 63).

The signature Nike Town in Chicago attracts some 12,000 people a day to the 68,000 square foot museum-like complex. It contains a basketball court, giant fish tanks filled with tropical fish, and a host of sports memorabilia, which makes it one of the most popular tourist attractions in Chicago, surpassing the

Lincoln Park Zoo and the famous Art Institute in visitor attendance (Katz 11). Nike Town is the definitive fusion of retail and entertainment (Katz 82). The attention to detail that Nike Town has is legendary. Every corner and crevice has its own lighting and its own music (Hine 199). This experiential approach moves the shoes and satisfies in numerous other ways. Thomas Hine relates how "delighted" some visitors are to discover "that the patterns on the manhole covers that decorate the floor allude to the waffle-patterned soles of the first Nikes" (Hine 199).

At Mountain Co-op in Toronto, there is a climbing wall. People who are not necessarily buyers are coming into the store alone, or with children, in order to climb the wall. At Ikea, one can drop off the children in a play area, peruse the various parts of the store, have dinner or coffee, leisurely killing time. Drinking coffee seems to be a hugely appealing feature for potential shoppers. Most of the book superstores now have coffee bars and lunch counters, not to mention a host of ancillary pseudo-educational activities designed to bring people in. For example, evenings with authors can be interpreted as simply publicity for their books, but one must concede that something deeper is at work.

Like themed restaurants (such as Planet Hollywood and the Hard Rock Café), entertainment stores (such as the Disney Store or The Warner Brothers store) fuse entertainment with consumption in a potent way. According to marketing guru Paco Underhill, "From a child's perspective, these places are like amusement parks that just happen to sell merchandise" (Underhill 149). They become synonymous with fun and excitement. Even the more "traditional" children's environments serve as entertainment outlets. On a rainy day, many parents roam the aisles of Toys R Us with their young children just for something to do. Children in the store are free to ride the bikes, test drive the electronic miniature cars, or sample (and break) a vast variety of merchandise. Inevitably, the ideal for the merchant is to sell something, and that is why this behavior is tolerated. Outside of the main store there are usually toy-dispensing machines that will cough up a trinket or trifle for a dollar or two—a cheap way to get out of buying something for the kids. Even Chuck E. Cheese and other food emporiums serve as versions of entertainment shopping. There kids can play, eat, and redeem expensive coupons for cheap merchandise, serving as an example of this fusion of entertainment and consumption.

Shopping as Entertainment/Retail Therapy

Studies have shown that the notion of "desire" is a very significant aspect in consumption. Specifically, the idea of desire occupies a key place, straddling the worlds of seeing and buying. Intimately related to this are things such as fantasy and imagination, which in turn give rise to very vivid cravings. According to research findings, many people have dreamt about things that they

don't own but look forward to buying (Schor 2: 70). This says much about the place of shopping in contemporary culture.

Many people find it invigorating to go shopping, similar to viewing an uplifting movie or walking in the park. It is no secret to most people that shopping is often cited as a great stress buster, and that purchasing goods or services is a way to get oneself out of a funk. For many, shopping brings about sensations that run the gamut from arousal to perceived freedom and fantasy fulfillment. According to James B. Twitchell, this is in fact why the early shopping emporiums were linked to dreams and called "places of enchantment." Twitchell feels that one moves into escape mode when one enters a mall. The mall has become an environment that can stimulate the shopper in many ways. It can entice and excite, or it can calm and soothe. Citing Ira Zepp, Twitchell suggests that the familiar use of fountains and flowing water pacify and soothe the tired shoppers, rejuvenating them when they are fatigued and refreshing them for more shopping (Twitchell 243, 244).

Some people experience a kind of giddy euphoria upon entering a certain shop or upon coming into the mall. They are enamored with the products on display and for sale in way that everyday life doesn't inspire (Twitchell 244). Individuals who study shoppers are the first to both recognize and admit that shopping fulfills some very key psychological mechanisms for many people. For many people, especially for women, shopping is "a transforming experience, a method of becoming a newer, perhaps even slightly improved person" (Underhill 116, 117). Once individuals (again, women) were made to realize (or were convinced) that it was okay to buy, a new kind of association was created. The first department stores served a key function for the ideology of consumption by teaching women that not only was it okay to spend money but also that the "buying of goods and services" was not simply a good thing. Even more vital here, it was a way to enhance both "psychic well-being and social standing" (Benson 3). For many people, shopping extends well beyond the bounds of normal activity and comes to stand for a multitude of experiences. Paul Auster describes his mother's equating of shopping with "self expression":

> My father was tight; my mother was extravagant. She spent; he didn't. The memory of poverty had not loosened its hold on his spirit, and even though his circumstances had changed, he could never quite bring himself to believe it. She, on the other hand, took great pleasure in those circumstances. She enjoyed the rituals of consumerism, and like so many Americans before her and since, she cultivated shopping as a means of self-expression, at times raising it to the level of an art form. To enter a store was to engage in an alchemical process that imbued the cash register with magical, transformative

> properties. Inexpressive desires, intangible needs, and unarticulated longings all passed through the money box and came out as real things, palpable objects you could hold in your hand (Auster 7).

For so many people living in the west, freedom means having the ability to shop for a wide array of consumer goods. It has even been remarked that the Berlin Wall fell, not because of political repression, but because of the desire for East Germans to have access to the consumer goods of the West (Halberstram). This can develop into a form of pathology where shopping as an entertainment or leisure activity means finding oneself in the form of objects. As with Paul Auster's mother, Billy Pilgrim's mother (the fictional protagonist in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*) is also an individual who "finds herself" by shopping. "Like so many Americans she was trying to construct a life that made sense from things she found in gift shops" (Fussel 127). This merging of personality to products has been termed "the assembling of the commodity self" (Ewen 79). According to Aaron Betsky, many individuals find their identities by "buying bits and pieces of consumer culture" (Betsky 110). Retailers, developers, and shopkeepers realize what so many consumer critics cannot: that shopping is no longer just shopping; it has become for many a way of life–or more accurately, an accepted form of leisure and entertainment. The storeowners and the mall barons are aware of this. People willingly go to the mall and the mall now accommodates them. It is now possible to pay a fee and have access to a quasi-country club or members' lounge. The waves of exhaustion (similar to museum-induced fatigue) are now swept away in a tranquil oasis within the mall, where one can relax and recharge. These services include babysitting and even Internet hookups to keep you in touch (Owens W120).

At another extreme is the sense of euphoria experienced when shopping or when making the purchase. For some this has the hallmarks of any variety of other expressions. It is not uncommon to experience a very pronounced emotional response in making a purchase. In his novel, *I'll Take It*, Paul Rudnick describes the protagonist's emotional state in one situation:

> Joe loved shopping for clothes and had an addiction to costuming himself. Clothing was the most benign self-indulgence. Shopping for clothes felt like sex, with a comparable cycle of foreplay, orgasm, and afterglow. If Joe had smoked, he would always have languorously puffed a cigarette after hitting the menswear departments (Rudnick 21).

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Losing Himself in the Music: Will the Real Marshall Mathers Please Stand Up?

In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1920), T.S. Eliot suggests that the artist's process requires "a continual surrender of himself . . . a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (148). Not unlike the notion of experiencing a poem as an objective correlative to the emotions presented through lyrics, seemingly his process of personal extinction lends itself to the high modernist desire to remain objective and distant from the text.[1] The need for objectivity suggests a desire and a belief on the Modernist's part that the self can be evaluated in a thorough and unbiased manner. Indeed, from Eliot's own Prufrock to James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, the modernists persisted in objectifying the self through third person personas, allowing these "selves" to be interrogated, satirized, and exploited at a distance from the artist and reader.

In an artist like Eminem, though, postmodernism has found a different model of the self. Eminem, through his various lyrical personas, embraces the subjectivity of the age, blurring the line between authentic self and simulation. This essay will consider the metanarratives generated by Eminem through his self-referential lyrics and the difficulty in determining the difference between the narratorial and authorial voices within the simulations of himself that Eminem generates, including Slim Shady, Marshall Mathers; and more recently, through the main character of *8 Mile* and one of the protagonists of the song "Lose Yourself" (2002), Jimmy Smith Jr. (aka Rabbit). The self that is lost in this music becomes a kind of Baudrillardan simulation that is more important, perhaps, or (in Baudrillardan terms) a "more real" model of the identity of the postmodern artist.

In order to make this identity clearer, though, I wish to return briefly to the contrasting example of the persona of the modernist artist to more clearly define this new postmodern artistic identity. In addition, this contrast will help to show how this persona has been reshaped in literature through similar kinds of metanarrative techniques used by Eminem. In essence, artists at the beginning of the century clung to the notion that the self could be examined in an objective manner because they believed that there was an essential self or a "true" self beneath the various personas worn in literature and culture. The burgeoning postmodern challenge against such essentialism began quite early. While Joyce and Eliot attempted to order the universe through essentialist mythologies, like many of the postmodernists that followed him, Jorges Luis Borges began to expose the subjective nature of the mythologies of history.[2] If—as such texts seem to suggest—history is suspect because of its narrativity and hence its subjectivity, how could a narrative possibly convey an objective view of the self?

A text like "Borges and I" (1960) becomes an obvious challenge to the modernist notion of the author's relationship to his work.

Borges begins the story by describing a distinction between himself (I) and Borges, "It's Borges, the other one, that things happen to" (324). Indeed, the self or the "I" that Borges refers to merely "allow[s itself] to live, so that Borges can spin out his literature," and he laments that "I shall endure in Borges, not in myself," suggesting the eternality of this author known as Borges but the mortality of whoever this man, this "I" is. On the face of it, these ideas seem no less objective than those of the high modernists. If the Borges represents the "I," then he is a persona not unlike a Stephen or a Prufrock. Borges claims that the author "Borges" "shares [his] preferences" and notes a number of similar interests and talents that these two selves share, but that this "Borges" persona has a way of "distorting and magnifying everything." Such distortion and magnification would seemingly unite this "Borges" with Stephen and Prufrock as semi-autobiographical fictions, which present a correlative but not a duplicate of the self. The problem here, though, is that while Borges has fictionalized himself as "Borges," he has also fictionalized himself as "I." Indeed the metanarratorial nature of this text defies the objectivity of representation. In large part, this lack of objectivity found in naming seems to be related to why both Joyce and Eliot "renamed" themselves in their work. While Joyce and Eliot could clearly claim to be able to distinguish between author and character or author and narrator, Borges rejects such an ability in the closing line of his story: "I am not sure which of us it is that's writing this page." Borges's self here has become a representation of a representation. Through metanarrative, he has fictionalized himself as author and essential self. So, how can there be an essential self, if even that true self is fictional?

This kind of metanarratorial interrogation of the self has been of interest to many postmodern writers. John Barth, Kurt Vonnegut, and Philip K. Dick have all at times integrated a character with the same name as themselves into their work thus creating what Linda Hutcheon, in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, calls a "subjective realism" by causing the reader to be "drawn into and out of the text" when the reader is forced to consider that the fiction being read is "both real and fictive by the decision-making process of the narrator" (36). In *Postmodernist Fiction*, Brian McHale calls the introduction of real-world figures into a text an "ontological scandal," noting the ontological implications of revising "selves" since that revision reveals their constructedness in the first place, saying:

> In postmodemist revisionist historical fiction, history and fiction exchange places, history becoming fictional and fiction becoming "true" history—and the real world seems to get lost in the shuffle. But of course this is precisely the question

> postmodernist fiction is designed to raise: real, compared to what? (91)

If history destabilizes the real world, likewise the personas of postmodernist writers destabilize their real selves.

If "Borges and I" begins to call the notion of distinguishing between an authentic, essential self and its representations and personas into question, the lyrics of Eminem exploit and explore this possibility in a clearly explicit way. Even the titles of Eminem's albums reveal Eminem's interest in and exploitation of the multiplicity of the nonessential selves that seem to make up the mind of this artist. Barring Eminem's first album, all of his albums are named for himself: *The Slim Shady EP* (1998) and *LP* (1999), the *Marshall Mathers LP* (2000), and *The Eminem Show* (2002). While each album has its own "identity" and should apparently reveal something about these various personas; nevertheless, all three personas make appearances in some form on all three albums, and much of the themes, and even structures, of these albums are quite similar. Slim Shady is seemingly the misogynistic and homophobic "dark side" of Marshall Mathers's identity. Eminem—as the title of his most recent album indicates—is the showman, the more traditional rap persona of Marshall Mathers. The double "m" invoked by Eminem's name connects him to Marshall Mathers while still maintaining an odd and potentially racially symbolic divide between himself and this performer.

But if there is an Eminem "show" there is also a Slim Shady and even a Marshall Mathers "show." After introducing himself to the world as Slim Shady at the opening of the *Slim Shady LP*, he apparently wants to also introduce Marshall Mathers to the world in his next self-titled album. His frustration in doing so is clearly evident in the album but especially in "The Way I Am." While the verses of the song describe who Marshall Mathers is, what he does, and what he thinks about, the closing lines of the first verse explain that he is "tired of arguin'" about who he is but that he does not "mean to be mean but that's all I can be is just me." Nevertheless, despite these claims that he is the man that he describes, his frustration at being defined through the media gives rise to another way that he knows himself:

> 'Cause I am whatever you say I am
> If I wasn't, then why would I say I am?
> In the paper, the news everyday I am
> Radio won't even play my jam
> 'Cause I am whatever you say I am
> If I wasn't, then why would I say I am?
> In the paper, the news everyday I am
> I don't know, it's just the way I am

The contradiction between the idea that "all I can be is just me" and that still "I am whatever you say I am" admits a complex revelation of self. Eminem seems to admit that a media constructed identity of Marshall Mathers is as legitimate a claim about who and what he is as what he himself has to say about himself. The existential statement that "in the paper, the news everyday I am" admits to how Marshall Mathers exists as a legitimately real simulation of himself. As he says, "it's just the way I am." Again, there is an almost Baudrillardan theme of self and simulation at work here. In *Postmodernism*, Jim Powell describes how Baudrillard's sense of the simulacrum is that these simulacra that appear through print and electronic media have become more real to us than the reality that they represent, or—put in Powell's words—that the images of a celebrity like Madonna have "become more real than Madonna the person" (56) in contemporary culture. "The Way I Am" seems to acknowledge this constructed nature of the self and to accept it. But at the heart of the song is also an acknowledgement that his presentation of self also helps to define that figuration. As Eminem says, if he wasn't who we say he is, "then why would I say I am?"

The complexity of this balancing act that Eminem plays between the self he presents himself as and that he has been constructed as is revealed in a 2001 interview with triple j of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Eminem defends his most offensive commentaries by describing them as merely representational:

> When a guy in a movie plays a racist, does that mean he's a racist in real life? When you see him out of that film? Outside of that film? No it doesn't. So what makes me so different as playin' . . . a persona on a record or livin' out a character—y'know what I mean—on a record as opposed to being one in a film? A lot of my songs are like movies. Like, like the "Kim" song for example. That's almost like a movie that I'm kinda taking you through.

While "The Way I Am" admits that personas become existentially "I am," his defense belies this idea, suggesting that a persona is role-playing, an act. Indeed, Eminem explains that "[i]t's irony, man. It's parody. It's what goes on here in America. There are really some sick and psychotic people that think like I rap." The ironic moment in this statement comes when Eminem claims that there are "sick and psychotic people that think like I rap." In order to write his lyrics, Eminem has to think like he raps; and indeed, his thinking is admittedly related to the thinking of Slim Shady. His response to the interviewer's question "How different is Slim Shady from Marshall Mathers?" shows there is both:

> [Slim Shady and Marshall Mathers's thoughts] are similar in a lot of ways and different in a lot of ways: my everyday views on life and things like that . . . Some of my views that come across in my music aren't exactly the same as they are in real life and some of them are . . . A lot of my personal life is reflected in my music and a lot of this shit is just to get under people's skin and its worked so far . . . Just like it may be a writer's job or a critic's job to critique me, its my job to get under those people's skins and piss them off.

It's often unclear just what parts of Eminem's lyrics are irony and satire and what parts are not. Clearly, the "Public Service Announcement" from the *Slim Shady LP* and the "Public Service Announcement 2000" from the *Marshall Mathers LP* show a consciousness of such irony and satire on the part of the artist. In the first "Public Service Announcement," an appropriately authoritative voice of an announcer warns in a serious tone that "children should not partake in the listening of this album," pausing to allow the gravity of that statement to sink in before adding the stipulation "with laces in their shoes." The announcer follows this mock warning by explaining that "Slim Shady is not responsible for your actions," before Slim himself facetiously states his final imperative, "Yeah, [and] don't do drugs." The album itself is, of course, laden with drug references and violent imagery but such contradictions are how Eminem invokes his ironic examinations of the culture and himself. His biting rant against "White America," consists of a stream of vitriolic invective in which he states that he wants to "piss on the lawns of the White House" and "spit liquor in the face of this democracy of hypocrisy." This diatribe is then followed by a brief pause and a rakish denial of all of these feelings: "I'm just playin' America, you know I love you." This facetiousness clarifies the contradiction between these two voices: the voice telling America "fuck you" and the voice that claims that it is all a joke. But which one is the put on? While Slim Shady and Marshall Mathers are apparently distinct personalities, Eminem makes no effort in this song (and rarely in any others) to distinguish between the two. Thus, Eminem's lyrics become less a war of competing ideas and more a war between competing selves.

As a 1999 interview with *Rolling Stone* would seem to suggest, it is as if the artist himself is incapable of determining who he is. During the interview, Eminem responds to questions concerning "'97 Bonnie and Clyde," a song which features the voice of his then three-year-old daughter Hailie as Eminem describes disposing of the body of her mother Kim. This fantasy of killing his wife and escaping with his daughter so it is just the "two of us" is a song that Eminem says that when Hailie "is old enough" he wants "to explain . . . to her." He describes the explanation briefly again in terms that suggest the artificiality and representational nature of his art: "I'll let her know that Mommy and Daddy

weren't getting along at the time. None of it was to be taken literally." This response would lead readers to believe that this is part of the "irony" and "parody" of his lyrical content, and indeed there seems some honest and obvious sincerity in this explanation. Then, he pauses briefly following the above comment to add, "Although at the time, I wanted to fucking do it." To Eminem, both statements would seem to be true, it was all a put on, but it was also an all-too-real desire. Slim Shady allows him to play Clyde through Slim in the song, but Slim is not a dispassionate and separate self through which Marshall's feelings can be examined. Slim and Marshall both parody and fantasize Kim's death, leaving the self that Eminem represents as the narrator of the song a fractured and contradictory one. That self is not objective, but, in the postmodern sense of the self demonstrated by Borges, it is a more authentic one, containing all of the fragmented and contradictory output and appearance of the self as all authentically "true."

Thus, the self that Eminem simulates is an authentic version of the postmodern constructed personality. Slim Shady is artificial, but so too are many of our personas. Sociology has long understood the artificial nature of human personality and the need for personas. Consider Erving Goffman's definition in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) of the "fronts" that we use to define ourselves to others. These social masks are not merely those used by professional performers but ones that we all use in performing ourselves. He says that the front is "that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those that observe the performance" (22). Fronts serve through our appearance and manner both "to tell us of the performer's social status" as well as to "warn us of the interaction role the performer will be expected to play in the oncoming situation." What becomes complicated in examining Eminem and his comments about himself, and himself in the manner that are his music and his personas, is that even he seems to need to be informed by the cues of his own manner to be warned about the role he is to play within the context of his songs. Often, again, he seems to play multiple roles that complicate how he and we interpret who he is in the song as well as who his personas are.

Up until now, I have only briefly spelled out how this kind of persona generation-through-metanarrative is related to Baudrillard's notion of simulation. In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard uses an example from painting—neofiguration—to describe how simulation has become not representational but instead hyperreal:

> Neofiguration is an *invocation* of resemblance, but at the same time the flagrant proof of the disappearance of objects in their very representation: the *hyperreal*. Therein objects shine in a sort of hyperresemblance (like history in contemporary cinema)

> that makes it so fundamentally they no longer resemble anything, except the empty figure of resemblance, the empty form of representation (44).

Such "irreferentiality"—as he describes it—in the symbolic order has made its way into examinations of the postmodern self. Critics such as Giorgio Agamben and Victor Vitanza have refined their definition of postmodern identities towards this idea of "irreferentiality" through the idea of "whatever beings"—those whose response to questions is most often "whatever"—a word whose meaning is radically negated by its multiplicity, or, more simply put, a word that suggests every possibility and hence suggests no meaningful answer at all. Again, this description of the self is akin to Baudrillard's description of how media simulations perform semiotically: "[s]imulation . . . stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as a reversion and death sentence of every reference" (6).

If Eliot preached that the artist should experience a continual extinction of self, the new subjective nonessential self presented by Eminem becomes a total of extinction of self. The contradiction and irony of his competing selves become a radical negation of all references to himself. In "Superman," Eminem bridles at groupies who think they know him through his music and the self that he has presented through it:

> I don't see what the big deal is anyway,
> You're just plain ol' Marshall to me . . .
> Hailie Jade—I love that name,
> Love that tattoo. What's that say?
> 'Rot in pieces'—Oh, that's great.

"Plain ol' Marshall," the father of Hailie Jade and an effort on the part of the groupie to essentialize Eminem, is rejected outright by the rapper: "you don't know Marshall." How can she? In other words, there is no plain essential Marshall to know through the simulations built by Eminem. As Eminem has already made clear in "My Name Is"—a song about who Slim Shady is—extinction of the self is clearly on his mind: "Well since age twelve I felt like I'm someone else / 'Cause I hung my original self from the top bunk with a belt." The multiplicity of Eminem's selves are evident in this feeling of being someone else, which has become Eminem's stock-in-trade: playing roles.

This role-playing and the hyperreality of role-playing is most evident, though, in one of the songs produced for *8 Mile*. *8 Mile* is a further extension of Eminem's personas as he literally acts like someone else, Jimmy Smith, Jr., whose life is based loosely on Eminem's own. Jimmy Smith, Jr. also reflects additional multiplicities through his dual identity as the rapper Rabbit. The film,

in and of itself, could make an interesting study of postmodern identity, but the more explicit metanarrativity of the song "Lose Yourself" presents a much more compelling model of the postmodern self presented through Eminem's artistry. The rap itself begins by describing Jimmy Smith as he prepares to compete in a rap battle and then his failure as he chokes on stage. This description is an almost perfect description of the opening scene of *8 Mile*, becoming a kind of pure simulation of the film itself:

> His palms are sweaty, knees weak arms are heavy
> There's vomit on his sweater already [and] mom's spaghetti
> He's nervous, but on the surface he looks calm and ready
> To drop bombs, but he keeps on forgetting what he wrote down
> The whole crowd goes so loud, he opens his mouth
> But the words won't come out
> He's chokin'. How? Everybody's jokin' now.
> The clocks run out, times up, over.

This literality of the description of the character in the film who vomits on his sweater before the competition begins is disrupted by the next line: "Snap back to reality. Oh, there goes gravity." Jimmy has snapped out of his muddled haze as he does in the film, but, at the same time, reality has been unsettled as rules like gravity are unsettled and Eminem oddly describes the departure of this character, "there goes Rabbit, he choked," but it is also a demarcation in the song that this character will shortly exit the narrative. We are brought back to reality as Eminem describes not the fictional world of Jimmy Smith, but the medium in which the character Jimmy Smith exists and the sort of role that this song should play for this character: "This whole rhapsody better capture this moment / And hope it don't pass him." Eminem acknowledges here that the first verse, this "rhapsody" exists to capture this moment from the film and that the song needs to maintain its focus on the "hero" of that film. Yet, at this point, he breaks into the chorus, which ironically follows the notion that Rabbit has exited the stage, has been lost from the narrative as he sings: "You better lose yourself in the music."

When the next verse begins, it is as if Rabbit has been lost in the music, "His soul's escaping through this hole that is gaping." Eminem continues to describe Rabbit in third person terms but, again, in terms that highlight his disappearance. He follows with a line that should seemingly belong to Jimmy but is expressed in the first person and ultimately does not sound like the words of a defeated, young rapper: "This world is mine for the taking, make me king." The shift to the first person is brief, but the shift in personas in this verse is clear. It is no longer Rabbit who is being described, but instead Eminem who is describing his own rise to superstardom:

Superstardom's close to post mortem
It only grows harder, only grows hotter
He blows. It's all over. These hoes is all on him.
Coast to coast shows he's known as the globetrotter.
Lonely roads—god only knows, he's grown farther from home
He's no father. He goes home and barely knows his own
daughter.

This life is not the life of Jimmy Smith. Jimmy Smith is no superstar, no globetrotter, and no father. All of these descriptions fit Eminem, just as the next verse does, which is rapped in the first person in which Eminem (as he is in these lines) is "caught up between being a father and a prima donna." In this middle verse, it seems as if the Jimmy Smith persona and the Eminem persona blur into a single identity.[3] Eminem does not distinguish between himself and the fictional autobiographical identity portrayed in the movie. He has become this simulation of himself and allowed it to become him.

Narrative contradictions exist in the lyrics, but the song fails to acknowledge those contradictions, which blur into the fiction of the song as the next line implies through his description of his and Jimmy's lives as a "soap opera" and then allows those media-generated selves (Jimmy through the film and Eminem through the his tabloid celebrity) to be dissolved and extinguished in the sound of the music itself:

So the soap opera's told it unfolds I suppose it's old partner
But the beat goes on da da dum da da dum data
You better lose yourself in the music,
The moment, you own it, you better never let it go
You only get one shot do not miss your chance to blow
This opportunity comes once in a lifetime

That Eminem admits that his life has become a simulation, a melodramatic television show of sorts, is acknowledged by the shift in viewpoint as Eminem enters the third verse as himself: "No more games, I'm a change what you call rage / Tear this motherfuckin' roof off like two dogs caged." Yet, his metaphor suggests that *two* rappers will tear the place down as the next few lines continue the hyperreal blending of identities. This composite version of himself represents his past as if he is Jimmy, explaining that despite the fact that he will shortly describe the "baby mama screamin' drama" that comes from his being a "prima donna":

All the pain inside amplified by the fact that I can't get by with
my nine to five

And I can't provide the right type of life for my family
'Cause, man, these food stamps don't buy diapers

All of these identities—the superstar involved in his mother's lawsuit and the loser that can't make ends meet for his daughter, along with the fictional world of Jimmy Smith—are integrated in this verse under the single identity marker "I."

Eminem has become all of these selves, yet he claims that this narrative, which he has described as a fictional soap opera, is "no movie, and there's no Mehki Phifer." This reference to "Mehki Phifer," the actress who plays the role of Future, rather than to the character named Future, further and most clearly disrupts the balance between reality and fiction in the song. While the song begins as a description of a piece of fiction through this metanarration in which the distinction between actors and characters unravels, it becomes a metadescription of the creation of the film itself, acknowledging the relationship between the fictional material and its real world source as well as the differences between those ontologies. For Eminem, there is no "Future" and the song becomes a hyperreal space where Jimmy's world is negated by Eminem's and consequently Eminem's world is negated by Jimmy's. While the narrator claims that this "may be the only opportunity that I've got," we are left unclear as to whose opportunity is being spoken of—Jimmy Smith's or Eminem's. Both selves have become lost in the music and distanced from the narrator through the use of the word "you." But because of the multiplicity of the narratorial voice, the "you" seemingly still could be either of these identities. Indeed, the verses suggest that this is how Jimmy and Eminem have and will succeed by extinguishing themselves through their music.

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Notes

1. As Eliot defines it in "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919), the notion of an objective correlative suggests that art should merely present the "formula of [a] particular emotion" rather than presenting the emotion in a directly experiential manner. For example, Eliot argues that in *Hamlet* Shakespeare is incapable of expressing Hamlet's emotions because "the supposed identity of Hamlet with his author is genuine to this point: . . . Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of [an] objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem" (100).
2. Borges does so in texts like "The Garden of Forking Paths" (1941) and especially in the pseudo-history at the center of "Tlon, Uqbar, and Orbis Terius" (1941).
3. In "The Making of 'Lose Yourself,'" *Rolling Stone* quotes Eminem's manager, Paul Rosenberg, pointing out that this blurring was Eminem's intention: "He wanted to write at least one of the songs as Jimmy . . . where the similarities get blurred between himself and the character" (68).

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'In other people's mouths': Dialogic Interaction in Rick Moody's *The Black Veil: A Memoir with Digressions*

> A word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language . . . but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions.
> —Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel"

> All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in the place of another.
> —Helene Cixous, *rootprints*

Shortly after the publication of *The Black Veil: A Memoir with Digressions*, Rick Moody made this observation: "Literature is on a dialectic that has fiction and nonfiction on either end. Together, they form one narrative [and yet] *The Black* Veil will not be shelved with my [fiction] which is incredibly irritating to me. I want people to read it in the context of everything else I've done" (DeMott 73). Moody's "irritation" in a sense directs us to an idea touched upon by Mikhail Bakhtin: that just as literary works are shelved according to their topic or genre, we are taught to read literary works within the boundaries of their categorization. Fiction, nonfiction, literature, popular novels, plays, poems, even grocery lists are all ways of ordering the written word and preparing us for what we are about to read. This seems to go without saying.[1] But by classifying the writing (as we do), by embodying different works within the designation "genre" (as we do), we, as Thomas Kent has argued, "begin to understand the kind of interpretation necessary in order to make sense of the text" (301). Thus we have before us, imprinted on the cover and the spine of the work, a kind of literary short-hand—a technique to steer us away from the dangerous rocks of randomness and towards the already clear and highly navigational waters of coherence and understanding.

Traditional notions of "autobiography" place it firmly within the borders and boundaries of non-fiction, sometimes "literary non-fiction." The reader reads an autobiography, presumably, because she has an interest in the person's "life-story"—"written by himself"—and assumes that the recollection and recounting will be truthful.[2] Truthfulness is the guarantor, the promise, and the assurance that the reader will not be tricked or fed falsehoods in the place of reality. Indeed, as the theorist Philippe Lejeune has argued, the truthfulness of autobiography is established by the condition that there must be "identity between the *author*, the

narrator, and the *protagonist* (in Anderson).[3] Other theorists like Laura Marcus and Karl Weintraub, for example, argue for a kind of 'honest' intention which then guarantees the 'truth' of the writing"; and Roy Pascal takes it one step further and suggests that if an autobiography is to succeed, it must depend "on the 'the seriousness of the author, the seriousness of his personality *and* his intention in writing' [my emphasis]" (Anderson 2-3). When we pick up an autobiography from the bookstore stacks, we do so assuming that the risk rests only in the writer's ability to be interesting in the way the story is told.

Like other types of genre-designating terms—"novel," "poem," "essay," "play"—the term "autobiography" in the title announces itself as a kind of an appendage: "an autobiography." Such a marker is found (usually) after a colon and the colon (written or implied) after the primary title signals that the term—"autobiography," "novel," "essay," "play," and so on—is an appositive; the colon serves to explain, amplify or, conversely, limit the title that preceded it.[4] However, the designation "autobiography" also marks the text "as a kind";[5] that is, a singularity carrying within it a host of assumptions about what will be and will not be found in the text. The title of Rick Moody's work, *The Black Veil*, is followed by "a memoir," and if this was not enough to give us pause to think, he throws in a prepositional phrase, adding, "with digressions." So our reading and interpretive strategy is already being led toward a kind of "self-life-writing," which is fine, since we understand that is the idea behind a "memoir;" however, what does Moody mean by "with digressions," which carry within and upon the object of the preposition notions of veils and veiling as a kind of already signifying metaphor?[1]

Perhaps Moody's double tag is so intriguing because it seems to fit in so well with Bakhtin's notion that the term or idea of "genre" is "neither [a] set of conventions nor . . . hierarchies of devices." Instead, such designations are "ways of seeing the world" (Morson and Emerson 66).[7] In Moody's work, the double "tag" provides the potential directions and drifts that will open the text to the "ways of seeing the world." Further, the phrase "with digressions" becomes the site where interaction between several voices is located. Such interaction is the "task" of the dialogic. In Bakhtin's assessment, language, spoken and written, is essentially "a matter of utterances rather than sentence" and "utterances are by their nature dialogic in that listeners (or readers), real and potential, shape the utterances from the outset" (Moroson and Emerson 65). "No living word relates to its object in a *singular* way," Bakhtin argued. "Indeed any concrete discourse . . . finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist—or on the contrary, by the 'light' of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents" (276). Or as David Lodge glosses it, for Bakhtin, the *word* comes to us "already imprinted with the meanings, intentions

and accents [of] previous users, and any utterance we make is directed towards some real or hypothetical Other" (Lodge 21).

Moody's autobiography is always in contention with what is known, imagined, understood or claimed in the process of creating a "life story." It is dialogic in its assumptions: not only does the memoir anticipate the "future answer word," it also recognizes the relationship between its own discourse and "other discourses outside the text, which are imitated or evoked or alluded to by means of doubly-oriented speech" (Lodge 22). Moody's utterances, then, show they are directed toward that Other and that these utterances are themselves the product of other utterances. Kent tells us that "Bakhtin's conception of the utterance accounts for the dialogic and collaborative nature of language-in-use by merging the speaker/text with the other" (286). Adding,

> Within any communicative interaction . . . the speaker shapes her discourse in response to the other, and in a similar fashion, the listener makes sense of another's discourse by taking a responsive and interactive stance toward the speaker/text. Bakhtin argues that no meaningful communication can occur without a response from the other: 'Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker'[8] (286-87).

All understanding, then, takes place as a response to the Other. But response is never one sided: just as the listener becomes the speaker, the speaker becomes the listener, and so on and so on. By this standard alone, Moody's autobiography positions itself as an example of the dialogic, of "language-in-use." If understanding the self, as James Olney contends, is the raison d'être of autobiography, or memoir, merging the speaker with the Other can only bring about such understanding.[9] In this sense, Moody's text oozes with heteroglossia facilitating exchanges between, well, between his voice and his father's voice, his voice and his mostly silent mother's voice (but can it not be understood that silence is just as loud as the loudest voice?), his voice and his sister's, Nathaniel Hawthorne's, his friends, his enemies, not to mention the voices of historical and cultural icons (some speaking for themselves, some being spoken for[10]), as well as his past, his present, his future voice. There is fullness and richness to all those other voices: the many and varied voices that speak to, with, at, against, and for Rick Moody. And if you are familiar with Moody's fiction, there are those voices which he himself has ventriloquized in early novels and short stories: voices whose utterances find purchase along the margins of this memoir.[11]

Moody's opening paragraph is an act of containment; his opening sentence sets the stage for us to engage in conversation with him, to agree or disagree, to contradict or affirm his words. "So there's the matter of our crimes,"

he writes, as if he is directing our attention toward one more piece of unfinished business. This statement is followed by four more sentences, two hundred and seventy-four words in all, which serve not only to simply introduce us to the drift of Moody's thoughts, ideas, desires, dreams, and dispatches, but also to indict us. The force of the collective pronoun "our" is joined by sixteen uses of the pronoun "we," making us as complicit as Moody is in "the matter of our crimes," which he catalogues and lists; crimes which range from the "unspeakable . . . like robbery, battery, rape;" to the mundane: "gifts never sent . . . the waiter we upbraided" (3). In a large sense these crimes do nothing more than point out what the possibility of living might look like. There is no finalizing gesture found in Moody's pronouncement; he simply states the obviousness of what we as living beings must on some level share or do or think or feel.

He warns us early that if we are in "search of a tidy, well-organized life in these pages, a life of kisses bestowed or of novels [he has] written," we will be in for a surprise. "My book and my life," he tells us, "are written in *fits*, more like epilepsy than like narrative. The process of this work is obsessive" (8). *The Black Veil*, he tells us, is the "story of a particular search for the original image of *the veil* in my life, the veil in the life of my family the original image of *facelessness,* all this in account of a five-day driving trip to Maine to locate the origin of the veil among Moody's, this five–day search woven like a braid into an account of my own difficulties" (8).[12] The account "never settles for the orderly where the disorderly and explosive can substitute, because obsession is not orderly, it is protean, like consciousness" (8). Throughout the work other voices—"disembodied quotations (some from Hawthorne, some from others) that float like ghosts"—are intermixed with Moody's descriptions and analysis (8). These "voices" are signaled and set apart through the use of italicized type—there are no other page or source references (though an extensive bibliography follows at the end of the work). These different "voices" function also to influence and, in a sense, "disrupt" the authority of a single voice, of Moody's voice.

Early on one such "voice" begins a section this way: "*Fathers appear to us to love without condition if only we can interpret their complicated language. Fathers move over expanses of time, across abysses of generations*" (21, italics in original). And it sets the stage for us to be introduced to Moody's father, Hiram Fredrick Moody, Jr. The father in Moody's early memory is largely there as the source of law, of punishment. He is the signifier of the elliptical term, "Wait until your father gets home." Until, that is, a divorce splits the household and the reference loses meaning. Moody tells us that before his father chose a life in business, in college he had been an English major and his field was American literature. And so one evening when Rick Moody asked his father a question about the epigraph by the poet John Donne in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the father locates a copy and goes over the poem "line by line": through, "lines about being part of a herd, the rabble . . . [lines] about lineage too, or so I

thought, how we are of one substance with the past, with countrymen, with peerage, with all who went before us, even in the nomadism of the late twentieth century, when families were easily sundered and people moved away from one another" (22). His parents' divorce affected him as divorce affects a lot of children: it cut loose the foundation from under him and he turned inward; a shy kid to begin with, "five different address in five years" because of the divorce did not make his life any easier (21).

But now, in discussing a poem with his father, Moody "encountered a guy [who he had] never been introduced to . . . whose preoccupation had always been numbers, numbers, numbers" (21). In his discussion of Donne, his father introduces him to Hemingway, and Moody feels that in his new role as a reader of important literature, "that the bright light of parental affection had been turned on [him] for the first time" (22). Shortly afterwards, his father "urges" him on to the favorite author and book of his college years, Herman Melville and *Moby-Dick*. In the ensuing conversation it is the result of a nod of recognition to Hawthorne, Melville's contemporary, that allows the father to add, " . . . what was most interesting about Hawthorne *was that he had written a story about a relative of ours*, a story about a Moody!" (23, italic in original).[13] The source of that claim is located in the footnote that Nathaniel Hawthorne added to his story "The Minister's Black Veil: A Parable" published in 1836: "Another clergyman in New England, Mr. Joseph Moody, of York Maine, who died about eighty years since, made himself remarkable by the same eccentricity that is here related of the Reverend Mr. Hooper. In his case, however, the symbol had a different import. In early life he had accidentally killed a beloved friend; and from that day till the hour of his own death, he hid his face from men."[14]

If life were like fiction, Moody's "five-day search" would end with certitude: the original image of the veil, confirmed. And yet life is not fiction and the truth that they sought turns out to be a lie—a story, a tale, a fiction. After tracking down papers, journals, diaries, odd-stories of the "clan" Moody, it became readily apparent that there is more than one Moody family involved. As they come to the end of the line, tracing and retracing their steps, working through the genealogies, all the signs point to the awful conclusion: "that the Moodys of my line *had no conclusive relation to the Moodys of Handkerchief Moody's line*, unless I was willing to make one up" (284).

But the discovery of his and his forbearer's misinterpretation and misapprehension of familial beginnings is not and does not constitute the rational behind these pages; the information, which is known to Moody before he begins his task of reconstruction in these pages, does not set itself up as a kind of *telos* from which all interpretation is derived or even directed toward. Rather, it situates itself in these pages as simply a fact, a fluke, a fable. One of many. The discovery affirms and re-affirms for the reader that it is the journey and not the outcome, which is important in Moody's text.

That said, then it becomes clear that throughout the journey we seek what he seeks, and like Moody, our search is not restricted to a week-long event; rather, we (like him) circulate within several particular cultural moments; we (like him) circulate around ideas of Patrimony and divorce and family and the roles we play in the ideal family; like him we recognize place, placement and terrain to supply a theory of origin; like him we ask and re-ask what it means to be an American and what does America mean or stand for or look like toward the end of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries; we (like him) seek answers to questions raised about ancestors (real and imagined) and their stories (real and imagined) and the impact those stories have on our lives (real and imagined). Moody suggests the questions and we grapple with them individually.

Toward the end of his autobiography, Moody writes:

> When I started this book, I told myself *I would conceal nothing*. All of myself, so far as it was illustrative, would be material. Eccentric habits (an almost total avoidance of telephones, a tendency to eat the same meals over and over), grand mediocrities, malfeasances, failures (I couldn't make it in book publishing, I was turned down at every doctoral program I ever applied to, I was fired from most of my jobs, I was completely inept at Little League, I never became competent in a single musical instrument), all these would be *in bounds*, so far as the rules of this adventure were constructed. The only requirements for admittance to this canon were that tales of my life had to be interesting, relevant, and subjectible to style. Why this feeling, then, that I have left something out? (293).

"I have felt," he adds, "there were things I wasn't getting down." And then for a number of pages he muses on (and plays with) the idea of "things left out." For example, "My work, . . . and all that business about a movie that was made of a certain book by me, etc., is left out" (293). As in the opening pages, Moody's pages contain a list of "things left out" which range from the mundane to the serious, leading finally to a harrowing moment of self-disclosure: his sister's death and what it meant to him.[15]

Why is this here? Why, as we turn the final pages of the work, does Moody stop to inform us of his project; shouldn't this have been forecasted to us earlier in the text? Perhaps it is an act of restoration: in this single last act, he restores to the memoir all that he says it lacks; with this swipe of the hand, that feeling of "something left out" has been erased and placed in its proper place and taken its space (as limited as it is) among the many words already "spoken." Or perhaps it is as Moody suggests, "Maybe it's simply the case that *concealment is essential to identity*" (298).

Since no utterance is ever exclusive—the final word, as it were—all discourse finds itself within this interplay of concealing and revealing, and all discourse revolves around the shared and counter utterances of the Other. Moody's act of restoration (if that is what it is), then, simply signals to the reader—the other partner in this discourse—that not all has been said or can be said. Moody (in the construction and reconstruction of the events, the ideas, and indeed, of this text) demonstrates that not only is language, as Bakhtin reminds us, "overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist," but so, too, is one's life. "I had learned that my past didn't exist except in interpretations of the past," Moody tells us (202). That said, Moody's "memoir" set out to trace the authenticity of Hawthorne's "footnote," while it worked to make sense of (and in some ways make "real") Moody's own life.

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Notes

Endnotes serve to add information to the discussion-at-hand without distracting from the on-going conversation; that is, endnotes are asides, references, perhaps even anecdotes that are as necessary to the conversation as is the overall text. And yet, endnotes are set a part from the main train of thought by a reference number. In a way, endnotes are also dialogic in that they disrupt and interrupt the conversation in order to have their say. They situate themselves as the other voices—they bring to the conversation their own set of utterances and assumptions. In a sense they exist "in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions" (Bakhtin).

1. We shape the narrative according to the conventions of the form. For example, one's grocery list—"bread, butter, milk, and eggs"—is read one way as a grocery list and then another way if we assume it's meant to be a poem. Mary Klages argues that for Bakhtin, a grocery list may be more reflective of social relationships; the list appears to have a distinctive social purpose, while, if read as a poem, the words "presume alien utterances beyond its own boundaries" ("Discourse in the Novel" 285).
2. The OED definition of "autobiography." Though the "by himself" portion is not always followed. See *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Alex Haley, for example, or any number of popular autobiographies, usually written by sports stars or celebrities, which seem to always include an "as told to" tag.
3. See as well Philip Lejeune's chapter "The Autobiographical Pact" in *On Autobiography* for an earlier formation of these ideas and the problems or, rather, the limits of such a "condition." As Paul John Eakins points out in his introduction to this work, "we find Lejeune insisting, as a point of departure, that autobiography is necessarily a fiction produced under special circumstances, yet without some sincere basis in referential fact autobiography risks losing its status as a distinct genre and collapsing entirely into fiction. To read autobiography in the manner of Lejeune, one must both be sophisticated, alive to

its imaginative art *and* naïve, believing in the sincerity of the author's intention to present the story of 'a real person concerning his own existence" (xiii).

4. Geoffrey Nunberg considers the colon to be a kind of punctuation which is "genre-independent" since it can be used "in every written genre from a personal letter to a published article (thereby excluding, for example, footnotes, block quotations, bullet items, the newlines used in poetry and lists)" (18). He also suggests that colons are "text category indicators," that is, a graphical device in which a non-alphanumeric character is used "to provide information about structural relations among elements of a text" (17).

5. See as well Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," in *Acts of Literature* (221-252). For Derrida, a text's participation within a genre marks both inclusion and exclusion; that is, the term "genre" "gathers together the corpus and, at the same time, in the blinking of an eye, keeps it from closing, from identifying itself with itself" (231).

1. It might seem ingenuous to use the term "metaphor" in a discussion of the Dialogic, since, as Bakhtin writes in "Discourse in the Novel," "it is impossible under any condition or any time to imagine a trope [say, metaphor] being unfolded into two exchanges of dialogue," since "[t]he polysemy of the poetic symbol presupposes the unity of a voice with which it is identical." However, "as soon as another's voice, another's accent, the possibility of another's point of view breaks through this play of symbol, the poetic plane is destroyed and the symbol is translated onto the plane of prose" (327-328). Not only the possibility of another's voice, but the actuality of voices wrestling with the idea of veils and veiling "destroys" the poetic and reaffirms the dialogic in Moody's memoir.

7. The idea of autobiography situating itself as a genre is also made problematic, of course, by Paul De Man's assertion the autobiography should not be considered as a genre at all; rather for him it is "a figure of reading or understanding that occurs . . . in all texts" (70). And thus, as Anderson points out, for DeMan, autobiography produces "fictions or figures in place of self knowledge" (13); the author of the text reads himself as personified by himself and thus he is always removed from the self he seeks. Unlike Bakhtin's questioning of the idea of genre, De Man's assessment is a *poetic* interpretation and Bakhtin's *dialogic.*

8. The quote (in Kent's essay) is from Bakhtin's "Speech Genres," found in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1986), p 68.

9. In the essay "Autobiography and the Cultural Moment," James Olney reminds us that the focus on the word "autobiography" should rest on the *autos* since the notion of "self" should take precedence over the notion of "life" (*bios*). He says, "Prior to the refocusing from *bios* to *autos* there had been a rather naïve threefold assumption about the writing of an autobiography: first that the *bios* of the autobiography could only signify 'the course of a lifetime' or at least a significant portion of a lifetime; second, that the autobiographer could narrate his life in a manner at least approaching an objective historical account and make of that internal subject a text existing in the external world; and third, that there was nothing problematical about the *autos*, no agonizing questions about identity, no self-definition, self-existence, or self-deception—at least none the reader need attend to—and therefore the fact that the individual was himself narrating the story of himself had no troubling philosophical, psychological, literary, or historical implications" (20) However, it was "this turning to *autos*—the 'I' that coming awake to its own being shapes and

determines the nature of the autobiography and in so half-discovers, half-creates itself—that opened up the subject of autobiography specifically for literary discussion, for behind every work of literature there is an 'I' informing the whole and making its presence felt at every critical point, and with out this 'I,' stated or implied, the work would collapse into mere insignificance" (21).

10. Much of Moody's autobiography is haunted by an idea sounded in Hawthorne's footnote as to why he wore the veil: Hawthorne reports it is because Moody had "accidentally killed his beloved friend." And Moody traces the ramifications of that statement and questions what the adverb "accidentally" means? Moody seeks to understand and to enter into the mind of the other by giving voice to the pain and fear the young Joseph Moody must have felt at the death of his friend by his hands. He does so by asking us to consider two other "killers": Kip Kinkle and William S. Burroughs. Kinkle, of course, is the young boy who slipped into a crowded cafeteria at his school in Springfield, Oregon, and began shooting his fellow classmates; Burroughs is the famous author who shot and killed his common-law wife, Joan Vollmer Adams, in Mexico in 1951. Neither "killer" is a conventional killer and as Moody points out the theories as to why they did what they, do not and cannot really answer the question. Rather, suggests Moody, their purpose as "the attribution of explanation, in the spirit of calamity, [becomes] an important part of the American experience" (222).

11. In Rick Moody's first novel, *Garden State,* Lane's story, his stay in the "The Motel," reflects, echoes, develops, traces, exhumes, Moody's own stay (and the people he met) at the psychiatric hospital in Hollis Queens. Moody refers to this section of the novel in the memoir: "Readers of my earliest novel, . . . can see the fault lines I'm describing, . . . and is best symbolized in the activities of the protagonist immediately before and after the break. The blank pages were a lot like me" (180). See as well selected stories in Moody's collection, *The Ring of the Brightest Angels Around Heaven*, specifically the short story "Phrase Book," which begins "This one's about the stuff that Lucy said. . . .Lucy who took seventy hits of acid *in one day* and, in a way, lived to tell" (39).

12. Part of the difficulties that Moody alludes to above is that his childhood seems to resemble the childhood of his times: a world filled with divorced or absent parents, latch-key kids, television baby-sitters, video games, and hours and hours of loneliness and confusion.

13. "It was the kind of thing you repeated on the playground. *I'm related to Davy Crockett! My grandfather owns a newspaper! My father fired off a howitzer! Some guy named Hawthorne wrote a story about our family!*" (23)

14. This quote comes from Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Selected Tales and Sketches* (New York: Penguin, 1987), p. 185. But Rick Moody also places Hawthorne's story at the end of his memoir (as perhaps both a beginning and an ending); it follows his closing remark, "Cover your face" (303). In the Penguin edition, in his "Introduction," Michael J. Colacurcio suggests that "The Minister's Black Veil" is emblematic of Hawthorne's "own thematic 'bottom line'": "the ineluctable relation of all personal existence" (xxxi). And it may well be Moody's.

15. In his collection of short stories *Demonology*, there are two stories, "Mansion on the Hill" and the title story "Demonology" that circulate and resonate with Moody's sister's death. In "Demonology" he writes:

> I should fictionalize it more, I should conceal myself. I should consider the responsibilities of characterization, I should conflate her two children into one, or reverse their genders, or otherwise alter them, I should make her boyfriend a husband, I should explicate all the tributaries of my extended family (its remarriages, its intercince politics), I should novelize the whole thing, I should make it multigenerational, I should work in my forefathers (stonemasons and newspapermen), I should let artifice create an elegant surface, I should make the events orderly, I should wait and write about it later, I should wait until I'm not angry, I shouldn't clutter my narrative with fragments, with mere recollections of good times, or with regrets, I should make Meredith's death shapely and persuasive, not blunt and subjunctive, I shouldn't have to think the unthinkable, I shouldn't have to suffer, I should address her here directly (these are the ways I miss you), I should write only of affection, I should make our travels on this earthly landscape safe and secure, I should have a better ending, I shouldn't say her life was short and often sad, I shouldn't say she had her demons, as I do too.

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STARS AND STRIPES OF CORRUPTION: Dead Kennedys' Subversive Critique of the Reagan Administration and Fundamentalist Religion in the 1980s

When it comes to influential American punk rock bands, San Francisco's Dead Kennedys superseded the punk movement's "anarchy for anarchy's sake" intentions by releasing five controversial and politically charged records from 1980 to 1986. Taken collectively, Dead Kennedys' works—*Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables* (1980), *In God We Trust, Inc.* (1981), *Plastic Surgery Disasters* (1982), *Frankenchrist* (1985), and *Bedtime for Democracy* (1986)—represent a frontal assault on what the group perceived to be a heartless, dehumanizing, militaristic Reagan administration that was buttressed by hypocritical and bigoted fundamentalist religion. Calling upon a manic and cryptic guitar sound, as well as unflinching and brutal lyrics, Dead Kennedys in the 1980s became the target of censorship by Tipper Gore and the Parents Music Resource Center and became embroiled in an obscenity lawsuit because of a sexually graphic poster they inserted into their third album. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to provide a reevaluation of Dead Kennedys' music by removing it from the stereotypical landscape of nihilistic, purely emotive punk rock, and instead examine the music within the cerebral framework of an antifascistic, anticapitalistic, anti-conformist, antiwar critique of 1980s America.

Formed in 1978 and disbanded in 1986, Dead Kennedys consisted of lead singer/lyricist Jello Biafra (Eric Boucher), guitarist East Bay Ray (Ray Peppernell), bassist Klaus Flouride (Geoffrey Lyall), and drummer D.H. Peligro (Darren Henley). In a 1981 interview, Biafra summed up his band's musical philosophy by stating, "Anybody who doesn't use art as a weapon is not an artist" (Fitzgerald 130). The target of Dead Kennedys' scathing critique was the robotlike, "business-as-usual," don't-question-authority mindset of Reagan-era America. Dead Kennedys' music literally dared people to think for themselves, shun conformism, and to question the established ways of considering organized religion, capitalism, war, racism, and the environment. From the very beginning the band billed itself as "antistupidity," and the members took every opportunity on stage, in print, and on the airwaves to expound their "vacant stranger theory." Biafra described the theory as follows:

> People who are more interested in building cocoons for themselves than in trying to get rid of the problems; they're building cocoons to keep out...are the ones most openly proud

> of being stupid.... 'I will one day fall in love. I will one day have a job that I like'... they'll either just quietly try to ride it out until they crack up or they'll turn into a John Hinckley.... We glorify the vacant stranger as one outlet to mental freedom (30).

The vacant stranger theory serves as an overarching theme for the songs contained in their five records: the disturbing notion that nothing will fundamentally change in the United States—that no true happiness or fulfillment will be attained—until the *system* itself is dismantled. In a punk-rock variation of the "name the system" philosophy of the 1960s civil rights and anti-Vietnam War protesters (Gitlin 171-192), Dead Kennedys contended that fascism, racism, economic imbalance, and violence had become institutionalized, and that Americans have been brainwashed from birth into believing in the integrity and moral worth of a system of advanced capitalism. It was Joan Didion who most eloquently stated that "people tell themselves stories in order to live" (11); the philosophy that emerged from the music of Dead Kennedys was that Americans need to arise from their narcotized states (the stories—or lies—they tell themselves) and *creatively* construct counterarguments that directly challenge the capitalistic status quo.

By calling upon art, music, literature, and political and social activism, the members of Dead Kennedys maintained that a revolution was possible. Not a bloody revolution, because violence would simply emulate the fascistic impulse of American institutions; instead, a revolution of ideas, in which art and activism awaken people from their sleep of blind obedience by offering an alternative lens for viewing reality and the American experience.

According to Biafra, the real criminals are not the vacant strangers who continue to buy into status quo America, but rather the "mindless authoritarians" who run the country by default. And in his lyrics and interviews, Biafra, in true conspiratorial fashion, believed that the authoritarians are capable of anything—even murder—to hold onto their power and wealth. As Biafra once said, "Mark my words. If any member of the Dead Kennedys is found dead of a drug overdose or a car crash—a government agency is behind it" (Fitzgerald, 1983, 38). This conspiratorial bent also expressed itself in the band's belief that the use of harder drugs available on the street stemmed from a government plot to narcotize Americans into submission. The idea apparently was influenced by a 1978 interview with the late Michael Kowalsky, founder of the legendary punk band UXA (United Experiments of America), who was quoted as saying: "Don't you think punk rock is one of the first trends in America that isn't directly manipulated by the government? After all, they did give LSD away, 1964 was when the CIA experimented at Stanford with LSD, and 1964 was when it exploded on the streets" (37). Although a stridently antidrug band, the members

of Dead Kennedys, in lyrics and interviews, have asserted that it is more than simply drugs numbing postmodern America—it is the perpetuation of Darwinistic capitalism and the institutions that support it which are at the core of American soullessness. As Biafra commented in a 1982 interview, "Americans as a whole have no soul. . . .There's certain pride in being from a certain stock and a certain region, and even in being able to do things in a certain way and do them well, that we don't have in this country" (31).

From the perspective of various punk rock critics, the works of Dead Kennedys hinged on trying to raise the consciousness of their young fans, both on record and on stage. Making money was never the *raison d'être of* the band, as evidenced by their skeptical attitude to their newfound fame when their first album, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables,* was released in 1980 and sold tens of thousands of copies in Europe alone. In the face of growing demand for Dead Kennedys records and appearances, the band staked out public positions in opposition to high ticket prices, restriction of minors from clubs, and the massification of punk into "New Wave." Without such resistance, Biafra felt that their musical expression would turn into a job "you have to do if you're going to play for Bill Graham on a seven-foot stage for ten bucks a ticket and watch his goon squad beat up fans for dancing" (31).

Critique of Religious Hypocrisy in 1980s America

An overriding theme of the music of Dead Kennedys is that the Moral Majority of the 1980s experience—that is, the religious right and fundamentalist religion in particular—have engaged in a campaign to censor or curtail the distribution of rock music, art, and literature considered to be blasphemous, sexually explicit, or obscene. In song after song, interviews, and literature distributed by the band, Dead Kennedys, in Nietzschean fashion, hold that religion is the opiate of the masses—that by instilling the fear of the wrath of God, by imposing guilt, and by imparting the fear of eternal damnation, religion is, in effect, not offering the path of salvation, but is utilizing a form of mind control. In the 1981 EP *In God We Tru*st, Inc.—featuring a cover art by Winston Smith depicting Christ nailed to a cross constructed from a dollar bill—two songs especially reflect the band members' revulsion over what they perceive as a religious gestapo. In one song, titled "Religious Vomit," a manic, rage-filled Jello Biafra screams:

> All religions make me wanna throw up
> all religions make me sick
> all religions make me wanna throw up
> all religions suck.
> They all claim that they have the truth, that'll set you free
> just give

'em all your money and they'll set you free, free, for a fee.
They all claim that they have 'the answer' / when they don't
even know the Question
they're all just bunch of liars
they just want your money
they just want your consciousness.

In the other song, "Moral Majority," Biafra's voice drips with revulsion and resentment as he bellows:

You call yourselves the Moral Majority
We call ourselves the people in the real world
Trying to rub us out, but we're going to survive
God must be dead if you're alive.
You say 'God loves you, come and buy the Good News'
then you buy the president and swimming pools
If Jesus don't save 'til we're lining your pockets
God must be dead if you're alive.

In fact, many of the religious hypocrisy songs of Dead Kennedys are philosophically linked to the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. Because of his proclamation that "God is dead," his insistence that the meaning of life is to be found on purely human terms rather than within the precepts and doctrines of Christianity, and his concept of the Superman and the will to power, Nietzsche's uncompromisingly provocative works have influenced such artists as George Bernard Shaw, D.H. Lawrence, and Jean-Paul Sartre, and within the realm of the punk rock genre, Dead Kennedys are to be added to that list. Three specific Nietzschean themes thread through the band's caustic critique of fundamentalist religion in the 1980s.

First, in terms of decadence, is that an animal, a species, an individual is depraved when it loses its instincts, when it chooses or when it prefers what is harmful to it. Nietzsche considers life itself to be the instinct for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for power. For Nietzsche, where the will to power is lacking, there is decline—that is, decadence (1895).

Second, in terms of the "self-deceptive fraudulence" of Christianity, is that at the core of human decadence and the demise of the individual's will to power are Christian values, morality, and doctrines. For Nietzsche, belief in Christianity is contradictory to life because it has taken the side of everything weak, base, and ill-constituted. Nietzsche argues that Christianity fears people who *will* themselves to the fullest extent of self-actuality. To control anyone who would strive to attain such self-fulfillment, Christianity, Nietzsche proclaims, has succeeded in willing "the domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal

man—the Christian" (1885, 1895, 1889) to follow the dictates of Christianity in lockstep and without questioning.

The third comes in terms of Christian concepts of good and evil. Nietzsche maintains that both concepts are fraudulent and meaningless, asserting instead that what is good is all that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. Thus, for Nietzsche, all that proceeds from weakness is bad. Happiness, he says, is the feeling that power increases—that a resistance is overcome (1885, 1886,1895).

Once again, "Moral Majority" serves as a prime example, with a seething Biafra singing/screeching the following Nietzsche-inspired lyrics:

> Circus-tent con men and Southern belle bunnies
> milk your emotions then they steal your money
> it's the new dark ages with the fascists toting bibles
> cheap nostalgia for the Salem Witch Trials.
> Stodgy ayatollahs in their double-knit ties
> burn lots of books so they can feed you their lies
> masturbating with a flag and bible
> God must be dead if you're alive.
> Blow it out your ass, Jesse Helms
> blow it out your ass, Ronald Reagan.
> What's wrong with a mind of my own?

While the vocals on the religious critique songs of Dead Kennedys are decidedly emotive and primal scream in sound, the lyrics swell with Nietzschean concepts. The songs argue that Christianity in America has eroded individual free will and stunted the individual's ability to achieve self-actualization. The Nietzschean notion of decadence has set in, the lyrics declare, because Christian indoctrination from cradle to grave has obliterated the individual's instincts to strive to engage in that which brings him or her personal fulfillment and power. In other words, Nietzsche's description of the Christian "herd animal" is reflected significantly in the religious critique of Dead Kennedys.

Critique of the Denial of Human Rights during the Reagan Administration

Another important theme threading through the works of Dead Kennedys centers on the band's belief that the Reagan administration, in the 1980s, spearheaded a campaign to suppress and deny the civil rights of many Americans, particularly the poor, people of color, homosexuals, and controversial artists, writers, and musicians. From the vantage point of this band, President Ronald Reagan served as the ultimate symbol of a conformist, intolerant, bigoted, and greedy American spirit. The band—in their songs, on stage, and in interviews—was nothing less than scathing in its indictment of the Reagan administration as a

metaphorical cancer devouring the conscience of America. For Jello Biafra, East Bay Ray, Klaus Flouride, and D.H. Peligro, the Reagan administration represented nothing short of a kakistocracy—that is, government by the worst men.

The denial of human rights during the Reagan years as a recurring theme in the music of Dead Kennedys expressed itself quite jarringly in the 1981 song, "We've Got a Bigger Problem Now." Biafra sings:

> I am Ronald Reagan
> born again with fascist cravings
> still you make me president.
> Human rights will soon go away
> I am now your Shah today
> now I command all of you
> now you're gonna pray in school
> I'll make sure they're Christian too.
> California Uber Alles, Uber alles California.
> Klu Klux Klan will control you
> still you think its natural
> nigger knocking for the master race
> still you wear a happy face.
> You closed your eyes
> can't happen here
> Alexander Haig is near
> Vietnam won't come back you say
> join the Army or you will pay.
> California Uber alles
> Uber alles California.

In analogizing President Reagan to a Khomeini-like Shah or to a Hitleresque leader, Dead Kennedys are engaging in a longstanding practice of protest in rock music, although admittedly pushing the boundaries of taste and propriety to the breaking point for many listeners. Biafra himself has acknowledged that this type of subversive political critique is simply a contemporary version of the genre of protest rock, noting: "During the '60s Dylan and other artists did protest songs with acoustic guitar. We're just the modern equivalent—only louder so more people will hear us" (Fitzgerald, 1983, 59). Biafra points out that even the selection of the band's name was an act of political protest: "Our name was meant to call attention to the beginnings of the 'me generation' which started with the Kennedy assassinations, because the Kennedy assassinations torpedoed the American dream. America growing bigger, better!

Out in space! Bigger cars! Movie star president and his gorgeous wife! Kaboom! The balance tilts. And it tilted slowly, but where are we now?" (2).

In part, the protest lyrics of Dead Kennedys argue that the Reagan administration created an environment of hate for those with oppositional beliefs and ideas, as well as an environment of hate for those who found themselves on the economically lowest rungs of the capitalist ladder. This position reflects Haig Bosmajian's (1983) notion that the rhetoric of hate has historically been used to subjugate those in society who lack power or position. Bosmajian points out that the Nazis defined Jews as "bacilli," "parasites," "a disease," "demons," and "a plague" (6). Similarly, the language of white racism has been used to keep people of color in their place, while sexist language has allowed men to define who and what a woman is and must be. And labels such as "traitors," "saboteurs," and "obscene degenerates" were applied to students protesting the war in Vietnam (7).

Although often crude in sound and graphic in words, the music of Dead Kennedys has a moral urgency to it in characterizing the policies of the Reagan administration as ethically bankrupt and evil at the core. This moral component recalls John Gardner's observation that true art is essentially moral—that is, life-giving—and that "art builds; it never stands pat; it destroys only evil" (15). Dead Kennedys' music takes a cold, hard, uncompromising look at a nation that is morally adrift and refuses to back off in the assessment of blame.

Dead Kennedys' music also seems to reflect sociologist Ervin Staub's (1989) observation that the essence of evil is the destruction of human beings, which includes not only killing but also the creation of conditions that "materially or psychologically destroy or diminish people's dignity, happiness, and capacity to fulfill basic material needs" (25). Clearly, Dead Kennedys' intention is to confront its audience with the multiple levels of state-imposed "evil" sanctioned by the Reagan administration, and in so doing, implores their listeners to shake loose the bonds of complacency and moral ambivalence. As political scientist Murray Edelman (1995) has noted, some art helps shape what has become established political beliefs, while other artistic creations serve as a corrective in their challenge to common beliefs and conventional world views (11–14, 17–21). The band's protest songs are representative of the latter in their confrontational examinations of what the members believe to be abusive political orthodoxies. These songs offer few clear-cut solutions, because they are primarily meant as warnings or wake-up calls to those who would hear their message, before it's too late.

Critique of Fascism in 1980s America

As a protest band, Dead Kennedys also used their music as a forum for decrying government-promoted fascistic tactics during the 1980s experience. From the band's perspective, most acts of violence in America are rarely random; instead, they are premeditated acts of a police state designed to quell dissent and

crush overt opposition to the capitalistic status quo. Throughout their career, Dead Kennedys painted a picture of an America that touted itself as a peaceful nation despite a record of political assassinations, police-state scenarios, and the American war machine's imperialistic interventions in Vietnam, Central America, and elsewhere throughout the world. The use of official violence to silence the restless masses is at the core of the controversial 1980 song, "Kill the Poor," with an enraged Biafra declaring:

> Efficiency and progress is ours once more
> now that we have the neutron bomb
> it's nice and quick and clean and gets things done
> away with excess enemy
> but no less value to property
> no sense in war but perfect sense at home.

Here, the band is assuming the vantage point of an American government considering various options to rid this country of its slums, including eradicating them with nuclear weapons. And in the 1982 song, "Bleed for Me," Dead Kennedys stake out the position that America will resort to any violent means in order to protect its financial interests and to secure petroleum. Biafra sings:

> In the name of world peace
> in the name of world profits
> America pumps up our secret police
> America wants fuel
> to get it, it needs puppets
> so what's ten million dead?
> If it's keeping out the Russians.

The band's examination of fascism mirrors Staub's analysis of group-induced violence and genocide. Staub maintains that rarely is the state's use of official violence directed only at people who cause suffering. Instead, its intensity and the circle of its victims tend to increase over time, as reflected in the history of torture. For example, in the Middle Ages, when torture was part of the legal system, the circle of victims expanded over time. Starting with low-status members of society accused of a crime, progressively higher-status defendants and then witnesses were tortured in order to extract evidence from them (26). In examining group-related acts of violence, such as political torture, as phenomena representing human evil, Staub concludes: "Ordinary psychological processes and normal, common human motivations and certain basic but not inevitable tendencies in human thought and feeling (such as devaluation of others) are the primary sources of evil. Frequently, the perpetrators' own insecurity and suffering

cause them to turn against others and begin a process of increasing destructiveness" (26).

An important component of Dead Kennedys' critique of fascistic America involves the group's unwavering antiwar stance. For example, in the 1986 song, "Potshot Heard Round the World," the band chastises not only the American armed forces for turning people into killing machines, but also lambastes a human species that historically has been hell-bent on destroying itself. Biafra wails:

> Hey! Yo! We're the United States Marines
> we know you've all been killing each other
> for at least two thousand years . . .
> We want people boiling for revenge in their living rooms
> so we can play shoot-em-up anywhere we choose
> and our backers can cash in
> without the public asking questions.

Meanwhile, the 1986 antiwar song, "Rambozo the Clown," argues that America teaches its children to glorify war through mass-mediated messages, toys, and video games. The song states:

> War is sexy
> war is fun
> iron ego
> red dawn
> be a wolverine
> you'll rule the hills
> just get some guns and cheerios
> any kid can conquer Libya
> just steal a fighter plane
> look who came home in a wheelchair
> VA hospital they don't care
> we're the machine
> you're just a tool
> who fell for the myth of Rambozo the Clown.

Machismo as a source of American fascism is also targeted in the music of Dead Kennedys. This expresses itself to the fullest in the 1986 song, "Macho Insecurity," with the band steadfast in the belief that brains triumph over brawn, and that dialogue solves more problems than the use of force. In Biafra's words:

Name one thing on earth lower than a tough guy who talks with
his fists instead of using his head
who beats the shit out of anything it can't understand
behind the muscle mask is a scared little boy

Along with chronicling the violence perpetrated by humans against each other, Dead Kennedys' works also capture the violence waged against the environment. Two songs in particular sadly illustrate corporate America's ambivalence toward protecting the environment. In the 1982 song, "Moon Over Marin," the protagonist stumbles through a bleak, murky world in which toxic pollutants choke the sky and the oceans are dark with the remnants of spilled oil. And in the 1986 song, "Cesspools in Eden," moral bankruptcy on the part of corporate America has transformed a once beautiful nation into a land of poisoned groundwater, toxic chemicals, and cancer-causing agents.

A final critique of fascism in America focuses on the punk rock movement itself, with Dead Kennedys making it clear that the band refused to be associated with the neo-Nazi punk fans who were brandishing swastikas and calling for the formation of a Fourth Reich. In the 1981 song, "Nazi Punks Fuck Off," Biafra sets the neo-Nazis straight by emphasizing what the punk movement means to him:

Punk ain't no religious cult
Punk means thinking for yourself
you ain't hardcores cause you spike your hair
when a jock still lives inside your head.

This sentiment is buttressed in the 1986 song, "Chickenshit Conformist," in which Biafra laments that in large part it was the fascistic tendencies of some of the punk rock performers and fans that led to punk's demise. Biafra concludes:

When thugs form bands
look who gets record deals
from New York metal tables looking to scam
who sign the most racist queerbashing bands they can find
to make a buck revving kids up for war.

Conclusion

The legacy of the music of Dead Kennedys is that it captured the tensions, turmoil, and inherent contradictions of 1980s America. The hardcore, abrasive sound, the graphic lyrics, and the outrageousness of some of the band's more extreme political positions—all of this was a calculated attempt to shock Americans out of their apathy and fear of change, and to convince people to think

for themselves rather than obediently follow the dictates of the church and the government. The band was conspiracy-obsessed to a fault, but in so doing, posed vexing questions about governmental abuse of authority and clandestine activities involving America's presence in Central America, the Middle East, and elsewhere in the world. And probably more so than any other punk rock band, Dead Kennedys was brutally fank about the growing chasm between the haves and have-nots of society—a gap that reflected the urgent need to dismantle a corrupt and unjust system of Darwinistic capitalism and replace it with a system of humane socialism.

Despite the fact that the punk rock movement ultimately unraveled and three members of Dead Kennedys ended up suing Jello Biafra for allegedly shortchanging them on royalties and mismanaging record sales *(Chandler, Arizona Tribune, 1998,* D2), the group left behind a body of political protest songs that represented a direct challenge to status quo America and established their reputation as this country's foremost "thinking person's" punk band.

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Carpenter Trio

One Piece of the Formula: The Hawksian Women in the Films of John Carpenter

When a young John Carpenter first saw Angie Dickinson in Howard Hawks's seminal 1959 western, *Rio Bravo*, her performance as one of Hawks's prototypical tough women made a lasting impression on the youthful filmgoer. As Carpenter's directorial career has progressed, his adoption of the "Hawksian woman" as a character in his screenplays has been repeatedly noted by his biographers, Robert Cumbow and John Kenneth Muir, in the many critical analyses of the Carpenter filmography, and as a forthright admission by the director himself.

John Carpenter may be the closest thing we have to a true auteur in the film industry today, as he not only directs his titles but also usually scores the music and either writes or co-authors most of his films' plot lines. Throughout his theatrical features, from *Assault on Precinct 13* to *Ghosts of Mars*, Carpenter has often included at least one tough Hawksian female in the cast. In his two most recent productions, however, Carpenter has veered somewhat from the formula by depicting Katrina in *Vampires* as little more than a victim of various characters' abuse. In his last film, *Ghosts of Mars*, Carpenter seemingly returns to the template by setting his narrative in a matriarchal society where women not only rule but also head the planet's various social institutions such as law enforcement and scientific exploration.

In their book-length studies of John Carpenter's career, both Muir and Cumbow discuss the contribution Howard Hawks's films made to Carpenter's storytelling sense. Muir has defined the Hawksian woman, as epitomized by Angie Dickinson in *Rio Bravo*, as ". . . a female who gives as good as she gets and is both tough and feminine at the same time" (11). Cumbow supplements these defining traits when he notes that Carpenter's work shows him as a director who " . . . remains less interested in sexual attraction than in the ability of women to prove themselves to be at least as tough and resourceful as the men around them" (229). Finally, in his study of Hawks's work, Robin Wood says Dickinson's character ". . .gives us the perfect embodiment of the Hawksian woman, intelligent, resilient and responsive. There is a continual sense of a woman who really grasps what is important to her. . . .It is not so much a matter of characterization as the communication of a life quality" (42).

We see a parade of these female characters throughout Carpenter's works. In most instances, the women are unattached and not in need of a man to provide them with such fundamental needs as food and shelter. The "life quality"

Wood refers to is exemplified by the fact they have all found a place for themselves in society in one way or another rather than retreating into their own worlds. Characters such as Leigh in *Assault on Precinct 13,* Linda Styles of *In the Mouth of Madness,* and *They Live*'s Holly Thompson epitomize those who have full-time jobs while *Prince of Darkness*'s Catherine Danforth and Maggie, in *Escape From New York*, are resourceful women who have adapted as best they can to their present circumstances. In each of these cases, as well as several others, Carpenter shows his major female characters as equal to his men, either in their choice of jobs (police officer, publishing company editor, television program director) or their equivalent place in the social hierarchy (graduate physics student, criminal associate). Of note here is that of all the major Carpenter females, only Adrienne Barbeau's Stevie Wayne in *The Fog* fits the general Hawksian mode while exhibiting one additional characteristic: unlike her sisters in the rest of Carpenter's titles, Stevie is also a mother.

This is not to say that these women fail to exude and enjoy sexuality, for the sexual byplay and courtship dances between them and one or more of their male counterparts is usually one of the subplots that help drive the overall narrative in Carpenter's universe. From Leigh in *Assault on Precinct 13* to Melanie Ballard in *Ghosts of Mars*, these women are depicted as comfortable with their sexuality while simultaneously unwilling to hop into bed with the first man who attracts them unless that male character first proves himself worthy. Indeed, in many instances these characters are too busy saving the world or forestalling evil's appearance to actually find the time for such physical intimacy. Thus, when we see Catherine Danforth and Brian Marsh following their sexual tryst in *Prince of Darkness,* or Elizabeth Solley and Nick Castle snuggling after their exertions in *The Fog*, we know their teaming up will lead to their combining forces to confront the narrative's evil somewhere down the road. Carpenter's world is such that this female-male teamwork does not guarantee a happy ending, because evil's pervasiveness is always shown as never-ending. Thus, for every Elizabeth and Nick who survive the ghost assault on Antonio Bay, there is a Catherine Danforth who must make the split-second decision to head off the appearance of an ultimate evil in the world in lieu of the opportunity of finally experiencing a positive relationship.

As with any topic there are always exceptions to the generalizations we attempt to draw, and such "rule making" for Carpenter's lead females is no different. For example, while Carpenter is mostly intrigued with his characters' heterosexual byplay, his plot lines occasionally admit to same-sex attractions, particularly among certain of the females. There are also periodic films in the Carpenter oeuvre featuring no female characters at all, such as *Dark Star* and Carpenter's rendition of William M. Campbell's short story, "Who Goes There?", in 1982's *The Thing*. It may come as no surprise, then, that by the conclusion of

both of these films the all-male casts have disintegrated into chaos that leads to death.

Another situation that fails to elicit much in the way of the Hawksian mode is found in Carpenter's occasional forays into directing within the studio system. As such, both his adaptation of Stephen King's *Christine* and the forgettable Chevy Chase-Darrel Hannah comedy-thriller, *Memoirs of an Invisible Man*, fail to develop female leads in the Hawks tradition. Both of these productions found Carpenter working primarily as a director-for-hire, chosen for his above-the-title cachet whose impact on the narrative was limited in comparison to his independently produced efforts. Carpenter's tendency to return to the generic Hawksian woman, however, is one characteristic of his style that makes his most recent works, *Vampires* and *Ghosts of Mars*, intriguing in the way they adapt the apparent formula for their own uses.

Vampires (1998) is based on John Steakley's 1990 novel *Vampire$* with the film scripted by Carpenter, Don Jakoby, and Dan Mazur (Cumbow 280). The adaptation is a loose one, and anyone familiar with the novel will only recognize its parenthood in a couple of the film's more arresting set pieces. Particularly interesting is the way Carpenter and company play fast and loose with the characters who make up the Hawksian group in Steakley's tale. In his film, Carpenter is satisfied to use the members of Jack Crow's (James Woods) vampire-hunting team as cardboard characters whose personalities are not fleshed out as they are in the novel. Indeed, Carpenter sees fit to kill off all but two of the team early in the narrative following their successful raid on an isolated farmhouse that makes up the film's opening scene. The team's eradication occurs when Valek (Thomas Ian Griffith), the film's master vampire, slaughters the vampire hunters and the call girls who are celebrating post-raid at the Sun God motel.

One substantial change resulting from the adaptation process lies in the depiction of the film's sole female character of any weight, Katrina (Sheryl Lee). This character does not even appear in the Steakley novel, while two of the key women who are, arguably, more interesting characters in the latter work are totally excised from the film's cast. *Vampires*' women are thus pigeonholed into tertiary characters who are either hookers, vampires, or victims of abuse by one of the hunters or Valek. The film's men, on the other hand, get to have all the fun as it is they who kill the vampires, get drunk, and screw the call girls. For a director who has shown the respect for women in the Hawksian mode to the degree Carpenter has, *Vampires* displays a misogynistic tone unlike any other title in the director's filmography.

One might argue that the females in this film merely follow the classical vampire narrative tradition that repeatedly places women in a perilous position from which they must be either protected or rescued by the tales' men. As one might expect, however, Carpenter's vampire film derives from a different

sensibility. As Muir has noted, prior to directing *Vampires* Carpenter was openly dismissive of the form as "...being unbelievable and difficult to relate to. He had no desire to make a film about...a bunch of romantic figures with 'eurotrash' accents who wear 'rented formal wear' (191)." Thus, Carpenter wanted his vampires to present Jack Crow's hunters with opponents who present a real threat to peoples' everyday lives and display a cockiness commensurate with that threat. In light of the revisionist attitude underlining *Vampire's* genesis, including Steakley's portrayal of the women in the novel, it appears unlikely that Carpenter felt any obligation to depict his female characters along the lines of traditional women in vampire novels and films.

The brutalization of the female in *Vampires* is carried out primarily toward Katrina who undergoes a variety of humiliations as Carpenter unfurls his plot. Introduced initially as though she will be the film's love interest for Jack Crow, Katrina spots Crow as the hunters' leader at the motel party and willingly takes his room key while he grabs them a couple of beers. Much to her surprise, Katrina is ambushed by Valek who is waiting for Crow in the room. In a creative twist on the concept of the vampire's bite as surrogate for sex, Valek initiates Katrina into vampirism in a scene of faux-cunnilingus that finds the master vampire eventually biting her on the thigh rather than the traditional jugular-bearing neck. As a result of the bite, Valek establishes a telepathic link with Katrina who then becomes valuable to the remaining hunters (Crow and Montoya) as their Mina Harker, allowing them to make contact with Valek in their attempt to discern what he is up to.

Thus, Katrina's primary function in the story is to be used by the hunters in their quest to track down Valek and determine what he is up to in his wanderings. She is also utilized by Carpenter as "eye candy" as Katrina spends a substantial time stripped and tied to a bed in the hotel room where she is watched over by Montoya (Daniel Baldwin), Crow's right-hand man. Eventually, Katrina is slugged by Montoya when she bites him on the wound he receives crashing through the window to save her when she attempts to commit suicide. As Montoya says to Crow later, "I fuckin' slugged her. Who cares?" This statement succinctly establishes the film's attitude toward women in general, and Katrina specifically, for in a perverse plot twist she and Montoya fall for each other during the film's second half despite his constant abuse "to protect her from herself." One can only attribute this attraction to some form of Stockholm syndrome on Katrina's part, but it hardly says much for her character to fall for someone who has treated her the way Montoya has–vampirism notwithstanding. By film's end, Katrina is little more than a prize for Montoya. Both of them are turning into vampires and Crow agrees to give them a couple days head start before hunting them down in recognition of the long-developed bond between himself and his buddy, who has repeatedly helped save his life.

If Katrina fails to fulfill the role of tough Hawksian woman in *Vampires*, who does? One of the things that drew Carpenter to the project was the obvious parallel between Jack Crow's rag-tag vampire hunters and the teamwork and code of respect and mutual reliance in the Hawks' universe. In addition, both Cumbow and Muir make note of what they see as the verbal homosexual byplay in the film between Crow and Father Adam Guiteau (Tim Guinee) who joins Crow and Montoya following the massacre at the motel. However, it becomes quickly apparent that Carpenter is taking one of his recurrent sly swipes at organized religion in general, and the Catholic church specifically, by making the priest the Hawksian woman surrogate in this story. In a film in which the lead male characters are notable misogynists, Father Guiteau is also abused verbally and physically early on by Crow. The vampire hunter eventually finds it necessary to cut the Father's hand in order to convince him to spill the story about the Bergiere Cross Valek seeks which will allow him to walk in the daylight. When Guiteau finally relates the story, Crow replies, "You're a good man, Padre." This scene signals Guiteau's acceptance into the team, much as the Hawksian woman must earn the respect of the men before she becomes part of the group. During the story's conclusion, the hunters' Judas is revealed to be Cardinal Alba (Maximilian Schell)–the priest who has had the task of overseeing the vampire killers' work. Eventually the threat posed by the Cardinal and Valek is repulsed, and it is Father Guiteau who survives as the only hunter trustworthy enough to continue the work of seeking out and destroying the remaining vampires with Crow.

Perhaps as a way of countering the misogynism charges leveled against him following *Vampires*, Carpenter decided to create a society in which women are running the show in his next film, *Ghosts of Mars* (2001). Set on Mars in the year 2176, the film's voice-over accompanying the opening credits tells us the planet is ruled by a matriarchy. In order to underscore this point, Carpenter utilizes a female voice during this exposition.

Told primarily in flashback, *Ghosts of Mars* tells a typical Hawksian western narrative while reversing the gender of the standard team members. As the story unfolds, Melanie Ballard (Natasha Henstridge), a police officer, is called before the planet's ruling council. Ballard has been summoned to explain why the group of officers sent to bring back accused multiple murderer Desolation Williams (Ice Cube) from the outpost named Shining Canyon failed to do so. In an indication of the gender reversals coming in the film, the ruling council is populated primarily by women and the "grand inquisitor" chairing the council (Rosemary Forsyth) is female.

As Ballard begins to relate the circumstances that have returned her to the home base minus Williams or the other four members of the police escort team, Carpenter further develops his gender-bending take on the standard Hawks team. Initially in charge is Helena Braddock (Pam Grier) who, to add spice to the team's interplay, is a lesbian. Clea Duvall's Bashira Kincaid is one of the two

rookies joining the group, while Jericho Butler (Jason Statham) is the veteran male whose primary interest during the mission lies in his desire to get into Ballard's leather pants, despite the fact she outranks him. Thus, the three women are shown to be more than equal to the two men in the group as Braddock and Ballard both outrank the other team members. In addition, all three are quickly established as highly proficient with their weapons as well as able to hold their own during hand-to-hand combat. In Carpenter's universe, however, this equality simply means that the women in this film are not superior to their male counterparts, but merely as ineffective and corrupt as men have been for a long time–particularly in Carpenter's films.

While Carpenter is willing to show us an intriguing version of the Hawksian team in *Ghosts of Mars*, he does not appear willing to set aside some of his long-held narrative traditions. One that is particularly apparent here dates back to Carpenter's treatment of the sexually active teens in *Halloween* who are singled out for death by Michael Myers while Laurie Strode survives. In *Ghosts*, Carpenter is similarly inclined toward Helena Braddock, the lesbian in charge of the escort team. After establishing Braddock's sexual inclinations as she attempts to discern Ballard's preferences during the train trip to Shining Canyon, Carpenter has Braddock become the first team member to die. Not only that, but Braddock is beheaded and her head is impaled upon a stake on a hillside littered with similar victims of the ghosts' wrath. Since Braddock is the only cast member the audience is made familiar with whose body is so abused, one gets the feeling Carpenter may be telling us he is not yet comfortable with homosexuality as a lifestyle. At the same time, however, Braddock's gruesome death and dismemberment help establish the film's concept that women can be just as ineffective and stupid as their male counterparts, for Braddock's fatal mistake is leaving the protection of the team to scout the fleeing ghost figure she spies while reconnoitering Shining Canyon. Indeed, she chooses to leave her partner, Jericho Butler, when prudence would suggest they investigate the fleeing specter together.

The appearance of the film's ghosts is also attributable to one of the cast's females. Dr. Whitlock (Joanna Cassidy) is working with an archeological team exploring the planet when they come upon what turns out to be a doorway buried in the side of a mountain. It is Whitlock who reaches out to touch the door, which surprisingly turns to dust and sets loose the spirits of the Martian warriors who see the colonists as invaders to be repelled. Whitlock then makes her way to Shining Canyon and locks herself in the jail in an attempt to escape the ghosts and in recognition of her failure. In a sense, Whitlock serves as the tainted Hawksian team member who must overcome a character weakness to help the team–much as Dean Martin's Deputy Dude in *Rio Bravo*. And Whitlock does eventually come clean, explaining how the spirits were let loose and acquitting herself well whenever the team is attacked during the film's action pieces. She

does, however, perish in the end when she is taken over by one of the spirits seeking a human host.

With Braddock killed early in the story, Ballard assumes command and it is her relationship with Desolation Williams that eventually forms the narrative's core. For Carpenter, Ballard and Williams may be equal, but that does not mean either of them is invincible. Throughout the initial scenes, when Ballard and Williams tangle, the two take turns besting each other. Williams initially defeats Ballard, although the policewoman manages to catch Williams off guard with a sharp punch to the jaw prompting a victorious Williams to respond, "Damn, girl. I like you already." This fight sets off a series of situations in which the two repeatedly come to each other's aid, saving their lives while concomitantly earning respect for each other's talents. While both Ballard and Williams are obviously dangerous and street smart in their own way, Carpenter frequently shows us that neither is invincible individually. While Williams initially gets the best of Ballard, she returns the favor later when she lures Williams and his cohorts back to his jail cell and confuses them enough to lock them up again. All this figurative pushing and shoving culminates in recognition that Ballard and Williams share the code of the Hawksian West, covering each other's backs and coming to one another's aid again and again. Thus, when Williams' brother dies during one of the confrontations between the ghosts and the humans, Ballard is visibly moved by her compatriot's loss. Likewise, in a bit of role reversal, Williams takes up the needle and thread following the final escape from Shining Canyon to sew the wound Ballard has suffered on her leg.

While showing his two main characters as equals, Carpenter also manages to make them human by showing their frailties. Ballard, faced with command when Braddock is killed, finds that her impromptu plans tend to backfire, and both she and Williams leave themselves open to ambush at different times. When the police officers, Williams' criminal brethren, and the others being held in the jail recognize they have to join together to fight a common enemy–ala *Assault on Precinct 13*–Carpenter shows us that putting differences and personal failures aside and teaming up is the only way for these people to have a chance of escaping the town.

By the time Melanie Ballard returns to the home base and relates her story, the ghosts are on the march. The ruling council, however, chooses to ignore the threat as the head inquisitor implies that the company funding the colonization would likely replace them if the planet's problems were reported as originating with the supernatural. This decision mirrors a number of similar situations in Carpenter's work in which the film's conflict results from the corrupting influence of power upon one or more of the characters. Often, this corruption is found within a ruling group as with the Catholic Church in *Vampires* and *Prince of Darkness,* the alien yuppie business people in *They Live*, or the government in *Starman*. Thus, Carpenter suggests in *Ghosts of Mars* that social

change leading to true gender equality perhaps means little more than the opportunity for women to be similarly corrupted by power as men have historically been. For Carpenter the problem, as always, lies with the potential for corruption in *people.* Gender simply has little to do with it. As Williams states at one point, "There's a thin line between a cop and a crook these days. You've just got the **woman** behind your bullshit."

That all of this may be uncovered in *Ghosts of Mars* is surprising, for the title certainly stands as one of Carpenter's lesser efforts. The film has a "direct-to-video" sense of production values to it that is compounded by the obvious miniatures used for the scenes of the train carrying the police team to and from Shining Canyon. Carpenter also elicits less-than-sterling performances from co-stars Natasha Henstridge and Ice Cube as well, with Cube walking through his role as "Desolation" Williams while giving most lines only the most desultory delivery. For a film whose major location (the Shining Canyon outpost) parallels the one-street settings of Carpenter's beloved westerns, *Ghosts of Mars* shows a remarkably lax group of performances, and is less than what it could have been had Carpenter shown a bit more interest in his casts' rendition of their roles.

Both *Vampires* and *Ghosts of Mars* establish intriguing twists to the often-used Hawksian formula. In *Vampires,* despite the title's misogynistic treatment of Katrina, Carpenter presents a creative rendition of the Hawks woman by placing Father Guiteau in that role. *Ghosts of Mars* shows us that it simply doesn't matter much whether men or women are in charge, as the power both genders may wield can be equally corrupting. In both films, Carpenter's characters can only hope to discover something of importance about themselves while fending off, however temporarily, an evil that is ever-present and can never be totally defeated.

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Invasion of the Individual:
John Carpenter's Modernization of the Myth of Identity-Theft in The Thing, Prince of Darkness, and They Live

The science fiction and horror genres have as a recurring theme the concept of the invasion of the human body by non-human entities. The ultimate threat is realized when a human host is used to help further the evil plans of whatever creature has inhabited it. The fear of being unable to correctly distinguish between our friends and our foes has struck different generations in different ways, with the attribution of the evil inhabiting the human often used as a metaphor for prevailing social fears of that time period. John Carpenter's *The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness*, and *They Live* are one director's attempt to identify, and at times satirize, the faults of 1980s "me decade" American society.

One of the earliest cinematic examples of this horror/sci-fi subgenre is the film *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The good Doctor is, on the outside, a member of genteel, late nineteenth century society. Even his friends cannot predict that Jekyll's body, effectively controlled by Mr. Hyde, has caused the rash of violent outbursts. Interpretations of the many Jekyll-and-Hyde films often tend toward a Freudian analysis, where Hyde's malevolence is an expression of Jekyll's repressed id. Likewise, stolen-identity films of other eras utilize this genre to describe or even blame the origin of evil on the corruption of the human mind and body.

The films of the fifties, sixties, and seventies are the forerunners of John Carpenter's trio of stolen-identity films of the eighties: *The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness*, and *They Live*. Stolen-identity films from the fifties, such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, have long been considered metaphors for the "red threat," where even neighbors and friends could secretly be communists lurking among us, waiting to take over the American way of life. The threat originated outside of America, but infiltrated the consciousness of the nation. Another major theme from fifties sci-fi films was the threat of nuclear power. Our friend the atom bomb had indeed helped end the second World War; however, the American public quickly became afraid of the incomprehensible power of nuclear energy and its potential for use against us. The original *The Thing (From Another World)* and *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* are two of the many films that explore the potential side effects of the misuse of nature.

Closer to Carpenter's films in its attribution of evil is the classic *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, in which a lower-class family of meat packers devolves into flesh-eating lunatics. Initially, several members of this psychotic family appear normal, albeit as normal as Texans manning a remote desert gas station can be. Soon, the viewer realizes just how awful this chainsaw-toting clan truly is when they exercise their profession on humans instead of animals. *Texas Chainsaw*

Massacre shifts its blame of the source of evil from the infiltration of communist regimes to the oil collapse of the seventies and the ensuing recession. Leatherface and pals, after severance from gainful employment, have nothing left to turn to, and so turn their anger, and of course, hunger, on their fellow humans. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was a grimy, sandy, cowboy perversion that counterpointed the glamour and self-indulgence of the cocaine-laced disco world.

The aforementioned Carpenter films update this subgenre to redefine the menace of hidden enemies. Carpenter modernized themes of the fear of invasive social change and the fear of the failure of our economy by placing the threat within American society itself: its principles, dreams, and desires. Carpenter's reaction to the rapid urbanization of America and the extreme stratification of wealth through then-president Ronald Reagan's failed "trickle-down" economic theory was to make monsters out of our friends, neighbors, bosses, and coworkers. This shift in focus was not necessarily more horrifying than the threat of invasion by another society, but it simply re-examined the cause of evil in our society. The media told Americans that to achieve happiness they needed money, and plenty of it. Power was the necessary tool for accumulating wealth, and social responsibility was left at the wayside. The political messages of Carpenter's films are almost the exact opposite of the fifties' sci-fi classics. Instead of glorifying the triumph of democracy and capitalism over communism depicted in fifties sci-fi film, they attempt to identify the same issues (wealth, consumerism, and consumption) as the cause of human unhappiness.

The entity that inhabits various members of an Antarctic scientific research base in John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982) is alien in origin. The creature crash-lands at the beginning of the film, only to be held in check by being frozen in place for years. When unwitting Norwegian scientists release the creature, it manifests itself as a parasite that can control, and ultimately replace, its host. Such is the level of imitation that friends and colleagues of those humans taken over are unable to discern whether a person has been replaced by a thing. Although the initial form the thing takes is that of a sled dog, the remaining organisms it mimics are human. At various times during the film, humans explode into dripping maws, tentacles, fangs, and other pieces of appropriated cellular tissue.

The important difference between the universal order in Carpenter's films, and that of those predecessors who influenced him, particularly the Christian Nyby/Howard Hawks *The Thing,* is described by Carpenter critic Robert C. Cumbow: "In general, the science fiction invader films of the Fifties and early Sixties begin with an emphasis on order and certainty, and an image, perhaps, of civic or domestic calmness. Then something arrives—usually from the sky—and disrupts that order. . . ." However, Carpenter's films "generally begin not with an order that is subsequently disrupted, but with a world in which things are already out of joint" (113).

The evil identity thieves in Carpenter's films are metaphors for the causes of the disruption that has left the world "out of joint." *The Thing* is certainly less *overtly* socially and politically critical in its explanation for this disruption in the world order than the later films *Prince of Darkness* and *They Live*, which viciously attack urbanization and Reaganomics. However, the films are thematically similar. The creature in *The Thing* has two separate metaphorical realizations. First, many critics see the theme of *The Thing* to be the exploration of "the frailty of human flesh" (Muir 103). More specifically, the creature is seen as a metaphor for the ease with which the human body can be injured, destroyed, or repaired, as evidenced by the fascination *The Thing* has with extreme close-ups of finger cutting, burnt flesh, frozen flesh, torn flesh, and-this author's personal favorite-a ravenous mouth that hungrily explodes from a corpse to consume the misplaced hand of a former comrade. Some gravity is also given to the argument that *The Thing* is a film about AIDS, or other dangerous communicable diseases, based on the nature in which the creature propagates itself. The expansion of the thing is exponential, and, echoing the newfound fears regarding the discovery of AIDS in the early eighties, can be spread easily by a single cell secretly invading its host. Carpenter later explored this theme more fully in *Prince of Darkness*.

Secondly, and again, less intense than the same themes as used in *Prince of Darkness* and *They Live*, is how claustrophobia and overcrowding can drive men to violence. Also, the eighties' mantra of self-interest over all else drives the theme of distrust that runs so rampant through the Antarctic research camp. Likening the evil in *The Thing* to claustrophobic "cabin fever" is at least more visually reminiscent of *The Shining*, both of which emphasize the remoteness of a crisp, snow-covered setting. However, comparing the urban expansion and overpopulation of the dirty cityscapes depicted in the later films *Prince of Darkness* and *They Live*, *The Thing* is just a more subtle expression of the same themes. When considering *The Thing* in relation to Carpenter's later productions for Alive Films, the distrust, anger, and anti-fraternity of the Antarctic research camp members are extreme, outward examples of what Carpenter saw as a threat to the American society. *The Thing* probably handles this theme the most smoothly and stylishly of the three films, in almost diametric opposition to the blatant *They Live*, which is about as political a movie as Carpenter may have ever made, perhaps with the exception of the somewhat *anti*-political message conveyed in the endings of both *Escape From New York*, (where Snake Plisskin destroys the president's "world-saving" audio tape) and *Escape From L.A.* (where Snake Plisskin really screws the country by rendering all electronic devices useless).

In John Carpenter's *Prince of Darkness*, the identity thief is none other than the Antichrist himself. However, not only are the graduate students possessed by a religious entity, but through the narrative of the film, they discover that the Antichrist and Christ are of extraterrestrial origin, somehow blending the

horror and sci-fi genres. Critics John Muir and Robert Cumbow both describe in intimate detail the textual similarities between *Prince of Darkness* and one of the big-screen Quatermass films, *Five Million Years to Earth.* In both films, the Christian myth of Satan is explained through scientific means to be based on alien invaders (Muir 140; Cumbow 154).

In *Prince of Darkness*, identity is stolen in two different ways. The first, and the most obvious, is when the glowing green liquid that has been hidden for years in the basement of St. Godard's is ingested. The result is that a once "regular" theoretical physics graduate student becomes a shuffling zombie, intent on spreading the noxious green vomit to others, thereby releasing the Antichrist.

The second way that identity is stolen occurs when several of Professor Birack's team members fall asleep. We tend to see our subconscious as something personal. It is something that is not, and mostly cannot, be shared with others; it is something that defines us. However, this attitude is challenged when all who slumber in the vicinity of the church experience the same dream sequence: the exterior of St. Godard's; a cryptic, garbled, auditory warning from the future; and a dark figure emerging from the front door of the church. This communal dream begins to break down the individuality of the team members' most personal of realms: that of their own dreams. This attacks the ever-present American myth of bootstrapping oneself from poverty to the upper echelons of society. In a way, the characters of *Prince of Darkness* do nothing but act out the clichéd phrase "follow your dreams." However, in the context of the world of *Prince of Darkness*, these attempts serve to satirize the naïveté of an earlier generation.

Like *The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness* has been seen as a metaphor for the AIDS virus. The public's misinformation and general ignorance about AIDS had not significantly improved since *The Thing*'s 1982 release. According to Muir, the threat of AIDS was felt so strongly in the United States "that even the traditionally hedonistic James Bond films were eschewing rampant promiscuity in favor of restrained monogamy (*The Living Daylights* [1987])" (142). AIDS is a disease transmitted through bodily fluids. An obvious connection is that the demonic possession of *Prince of Darkness* is spread through the vomitous ejaculation of a green fluid into another person's body. As no cure for AIDS has been discovered, contraction of the disease essentially spells the demise of the diseased. *Prince of Darkness* takes this fact and distorts it to play on the prevalent fears at the time: once the Antichrist is ingested, the self is cut off and the body becomes stuck in a half-live, half-dead state, seeking only to spread the disease to as many others as possible, with the end result being a nation of infected minions. This is, in fact, very similar to the 1950s fear of corruption by communist ideals, where everyone loses the "freedom" they believed they had.

Muir expounds upon this AIDS metaphor at great length, and also the connection between the misled notion that AIDS was a homosexual disease, and

how it is depicted in *Prince of Darkness* (Muir 142). While this is an interesting notion to consider, it is important not to leave out the similarities in theme between *Prince of Darkness* and the following year's release of *They Live*. *Prince of Darkness* and *They Live* are both strongly urban films. Carpenter takes great pains to establish a location that emphasizes the run-down, crumbling interface between the old Spanish church buildings of Southern California and the dirty squalor of the vastly overpopulated city, an overpowering visual theme in his previous films *Assault on Precinct B*, *Escape From New York*, and *Big Trouble in Little China*, and used later in *They Live*, *Escape From L.A.*, and *Vampires*. *Prince of Darkness* depicts a disgusting city in which the "street schizos" are easily taken over by the influence of the Dark Lord. These shuffling, homeless, homicidal zombies can be regarded as another poke at the fallout from failed attempts at renewal of the American economy. These people, devoid of employment, and cut off from support, express their anger at their situation by turning on the organizations that they were told would uplift them—organized science and organized religion.

Prince of Darkness is unique in this trio of films for its modestly positive ending. Without being too syrupy and heavy-handed, the conclusion of the film attests to the strength of love as the ultimate force in the universe. However, the love that defeats the Antichrist is no more than a brief fling between two graduate students, Brian and Catherine, which somewhat upsets the potential power of the message. Catherine sacrifices herself in an attempt to save mankind. In doing so she fulfills the premonitions in the strange recurring dreams she has been having. Carpenter seems to be saying that only human trust, honesty, and love can combat the forces that were threatening to undermine American society: greed, materialism, and the rapid influx of people to urban centers.

Little critical thought need be applied to Carpenter's 1988 release, *They Live*, to discern what metaphorical connection might exist between the alien identity thieves of the film and late 1980s American society. As pointed out by Kenneth Jurkiewicz, the humans are brainwashed into accepting alien beings masquerading as yuppies as normal, albeit successful, humans. Jurkiewicz describes the film as a "full-frontal assault on the social and political costs of eighties affluence and post-'me-decade' materialism, as promoted by the insidiously ubiquitous mass media" (34).

Our plucky hero, John Nada, played by the ever-sublime thespian Roddy Piper, is depicted as initially rather naïve, despite the hard times he has happened upon. He truly believes that things will get better, and that the government is looking out for his interests. However, John soon becomes quite mad upon discovering that aliens are holding the rich and elite positions in society: positions his fellow construction workers can only dream about. While the film's political message is pretty clear, when you stop and think about it, is there really a fundamental difference between a power-elite class of alien yuppies and a power-

elite class of human yuppies? The answer is, not a whole lot, especially when those aliens have integrated so well that they read our magazines, drink at our bars, and even enjoy sexual relations with humans. Furthermore, Carpenter's answer to the problems of the country, as voiced by an ass-kicking, gum-chewing John Nada, is sophomoric in its call to arms. Nada blows away aliens left and right, and eventually destroys the single satellite concealing the entire alien race from human view. As Jurkiewicz argues, Nada's methods are little better than the ideals he is combating (39).

This violent answer to the complicated problems of rehabilitating our society is made even more ridiculous when contrasted to the strong leftist political rhetoric that builds tension so well early in the film. Again, Carpenter voices his opinions on contemporary issues, this time through a pirate television station (notice the similarity between *They Live* and *Prince of Darkness* in the use of video to transmit revolutionary thought).

> We are living in an artificially induced state of consciousness that resembles sleep. The poor and the underclass are growing. Racial justice and human rights are nonexistent. They have created a repressive society and we are their unwitting accomplices. Their intention to rule rests with the annihilation of consciousness. We have been lulled into a trance. They have made us indifferent to ourselves, to others. We are focused only on our own gain. Please, understand, they are safe as long as they are not discovered. That is their primary method to survive: Keep us asleep. Keep us selfish. Keep us sedated (Jurkiewicz 36).

The substance of this broadcast, and similar passages throughout the film, give an impression of a complex and well-thought-out political message to *They Live*. Piper's vigilante answer to the problems raised by these pirate transmissions and resistance fighters is, unfortunately, intellectually weak, yet probably necessary to draw the tonnage crowds to the theatre. Granted, it *is* difficult to cast Rowdy Roddy Piper without some contractual scenes of good, old-fashioned, God-Bless-the-USA butt kicking.

Taken as a thematic trilogy, *The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness*, and *They Live* can be forgiven their individual faults, mainly due to the quality with which Carpenter gets his message across. *The Thing* is the subtlest of the three, with *Prince of Darkness* building in intensity in its accusations of foul play in American society. It then stands to reason that *They Live* should build further on the politics of the previous films, serving as an effective culmination of the themes of the three films as a whole.

Carpenter has used these themes in other films of course, and went on to use them in *Escape From L.A.* and *Vampires* as well. However, the difference between Snake Plisskin's conflicts with the corrupt futuristic government of the United States is a pretty literal one. In keeping with the tradition of some of the favorite films of his childhood, John Carpenter uses the stolen identity film to metaphorically point the finger at issues that hit the nation during the period in which the film was made. Carpenter has updated the concerns of the fifties, namely communism and nuclear power, with the concerns of the eighties: frantic consumerism, urbanization, narcissism, and materialism.

Why examine these three films on identity theft now? From a historical perspective it is fairly easy to see the social issues that Carpenter was taking aim at with these films. But why bring them up again, years later? Even if Carpenter's solutions to the problems explored in his films can be quite simplistic, the issues under the lens in *The Thing*, *Prince of Darkness*, and *They Live* are prevalent again, especially with regard to theft of identity. After the tragedy in New York City, an important issue debated in the United States legislature was the creation of a national ID card. How do we trust that someone is who he or she claims to be? For the World Trade Center and Pentagon disasters, it was easy for Americans to point the finger at extremist factions of an altogether different race and religion. Fake identities allowed these terrorists to commit their crimes. However, consider the Oklahoma City bombing, the Columbine massacre, and the politically motivated terrorism of the Unabomber: all were committed by white males, a group that your average American would feel very comfortable with. Suburban America continues to insulate itself from their neighbors and the world at large. Combine the gradual disconnection of families from others in their neighborhood with the crimes committed by seemingly innocuous, average people, and it suddenly becomes very difficult to trust anyone but oneself.

Carpenter repeatedly hammers this loss of trust into viewers of his films. The only people who survive a Carpenter splatterfest are those who are willing to work together to solve the group's problems, while the selfish end up dead, usually creatively dismembered. *The Thing* is the exception to this rule, of course, with everyone out for themselves and unable to trust the others. This makes *The Thing* Carpenter's most cynical film on the human condition and loss of identity. *Prince of Darkness* and *They Live* are much more positive in the end. However, like all Carpenter films, and like most horror films in general, there is no such thing as a happy ending. Evil may be defeated temporarily, but it is the truth of the human condition that it will arise again because of human greed and corruption.

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The Bogey Man Will Get You: Origins of Evil in the Films of John Carpenter

Halloween is a time for the celebration of evil. Its origins are traceable to the ancient religion of the Celts, who separated the end of summer and the harvest from the beginning of winter, a time associated with darkness and death. They believed that at this point, the boundary between the realms of the living and the dead became blurred; on October 31, they observed Samhain, when they felt that the ghosts of the departed returned to Earth. Although in its modern form, the holiday has come to include the Christian notions of All Saints' Day and All Hallows' Eve, Halloween is still largely associated with ghosts, witches, demons, and other such forms of potential evil (History Channel Exhibits).

Ideas about the existence and nature of evil are at the very heart of religious doctrine, some of which maintain that evil exists only as the absence of moral goodness, taking the form of bad actions or negative choices of human beings who are exercising free will. This concept of "moral" evil is sometimes contrasted with "natural" evil, which is defined by such inevitable processes as earthquakes, fires, and floods. Optimists, especially those among the religious, may see the first category as something less than inevitable, something to be struggled against ("Satan, get behind me") but virtually everyone acknowledges the existence of the dark side in some form or other.

It seems very appropriate that John Carpenter's best-known film carries the title *Halloween*, because his works have consistently echoed evil as a fundamental concept, originating from an interesting variety of sources. Films directed by Carpenter seem to reflect the general existence of evil as an absolute, an arbitrary and mindless force, taking many forms, and entering into our lives in sudden and unexpected ways. To Carpenter, the collective efforts of church, government, military, psychiatry, science, and technology to stave off and combat the cold reality of evil are all in vain as such entities may in fact be its source. Evil exists in the world and in the universe and will continue to rear its dark head forever. Only the extraordinary efforts of a select few individuals can make a difference, and this will result in only temporary relief. For Carpenter, the Bogey Man is out there, waiting.

Michael Myers in *Halloween* really is the Bogey Man. "Michael is not just conventionally, or even unconventionally, *sick*, but is the embodiment of pure evil" (Cumbow 51). At the age of six, he stabbed his older sister with a butcher knife and escaped 15 years later from a mental hospital. The psychologist, Dr. Sam Loomis (Donald Pleasence), described Myers:

> I met him 15 years ago. I was told there was nothing left. No reason, no conscience, no understanding . . . I met this six-year-old child with this blank, pale, *emotionless* face, and the

> blackest eyes . . . the Devil's eyes. I spent eight years trying to reach him. And then another seven years trying to keep him locked up because I realized that what was living behind that boy's eyes was purely and simply evil (Muir 73).

Unlike any ordinary mortal, Michael rises time and time again near the end of the film, each resurrection providing yet another shock for the audience. Just when the nightmare seems to be over, Michael comes back again. After repeated attempts by Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) to do him in, Dr. Loomis finally shoots him, and Laurie remarks, "That was the Bogey Man." Loomis's reply: "As a matter of fact, it was" (*Halloween*).

In his discussion of John Carpenter in *Film Comment,* Kent Jones points out that Carpenter is:

> . . . one of the few modern artists whose subject is the contemplation of true evil, or to be more precise, the stance that people take when they come face to face with true evil. Among the most tiresome contemporary clichés is "the banality of evil," the idea that it exists within all of us and can be sparked by random events . . For Carpenter, evil is horrifying . . . His characters . . . recognize it, which is the moment of absolute horror (Jones 26).

In *Halloween*'s end credits, Michael is referred to as "The Shape." Throughout most of the movie, he is seen lurking in the shadows, a faceless being behind a mask. He is a character representing, not a person, but a symbol, a primitive concept—the epitome of evil, a universally existing evil. As John Muir puts it in *The Films of John Carpenter*, modern wrongdoers are seldom seen as "evil" by the media or psychology experts:

> They are described instead as a 'product of their environment,' or as 'disturbed.' Motives are attributed, and reasons for the behavior are documented. . . . Experts look to find some reason, some clue as to why a child could commit murder. Likewise, killers who sit on death row . . . are not 'purely and simply evil' either. They are instead a result of genetic predispositions to alcoholism, drug addiction, child abuse, crime. Those who commit deeds of violence are not denounced as 'devilish' entities, but rather as explainable, understandable creatures who are even pitiable in their own way. *Halloween*'s Michael Myers is a determinedly different animal. . . .He is the perfect

> embodiment of primitive evil: the Bogy Man whom man cannot escape (Muir 77).

The film was hailed as a major achievement in horror by the audience and by critics. It was seen as suspenseful and truly frightening. It still works, all these years later, even for those who may have seen it before. Although *Halloween* has been described as the "seminal slasher film," it stands well above its imitators, including the sequels, which failed to fully re-create its magic.

Even prior to his 1978 classic, Carpenter-directed films exhibited a fascination with evil, although in *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976), its origin was more specific and earthly. Here, a youth gang seeks revenge on a police station for the earlier slaughter of some of its members by "law enforcement driven to horrible extremes" (*Assault on Precinct 13).* Reflecting the shadowed, masked face of Michael Myers, the attackers are shown as robotic zombies, without identities as complete human beings. Evil is represented here by a faceless, nameless, ceaseless force, symbolic of the eternal existence of the dark side. There is also a clear indictment of the authority of government, represented by an about-to-be-closed police station manned by an odd assortment of individuals who lack a direct connection with the earlier massacre of gang members. One of the defenders of the precinct station is a convicted murderer, which further blurs the identity of forces from the dark side. In Carpenter films, these forces may be ethereal representations of a lurking menace; they may be grotesque, repulsive horrors; or they may be clean-cut agents of government.

The Fog, Carpenter's 1980 effort, was, like *Halloween,* a result not only of his directing, but his writing, as well. In this story, nameless ghostly victims of a century-old shipwreck seek revenge on a California village. The ancestors of the current residents lured a ship loaded with lepers and a cargo of gold to the shore, where they murdered the ship's inhabitants in order to steal the gold. The ghosts are only occasionally and partially glimpsed; a luminous fog, which drifts in and out of the village, signals the ominous presence of the ghosts and their dark mission of murderous retribution. *The Fog* ends with the admonition that the evil has not been vanquished. It continues to exist and will reawaken at some future time. Evil is shown here in the guise of human shape, but also as an everlasting entity, transcending mortal form.

In *Escape from New York* (1981), Carpenter is once again credited with writing as well as directing. Here, the island of Manhattan is literally a prison; Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) is enticed to free the President of the United States (Donald Pleasence), who has been captured and held hostage by a gang headed by the "Duke of New York," ruler over inmates of this island-prison. Near the end of the film, the Duke is savagely gunned down by the President, who, thanks to the efforts of Plissken, manages to escape to freedom. Evil in this film is represented not only by the violent acts of mayhem and murder, but also by

corruption and amorality in government. Authoritarian order is not to be trusted at any level, in any form. The President's comments to the media, after he has been saved, reflect a total disregard for those who helped to set him free. He is just as bad as those who held him hostage. Captives living within prison walls see no more greed, corruption, and selfishness than those who live on the outside. Evil is omnipresent.

Carpenter's 1982 version of *The Thing* features a more physical construction of the dark side, although here it seems especially graphically evil because its presence kills, imitates, and assimilates existing forms of life, resulting in a world where no one can be trusted. Beings taken over by this malevolent force, which came to Earth with the long-ago crash of an alien spaceship, look and act just like everyone else. They appear to be normal, but within there is another being: a rampant, steaming, oozing infection. Mankind is being dehumanized; people taken over are no longer concerned about anyone else. The goals of these creatures are strictly self-centered. They may display a familiar, friendly demeanor, but underneath (like unbridled capitalists of the Reagan era), they seek to compete for survival, dominance and control, even to the level of destroying all others. The setting here is a metaphor for the world we really live in. Evil prevails within and without. Who is your friend? Who is your enemy? How do you *know*?

Prince of Darkness (1987) features a direct confrontation with evil in the form of the Devil himself, which is in the shape of a green liquid, buried eons earlier by the father of Satan. This "Prince of Darkness" is of extraterrestrial ancestry, but from a humanlike race. It was a decision by the disciples of Christ that this physical presence would be hidden away, and that the force of evil would forever be portrayed, not as a tangible reality, but as a spiritual darkness, existing within the hearts of men. The existence of an actual anti-god, with the power to direct human minds toward darkness instead of toward light, is presented as the mirror image of the God of popular religions. The Catholic Church here has perpetrated nothing less than a lie. Robert Cumbow, in his *Order in the Universe* (2000), describes *Prince of Darkness* as Carpenter's definitive film, one which brings together his basic themes, including the genuine existence of the Devil and "possession by the Devil as an explanation for evil, and an assertion that evil is an objective, absolute reality abroad in the world" (Cumbow 149).

They Live (1988) combines the importation of evil from aliens with blunt and potent social commentary. When John Nada (Roddy Piper) searches for work, he finds little help from a bureaucratic unemployment office, but manages to find himself a job in construction. A coworker introduces him to some citizens of "Justiceville," a community located in makeshift housing. He is advised that "the name of the game is make it through life. Only everyone's out for themselves and looking to do you in" (*They Live*). When Nada comes upon a box of sunglasses and tries on a pair, he is able to decipher the subliminal messages on

signs: "They Live, We Sleep;" "Obey;" "Marry and Reproduce;" "No Independent Thought;" "Consume;" "Watch TV;" "Do Not Question Authority" (*They Live*). He discovers that the glasses also enable him to see that many beings who appear to be human are actually robotic figures with skull-like heads and glowing eyes. One character notes that "most of us just sell out right away . . . Our bank accounts get bigger" (*They Live*, 1988). Stimulated by aliens seeking total domination, along with a manic obsession with television, we have become a nation of plodding, non-thinking robotic beings, interested only in self-serving gratification and consumption. Muir describes this film as:

> A depiction of the post-Reagan malaise, an America suffering serious consequences for the prosperity of the few: a shrinking middle class, increased homelessness . . . [a land where] corporate America and the 'free enterprise' aliens seek to gain wealth by separating men from their consciences (Muir 148-9).

In contrast, the community of Justiceville, where people have not been "taken over," is shown as a utopia:

> . . . an oasis of decency in a world dominated by selfishness and greed . . . Children of different races play together in peace, a mother reads to her child, people cook for one another and share responsibilities . . . As its name suggests, this is a place of liberty and equality (Muir 149).

As does *The Thing,* this film questions the validity of the Reagan dream. Like the protagonists of other Carpenter films, Nada will not submit to authority; he stands up for individuality versus the evil establishment, and he sacrifices his life to uncover the alien plot. For this filmmaker, we are, as a society, vulnerable to enslavement by those who seek to take over and eliminate our freedom. The only hope for repelling such forms of evil comes, not in collective action, but through the efforts of brave individualists.

Village of the Damned (1995) focuses on the strange aftermath of an alien invasion. All of the women of childbearing age in the village of Midwitch turn up pregnant at the same time, and all give birth to blonde, look-alike children who seem to lack emotion or soul. After they reach school age, as Dr. Alan Chaffee (Christopher Reeve) tutors them, he notices that the children exhibit strange powers. They have the ability to read minds. As their eyes light up, they concentrate mental energy in ways that cause those working against them to self-destruct through suicide or to have unusual accidents. The children only seem to be "like us." Reflecting the themes of other Carpenter films, official authorities (in the form of scientists, police, and the military) offer not help, but only further

menace and malevolence. The citizens are repelled by the aftermath of an alien invasion, but the horrors brought by government are just as evil. The end comes when Dr. Chaffee, who has learned to block their efforts to read his mind, detonates a bomb hidden in his briefcase, killing himself and all but one of the children, one who did not seem to be like the others. We are left wondering what choices and directions the child will make, whether good or evil will persevere.

In the Mouth of Madness (1995) brings the audience close to the thin line separating reality from fantasy. Nightmares and paranoia are set off among those who have read Sutter Crane's novel, *In the Mouth of Madness.* The story begins as John Trent (Sam Neill) is shown in an insane asylum, relaying to a psychiatrist the path that led him there. In the process of investigating the author's disappearance, Trent had discovered that, in Crane's novel, a strange form of evil takes over the world. Readers of the book are losing their grip on reality; they are losing their minds. Creatures from a dark, parallel, Lovecraftian world emerge, attempting to reclaim life through living beings. Readers are being replaced by evil monsters. Crane's publisher represents corporate greed and a general decline in morality. Trent, too, seems to lose his sanity. Evil has triumphed and has taken over the world. Trent is shown as the last hope of humanity, but he has lost any desire to try to save mankind: "The human race will just be a bedtime story for children" (*In the Mouth of Madness* 1995).

Vampires (1998) begin with Jack Crow (James Woods) leading a team of vampire slayers who attach the vampires to a cable and drag them into the sunlight to their destruction. Valek, the vampire master, strikes back and murders the team, with the exception of Crow, his primary assistant Montoya (Daniel Baldwin), and a prostitute named Katrina (Sheryl Lee). Upon being bitten by Valek, Katrina forms a mental link with him, and Crow attempts to exploit this in his quest to defeat and vanquish the vampire master, who (Crow learns from a Vatican official), is the original vampire, created when the church bungled an attempt at exorcism in the Middle Ages. If Valek can obtain the black cross used in that ceremony and complete the exorcism, he and other vampires will become immune to the destructive power of sunlight. Katrina is able to telepathically determine the whereabouts of Valek as he searches for the cross, and she leads Crow to its location, but she also bites Montoya, turning him into a vampire too. Crow is captured by Valek, who has seized the cross and is about to re-create the exorcism. A Catholic Cardinal has agreed to perform the ritual in exchange for Valek's granting him immortality as a vampire. In a final showdown, Crow destroys Valek, but he sets free his vampire friends, Katrina and Montoya. Evil will live on. Carpenter's disdain for authority, especially for the Catholic Church (which is shown here as responsible for the creation of vampires) is a central theme in *Vampires.* An everlasting form of pure evil has ironically been created by an institution symbolic of its opposite.

Carpenter's 2001 film, *Ghosts of Mars* takes place in the year 2025. Melanie Ballard (Natasha Henstridge) is the sole survivor of an accident that took place at a mining colony on Mars. In a flashback, we see that the human occupation and mining operation have set off retribution by a deadly army of previously dormant Martian spirits, who take over the bodies of humans. The converted then massacre the still-human, cutting off their faces and wearing them as masks, taking revenge on the interlopers who tried to claim their planet. A known criminal, James "Desolation" Williams (Ice Cube) joins Melanie in subduing the Martians. After they save each other's lives, Williams is set free by Melanie, raising the question of what constitutes morality and carrying forward one of Carpenter's ongoing themes. *Ghosts of Mars* also repeats the "government is corrupt" concept. The other central thesis here, clearly and repeatedly one of this director's favorite themes, is the eternal omnipresence of core evil. We cannot be sure that all of the attacking vicious Martians were actually destroyed in the final explosive action in *Ghosts of Mars*. The evil may be stopped, but only temporarily.

As for Carpenter's likely legacy, Kent Jones notes that:

> The many forms that evil can take, the many places in which it can appear, the infinite ways it can announce itself, the ease with which it can blend into the rhythms and atmospheres of everyday life—this is Carpenter's focus, and the moral clarity that he brings to that focus is what makes him a great director (Jones, 26).

In Carpenter films, we see that evil is portrayed over and over again as an actual, even tangible, force. The institutions designed to protect us, such as government and religion, may only further advance the interests of the dark side. Authority in any of its forms is more likely to represent threat and conquest than truth or hope. Modern science and technology offer only feeble and ineffective efforts to confront evil. Its existence is no less real than humanity itself, and although mankind is frequently the instrument for its execution, evil lies before, after, and beyond the mere presence of the living.

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The Language of *COPS*

Introduction

Television programs have played a central part in portraying features of American popular culture. From cowboys to courtroom dramas, these programs, among others, give viewers a picture of different cultural expressions of events that constitute life in the nation. Furthermore, these programs could be considered therapeutic; they get us away from the rituals of daily life. One program that can be considered as a feature of popular culture is the often-aired program *COPS*. We use the term culture within the sociological definition as a way of life expressed in art and artifact that characterize a people.

There are several approaches that I could use to examine a program such as *COPS* as a reflection of popular culture. For example, I could look at the topic of officer recruitment in light of the emphasis on diversity in the workplace, officer training, relationship of police officials to the courts and to the community that they serve, methods of crime reduction, and so on. It goes without saying that investigators explore areas of inquiry that reflect their training or areas of curiosity. As an individual interested in the study of language in its social context, I have found that the program *COPS* provides data for analysis.

Language in Its Social Context

As Pandit notes, language is put to use in a society; any instance of verbal encounter transmits and reasserts the norms and values shared by the speakers (174). Discussions about the structure and use of oral communication can be seen from various perspectives. At one level, investigators can make judgments about social class and language use (Wolfram and Fasold 1-2). In studying language in its social context in the United States, this research methodology has been used in the earliest part of the twentieth century, with results that culminated in the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada. Research in this area came under the general heading of *dialectology*, in which the focus was on looking at grammar, morphology, lexicon, and sound change that could be considered as belonging to a specific geographic area and to specific social groups in that area (Pederson et al. 17-18). As a follow-up to such studies, Labov's pioneering work in New York City and subsequent analyses of language have added to our knowledge about the relationship of social variables to language form and structure (Macaulay 70-71)[1].

At another level, I might consider a study of oral communication within the dimension of discourse analysis as advanced by such investigators as Stillar (91-92). In these studies, investigators bring to bear such issues as the topic, purpose, setting, speech events, and participants and their role in communication.

In short, speakers take these issues into account before and during moments of verbal interaction. These factors of communication, I believe, are carried out in a very rapid manner since speakers could not be seen as stopping to make these judgments as they communicate (Taylor and Taylor 102)[2].

What might be of interest, in addition to the issues of communication cited above, is to look further to see what goes into the construction of utterances. According to Taylor and Taylor, speakers go through four stages in communication: *conceptualize*, *select*, *formulate*, and *articulate* (99). The same procedure might also apply to some degree in written communication. These features of communication are part of the interplay of language and thought, a discipline known as psycholinguistics. In brief, an individual thinks of what he or she wants to say. Next, the individual selects words according to their phonological shapes, puts these words into a sentence with the appropriate grammatical classes (e.g. noun, adjective, verb), and finally articulates that message. Thus, rather than see communication as separate subdisciplines – sociolinguistics or psycholinguistics– the better approach would be to see them as co-occurring elements of communication. In other words, speakers bring together aspects of social factors (e.g., age, gender, speech situation) with their thought processes simultaneously.

Language study is a very broad academic enterprise, and it is imperative that investigators narrow the scope of study. Unmindful of the areas of interest being pursued, however, one strategy that researchers generally follow is to look at the structural components of language. These structural components are phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. For example, let us take the case of phonology. One method of analysis takes into account the larger sociocultural factors (e.g., age, education, ethnicity, gender, region) that shape the pronunciation of a word or words. For instance, some speakers of American English drop the final consonant of words such as *cold* or *bold* to produce *col* [kol] and *bol* [bol] while others tend to keep it. For the analyst of language, however, he or she desires to learn about the conditions that influence the pronunciation of such words.

The Language of COPS

In studying language heard and used in the program *COPS*, I may use a similar method of inquiry as that established when studying the structural components of language. Given the scope of inquiry, it might not be profitable to specify all of the structural elements of language.[3] However, I would like to know some of the possible variables or conditions that shape the type of language used in certain speech situations involving officers and suspects. The aim of this study is to identify specific types of linguistic structures, specifically syntactic ones, and the social situations under which police officers use them when confronting suspects or when responding to events of lawbreaking.

Data

Data for this report were obtained from viewing several segments of the program *COPS* aired in Baltimore on Saturday and on Sunday evenings. These episodes, usually of an hour's duration, represent segments of the program taped in various cities of various sizes across the nation. I used thirty episodes of the program from which to draw conclusions about the forms of language used by officers in encountering individuals thought to be involved in illegal activities.

Coding Procedure

In observing the program, I was interested to determine the variables that influence the choice of language heard and used by officers in *COPS*. I hypothesize that the most salient variables that influenced the type of language used by officers were type of crime, length of employment, and gender. On the other hand, having listened to several episodes of the program, I established three linguistic categories of language used: *statements, questions*, and *commands.*[4] To claim that a specific language form belonged to a specific category, I noticed its linguistic structure with respect to the arrangement of units in the utterance. Commands, for example, were of the form of a *verb* with or without a *noun.* Thus, the expressions "Hands up" or "Put your hands up" would constitute a command. Questions, on the other hand, were of the form of preposed auxiliary (e.g., do, have, will, can) followed by a subject and the verb with or without a tag unit or with rising intonation as in "Have I seen you before?," "Do you live here?," or "You don't have any weapons, do you?," respectively. As was mentioned above, I established three broad social variables: type of crime length of employment, and gender. Of course, I could have established other social variables (e.g., city size, time when crimes were committed, race of suspects, household type). To include other variables, however, would go beyond the scope of this study

To facilitate an examination of language used by officers in the program *COPS*, I was interested primarily with how officers used language when they encountered individuals initially. These speech situations could involve one officer or several officers using the same form of language simultaneously. The initial verbal exchange allowed me to isolate specific units of language since communication between officers and suspects became more complex involving various linguistic units as the dialogue continued. The initial exchange is pertinent since it provides an analyst with language as it is first heard and from which I can draw several conclusions[5]. This initial use of language is not that farfetched since, as speakers and as listeners, I make certain inferences about speakers when I encounter them initially in greetings, in making requests, in asking for directions, and so on. It is also part of what Finegan and others refer to as "markers of register" (336).

For this study, I used a statistical test of cross tabulation and chi-square. Cross tabulation was relevant since I was interested to determine, in tabular form, the relationship between two or more categorical variables (George and Mallory 94). Categorical variables give us an either-or approach to our analysis (e.g., gender: male, female; ethnicity: Asian, Hispanic). I set out to determine if specific variables were in any way correlated with language used by police officers in *COPS.*

Findings

Several findings were most salient in this study. First, I found that there was a relationship between the type of language that officers used and the length of time that they were employed in a given law enforcement unit. Second, there was a relationship between language style and type of crime involved. Regarding the former, I found that new officers, those employed from one to five years, used commands more often than did middle-career officers, that is, those employed from six to ten years. As for type of crime and style of language, I observed that officers used commands when dealing with severe crime, questions with moderate crimes, and statements when confronting mild forms of crime. There were not enough instances of language used that involved officers of longer tenure, that is, ten years or more. Regarding language type and type of crime, officers used commands more often than statements and questions when confronting suspects initially. This situation might be attributed to the fact that there were more instances of severe crimes (e.g., robbery with gun, high-speed car chase, breaking and entering into a residence, vehicle theft) than those considered moderate (e.g., narcotics use, stolen goods, driving without a license) or low (e.g., noise from neighbors, loitering, littering). We had to discard the variable of gender since there were not enough instances of women officers responding to law-breaking events in *COPS.* In the few instances where women were on patrol, there was no difference in the way women used language and the type of crime events when compared to men. The question that arises is this: What message can I draw from these findings?

Discussion

This view of communication and its relationship to crime is similar to that advanced by Radford et al and the concept of audience design. By audience design, speakers assess the sociolinguistic characteristics of addressees and adapt their speech to conform to these characteristics (57). This view of language use seems relevant here in that police officers, in selecting a style of language – commands, questions, statements– took into account the situation that they encountered (e.g., high speed chase, narcotic sales, stolen vehicles) and used the style of language appropriate to that situation. This view is also similar to Finnegan's notion of "situation of use" (350). It is as if the officers surmised that

they should get control of events and that one way in which that could be done was to use the type of language suitable for that crime situation.

In addition, Stillar's concept of theme seems relevant in this analysis. By theme, I mean that there is an order of linguistic elements in language, in this case, the English language (46). In English, the theme of a sentence is marked by units that occur in the initial position. In commands, we assign actions that we want our listeners to carry out. From the data, officers used commands more often than questions or statements. In commanding an individual to "Put the gun down," the theme was on the weapon, as opposed to the command "Put the gun down on the floor," where the prepositional phrase "on the floor" would be a secondary feature of the command.

In addition, this analysis of language and social situations further supports the notion of *communicative competence* (O'Grady et. al 454). In other words, unlike grammatical competence, which allows us to determine grammatical from ungrammatical utterances, communicative competence allows speakers to use language that is appropriate to the situation or context. As Chomsky has pointed out, "Language is the communicative system par excellence, and it is 'peculiar and eccentric' to insist on studying the structure of language apart from its communicative function" (55). The idea of communicative competence comes to our attention in that officers have internalized the rules for using language in specific situations when encountering suspects. It could be that knowledge and use of language could have been part of the officers' training or work experience. Whichever the case, it is instructive to point out that knowledge and use of language are salient features to be noted in looking at language from the perspective of officers and suspects.

Closely related to the choice of language used in speech situations is the tone or prosody that accompanies it. As Kolb and Whishaw point out, "Spoken language carries two types of information: information derived from the content, and information inferred from the tone or voice used" (551). Research in neuropsychology suggests that the former appears to be a function of the left hemisphere; the latter, the right hemisphere. It is safe to say that commands, for instance, convey a more serious tone than statements or questions. Thus, I may conclude that officers, in using commands, do so with the purpose of conveying a sense of fear and authority in their initial encounter with persons thought to be involved in crime, especially those of a serious nature.

The choice of language used by officers is in keeping with the notion of a speech act. In other words, we do things with words when we use them. In saying to someone "Can I see your driver's license?," we are not just saying things, we are making a request. In speech act theory, utterances convey a *locutionary* and an *illocutionary* force. The locutionary force consists of the act of saying; the illocutionary act is what is conveyed by the words themselves (Parker and Riley 18-20).

Finally, choice of language reflects the values that speakers convey to listeners, in this case, to suspects. In many instances of *COPS*, officers took pride in conveying to the audience the satisfaction that they receive in making the community a better place for residents if they can bring a sense of order and control in law-breaking events. In many instances, an officer can be heard saying, "This is why I do my job. If I can take the bad guys off the street, it makes the job meaningful."

Conclusion

In this study our purpose was to show that there is a relationship between certain forms of language used by police officers in encountering suspects and certain social values associated with police officers. We found that commands were the chief forms of language used by officers in confronting suspects. This use of language I attributed to the nature of crime, that is, especially severe ones. Studies of this type should also support existing studies of language in its social context.

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Notes

1. This type of study has been given the label of "sociolinguistics" or "the sociology of language."
2. In some instances, speakers stop to make overt corrections as they communicate with listeners.
3. In his study of language in Martha's Vineyard, Labov (1963) identified the topic of centralized diphthongs [?u] to show that islanders used this form of pronunciation as a sign of group solidarity.
4. These are very broad categories and there will be instances of overlap in that one linguistic category can merge into another as the dialogue between officers and suspects continues.
5. By focusing on the initial forms of language, I am better able to facilitate the discussion regarding the type of language used since other forms of language will surface as officers engage in dialogue. If, in questioning a suspect, for example, an officer has concluded on the guilt of a party, an officer can then use commands (e.g., "Turn around," "Place your hands behind your back"). Furthermore, research in language processing and comprehension relies on first utterances, as well.

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Appendix A

Sample Dialogue from COPS

The following are portions of data used in the study. They are presented as examples of categories of crime and the type of language used with them. I use the categories of mild, moderate and severe to delineate types of crime. The speech situation is noted in parentheses.

Mild

A1. **Officer**: Step out, son, walk with me over here. I saw you smoking crack.
(Suspect smoking crack cocaine)

Officer: I am not going to let you hurt yourself.
(Individual bent on bodily harm)

A2. **Officer**: What can I do for you?
Wait here. Let me go talk to her.
Why not give me a rundown on what happened?
(Individual acting irrationally)

A3. **Officer**: What are we doing here? Does your wife know where you are? Are you practicing safe sex? How many times have you been arrested for this?
(Solicitation of prostitution)

Moderate

B1. **Officer**: How you doing? You have a license? You have a warrant? You driving the truck without a license? Is there anything in the truck you don't want me to find?

Officer: What's goin' on? What happened? Stand still for a minute. Were you parked? Stand still, sir.
(Male prostitution)

B2. **Officer**: You don't have any drugs, do you?
You don't know anything about a gun?
(Drug suspect)

B3. **Officer**: You know me. I busted you before.
Hey, close your mouth. Relax.
(Drug sales)

Severe

C1. **Officer**: Come on out [three times]. Police, come on down. Put your gun down [twice].

Officer: Get out [three times]. Get your hands behind your back [three times]. Don't fight. Stop fighting. You killed about two people. Give me your arm. Get up. You see this car? She has to go in a helicopter because of you.
(Suspect attempting to escape from a store robbery)

C2. **Officer**: Take your seat belt off.
Open up the door.
Step up. Step to the left.
Pull your shirt up from the top.
Stop. Walk backwards. Stop
Do you have some drugs in the car? What type?
(Methamphetamine dealer)

C3. **Officer**: Stop, please. Back up. Back off.
(Individual with a threat of suicide)

Contributors

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