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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.

Thank you all,
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Introduction

This issue of PCR has something for scholars of all persuasions. We don't theme our issues and are always a bit surprised when ideas unite and cohesiveness spontaneously emerges. In this case, the summer edition has a number of articles which deal with sport, gaming, or risk: it's a mini theme!

We begin with Philip Kolin's surprising and fascinating essay on Tennessee Williams and sport. A Williams expert, Philip is the editor of the just-published *Tennessee Williams Encyclopedia*. Then, whether you think gaming is sport or not, you will find Australian scholar and artist (he creates our covers) Laurens Tan's take on risk and pleasure enlightening. Perhaps taking risks is what makes the world go round. Historian James Forse adds to the sport/gaming discussion in "Secularizing the Saint: the Journey of St. George's Day from Feast Day to Horse Race." The final two articles of our mini theme are from Sergio Rizzo and Roberta Sabbath. Sergio moves us through an analysis of Hollywood versions of Las Vegas and Roberta examines the poetics of domination in "Las Vegas Odyssey."

In other arenas, Donald Newman takes us back to one of my favorite TV series in his insightful deconstruction of *Northern Exposure*, "Jacques Derrida Visits Cicely." Kevin Morrison provides plenty of food for thought in "Satirical Irony in Art Spiegelman's Holocaust narrative *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*," while Heather Lusty takes an offbeat look at war and trauma in Jasper Fforde's marvelously multi-dimensional Thursday Next novels.

Lastly, in gender issues, Mel Seesholtz raises the spectre of New McCarthyism as he discusses homosexual stereotyping and the politics of fear, and Calamity Jane rides again as Anna Louise Bates discusses her in the social issues of gender in the 1920s and 1930s.

Once again, it is clear that everything is related to everything else.
Enjoy!

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Tennessee Williams and Sports

When we think of sports (and athletes) in American literature, a crew of authors and their sports-driven works come to mind. Probably the quintessential American author-sportsman is Ernest “Papa” Hemingway whose fiction glamorized, almost in epic proportion, fishing, bullfighting, prizefighting, and other manly contests. Running a close second in the race for author as sports-enthusiast is Jack London whose *The Call of the Wild* sledges through dog sledding, hunting, and other outdoor adventures; he who also penned a volume entitled *Jack London: Stories of Boxing*. Other American authors who highlight sports in their work include William Faulkner whose *Bear* is frequently anthologized in volumes on sports and literature; Bernard Malamud’s *The Natural* (1952), a hard-hitting baseball story; Clifford Odets’s drama *Golden Boy* (1939) focuses on prizefighting; and the series of John Updike’s *Rabbit Angstrom* novels covering a variety of sports, especially basketball, golf, and sailing. Even more recently, Steven Pressfield’s novel *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, mythologizing golf, has been made into a popular movie starring Matt Damon and Will Smith.

By contrast, Tennessee Williams hardly seems in the same league with these sports-drenched writers. In the popular imagination, Williams’s plays are consumed with tales of sexual grotesqueries involving mad artist-maidens and outcast stud lovers, all set in a lyrical, moon-drenched South. Closer to the truth, though, sports and references to them play a symbolic role in Williams’s plays, fiction, and even in a few of his poems contributing to the development of his characters and plots. Williams incorporates a wide assortment of sports to capture and to deconstruct the popular ethos surrounding them, including swimming (“The Interval”; *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *Suddenly Last Summer*), diving (*Sweet Bird of Youth*; *Night of the Iguana*), bowling (*Streetcar*), bicycling (*The Confessional*), cock fighting (*Summer and Smoke*), croquet (“Three Players of a Summer Game”), motorcycling (*Now the Cats with Jeweled Claws*), track and/or football (*Spring Storm*; *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), and prizefighting (“The Palooka”; *Camino Real*). With the uncanny skill of an aficionado, Williams almost always seems to match his characters with just the right sport at which they must win or, more often than not, lose. Sadly but significantly, there are very few heroic sports victories in his canon. Yet perhaps the most telling use of sports in Williams’s works is to glorify the body beautiful or to encode its decline, a dichotomy that numerous Hollywood versions of his scripts played upon as he did himself in the performance of his own life and dreams.

Despite a sickly childhood, diphtheria, eye problems, an innate shyness, and his relatively small frame, Williams was no stranger to the sporting arena. He was encouraged, indeed alternately goaded and threatened, into them by his blustering father, Cornelius Coffin Williams, who denigrated Williams as “Miss

Nancy” but lauded Williams’s younger brother Dakin who was a football hero and a distinguished World War II veteran. When Williams enrolled at the University of Missouri from 1929 through 1932, he played golf, tennis, took dancing classes, and rode horses for a course labeled “Horsemanship,” primarily to evade ROTC which he loathed because of its military drills and regulations. The timid poet-playwright even had a “brief career in wrestling” as a member of Alpha Tau Omega. As Allean Hale points out:

The fraternity, despairing of his ever gaining the required points for activities, forced him to enter the intramural competition as a 115-pound flyweight. With two farm boys also entering the field, he posted a sign on the bulletin board: “Williams Ultimatum: Liquor! Liquor! Must have liquor for my bout with aggressive agrarians.” Despite Prohibition, his brothers obliged. Ignorant but wiry, Williams embarked with zest and, with the help of a bid, made it to the finals. He lost there, but his intramural debut earned more points for the ATO house than it won in basketball. He earned the nickname, “Tiger Williams.” (40).

“Tiger” Williams’s epithet did not, however, burn bright. His participation in such an aggressive contact sport as wrestling ended as quickly as it began. Ironically, however, as a fan Williams relished one of the bloodiest sports in the world—bullfighting—and zealously attended such sporting events in Mexico City and in Madrid, three times in one week, as one of his friends recorded from a letter she received from him in Spain (Kolin, “Tenn and the Banana Queen”). In his poem “The Jockeys at Hialeah,” he refers to the “half ounce bottles” of perfume “vended between the death of bulls on Sunday,” and in *The Rose Tattoo*, dedicated to Frank Merlo, the lover with whom he lived the longest, Williams alludes to bullfighting by describing Alvaro as “one of those Mediterranean types that resemble glossy young bulls” (348).

The one non-contact sport Williams did enjoy was swimming, which remained his lifelong love. Young Thomas Lanier Williams swam at various pools in St. Louis—at the Lorelei and at the Westborough Country Club, to cite just two. Years later, after his father withdrew him from the University of Missouri his senior year for flunking ROTC, Williams became a member of the Washington University swim team and practiced “every afternoon from four to five thirty.” But, as he confessed in a letter to his maternal grandparents, “Sometimes I get terribly tired and have to spend an afternoon in bed” (Devlin and Tischler, *Letters* 91). Though he was not cut out for competitive swimming, the sport nonetheless became a psychological tonic for Williams. As biographer Lyle Leverich rightly insists, he was as “addicted” to swimming as he was to writing (144). When Williams later enrolled at the University of Iowa (the third

university he attended), fearful of not passing a major examination in Greek, he revealed, "I'll drink a couple of beers or swim a few lengths to fortify my spirit. I'm too old for the academic life" (120).

Swimming continued to play a crucial role in Williams's peripatetic life, especially his laps at various YMCAs, including one of his favorites on 63rd Street in New York. In *Camino Real*, he calls the "Y" a "sort of a Protestant church with a swimming pool in it" (*Letters* 468). But in "The Killer Chicken and the Closet Queen," a story he wrote in 1977, Williams more openly identified the "Y" as the sexualized landscape for homoerotic encounters. A rather embarrassed "physically fit" young man named Stephen in "The Killer Chicken" observed "in a guarded tone . . . that there were a lot of physical advantages to be had at the 'Y,' the swimming pool, and workout rooms and association with other Christian kids." To which his friend's in-the-know wife, Maude, responds, "'Steve, you're playin' dumb!' [and] almost shrieked, 'Why everyone knows that Y's are overrun with wolves out for chickens'" (*Collected Stories* 555), using homosexual parlance for such assignments. The homes he owned in Key West and in the French Quarter, also had pools he used for a release. On his travels abroad to Mexico, Cuba, Paris, London, the Riviera, Greece, Tangiers, and elsewhere, swimming was a requisite and relaxing activity for the frenetic Williams. Traveling to the Isle of Capri in June 1948, Williams wrote to his friend and early lover Donald Windham that the beauty of the place "is strictly scenic but the swimming is buonissimo" (*Letters to Windham* 218). In several letters to one of his favorite traveling companions, Marion Black Vaccaro, Williams emphasized that any villas, apartments, or other accommodations that he might seek abroad must give him access to a swimming pool (Kolin "Tenn and the Banana Queen").

Essentially, of course, swimming helped Williams to be physically fit, keeping him attractive for the many lovers and strangers whom he picked up over the decades. Leverich concluded that the sport allowed Williams to "withstand many illnesses and forms of self-abuse that otherwise would have killed him" (163). Throughout his life Williams feared he would die of a heart attack or stroke. (Interestingly enough, a young man named Donald resembling Williams in an early one-act play "Summer at the Lake" [1938–1939] possibly goes to his death by swimming so far out into the lake so he will never come back to his domineering mother.) In an August 1940 letter to Joseph Hazan, a fellow "homolectual," Williams confessed:

But I see now that to grow or even to survive I must practice more discipline with myself and I am resolved to do this. I have also plunged into physical culture, swimming thirty lengths each day at the "Y" and working with weights. The motive for this is probably an ignoble desire to have a body like Kip's (*Letters* 265).

Kip Kiernan, Williams's first love, was a young Canadian ballet dancer whom he eulogized decades later in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (1982) where swimmer-writer August (Williams himself) roams the beach at Provincetown, Massachusetts for love until he couples with Kip. A photo of the young Tennessee at the time shows him striding jauntily down that beach, naked from the waist up and wearing a sailor's cap.

Symbolically, and physically, connected to Williams's love of swimming was his eagerness to arrange trysts with sailors, the ubiquitous free sexual agents. In a letter from Jacksonville, Florida, dated September 12, 1942, to Windham, Williams graphically described the kind of rough sport he could experience in the company of sailors:

I have rented a bicycle and discovered a marvelous dive on Ocean Street where I spend my evening hours mostly. It is like the Silver Front, only younger, rowdier, and more dangerous: fights and cuttings every half hour, the sailors dance with each other, and there is a group of tough queens who are out of the world—I will probably meet my end there. (45)

Despite his otherwise frail health, Williams reveled in such physical encounters. In fact, as a de-classified FBI file attests, he was under surveillance by the U. S. Navy Department in 1943, in large part because of his attraction to off-duty, fun-seeking sailors. Recall that Tom Wingfield (a.k.a. Tennessee Williams) leaves the St. Louis tenement in *A Glass Menagerie* to join the merchant marine in whose uniform he is seen at the end of the play. Apropos of Williams's obsession with swimming, his mate, the muscular Frankie Merlo, was a U. S. Navy veteran.

Williams's dreams about and dilemmas over his own physical image, symbolized by beaches and swimming, surface in an early short story "The Interval" (1945) about a young man, Jimmie, who longs to become a Hollywood star. Arriving in Laguna Beach, Jimmie could be found every afternoon "playing volleyball on the beach with a number of other bright and anonymous young fellows of the sort that abounded on Southern California beaches before the war . . . In the sun . . . he leapt and shouted. He cut fantastic capers, asserting himself all over . . . giving nobody a moment's chance to ignore him" (*Collected Stories* 192). But because Jimmie's youth and beauty were not "stable commodities," the beach and swimming through which he sought to preserve them, ironically enough, only brought him closer to obscurity and loneliness by hastening the aging process. As the omniscient narrator in "The Interval" points out about Jimmie:

He had been warned that salt water dried the scalp and contributed to baldness, so he did not go in the water in the

presence of others. He had bought a rubber swimming cap which he carried up to the beach with him to a secluded spot where he could put it on unobserved and take a swim by himself, for he felt that a man wearing a swimming cap was somewhat ludicrous-looking and not in the bright tradition. (193)

But, as he loses his looks after marrying a girl called Gretchen, whom he later abandons, “the manly assurance petered out of Jimmie and he began to lie around the apartment in shorts . . . not even much caring to go to the beach anymore” (194). Such would have been Williams’s own fate had he succumbed to losing his looks, his health, and his desire for fame. “The Interval” reads like a gloss on Williams’s fears over his short-lived career as an MGM screenwriter, translated through Jimmie’s initial delight in sports because of the attention he hoped they would garner and then in his pudgy and sorrowful retreat from them (Kolin “Williams’s ‘Interval’”).

Like Jimmie, Chance Wayne in *Sweet Bird of Youth* is an aspiring Hollywood star whose previous achievements in sports only deflate his current dreams by contrast. Attached to movie star Princess Kosmonopolous by a most tenuous service contract, Chance returns to his hometown of St. Cloud where he is remembered as a handsome diver by Miss Lucy, Boss Finley’s mistress:

Y’know this boy Chance Wayne used to be so attractive I couldn’t stand it. But now I can, almost stand it. Every Sunday in summer I used to drive out to the municipal beach and watch him dive off the high tower. I’d take binoculars with me and then he put on those free divin’ exhibitions. You still dive, Chance? Or have you given that up? (87)

Though Chance admits that he still dives, his ambitions for stardom, like his name, have waned. With “thinning” hair, fleeting youth, and degrading rumors about his being a “beach boy” in California, Chance is hardly the golden athlete Miss Lucy fantasizes about. Williams gives Chance a sport—diving—that has ominous, Freudian implications for this stud-star who will be castrated by Boss Finley for violating his daughter Heavenly. By the end of the play, Chance will not be able to go “diving” as he once did in his youth in St. Cloud. The sport fits the dream, and the crime, in Williams’s play.

An early (circa 1943) Williams poem, “Dark Arm, Hanging Over the Edge of Infinity,” celebrates the body of an athlete who has neither aged nor been maimed. Addressed to a “Sleeping Negro” pitcher whose “fingers” are “dangling emptily” (*Collected Poems* 87) just after he had made a masterly throw, Williams’s poem exhorts this baseball powerhouse to grasp the significance of his next move. Sexualizing the black athlete’s body, Williams

begs him “to bestir your dark copper limbs,” and then describes his plight in cosmic terms. This “dreaming ball-player” is addressed as a “skillful manipulator of a million glittering spheres” that he can throw “over the edge of infinity.” A juggler and “a drinker of the warm white milk of space” as well, the Negro ballplayer needs to “wake up.” The last line of “Dark Arm” claims to end the reader’s suspense but is packed with crafty hyperbole—“Heaven is full of the sound of shattering glass” (88). Retrospectively, the heroic tone here borders on the mock heroic as Williams’s conclusion both canonizes the enormous thrust of the black pitcher’s arm yet marginalizes its destructiveness at the same time. In comparing heaven to a glass window, Williams may be stressing how very fragile, short-lived, and pedestrian the pitcher’s sports feat really is.

Williams also sexualized the bodies of other black men within the context of sporting events in two key short stories. In “Big Black: A Mississippi Idyll” (1931–1932), he concentrates on a black road gang worker who tore his blue shirt open to the waist, “lying bare the gleaming black arch of his chest” (*Collected Stories* 26). Described as a superman, Big Black has shoulders and arms that were “gargantuan,” he had “more power than any two men in the gang” (27). When he “flung his muscular arms high about his up-thrust head,” his cry was “elemental, epic . . .” (27). The narrator’s amazement at Big Black’s athletic physique, though, is linked to a carnivalesque and racialized version of a national sport, baseball. Big Black was “prodigiously ugly,” says the narrator, and “had a face like a ‘nigger’ in the revolving circle of wooden dummies at which baseballs are cast for Kewpie doll prizes at carnivals and amusement parks” (27). Despite his Herculean strength and the epic pitch of his voice, Big Black is victimized by a culture that reduces him to a stereotype and thereby denies him the dignity associated with his extraordinary physique. The narrator continues to associate Big Black with the grotesque when he at first attempts and then refrains from raping a white girl. We read that Big Black’s “spatulate fingers” make him look as if he were an animal. Williams characteristically juxtaposes, contraries—Big Black’s incredible brawn with something unnatural.

Williams’s second story, “Desire and the Black Masseur” (1946), is set in a Turkish bath located in the “basement of a hotel” (*Collected Stories* 207), a sports-like setting. The protagonist, a young white male, Anthony Burns, goes there for punishment/atonement at the hands of a “giant” Negro who “hated white skinned bodies because they abused his pride” (209). Williams describes the way this masseur pummels Burns’s flesh in pugilistic terms: “the Negro raised up his black palm and brought it down with a terrific whack in the middle of Burns’s soft belly. The little man’s breath flew out of his mouth . . .” (208). During Burns’s violent massage, the Negro “loved to have [his] white-skin prone beneath him, to bring his fist or the palm of his hand down hard on its passive surface” (209). In the ultimate perversion of vanquishing his enemy, all with Burns’s willing consent, the Negro takes him home, murders him, “and

began to devour the body . . . It took him twenty-four hours to eat the splintered bones clean” (211). A complex, intricately disturbing narrative, “Desire” perverts the aims of athletic training—to get in shape and to display the body beautiful. The manipulating, pounding fingers of the revengeful masseur-trainer bring agony, dismemberment, and horror. In this story of sadomasochistic bondage, Williams shows us not a healthy body but a demonized body where the masseur may in fact be the dark Other residing in Burns himself. As his name suggests, Burns wants to suffer in atonement for whatever offenses he may have committed. But in terms of sport motifs and allusions, the masseur’s hands also symbolize the dark antithesis of the Negro pitcher’s arm in Williams’s poem “Dark Arm.” A small biographical detail sheds light on the “physical culture” context of “Desire and the Black Masseur.” Writing to Windham from the Via Aurora in Rome on June 3, 1948, Williams described a massage he had received that day:

There is a lovely swimming pool. I have an attractive masseur who comes in three mornings a week to give me massage and exercises. He came yesterday and I am still aching all over! I have lost about 15 pounds due mostly to lack of fat in the diet but my clothes all look as if they had been designed for the fat one in Laurel and Hardy. (*Windham* 207)

Clearly, Williams’s experiences at the masseur’s were the felicitous opposite of Anthony Burns’s. But once again Williams compellingly links health, “physical culture,” to the popular entertainment of his day—Laurel and Hardy—just as he had negatively compared Big Black’s physical appearance to the ugly black faces of wooden dummies at amusement parks.

In one of his apprentice plays, *Not About Nightingales* (1938), Williams painfully punctures the myth of sport as an honorable, even glorious route to fame that “Dark Arm” may seem to presage. Dramatizing one of the worst instances of prison abuse in American history, *Nightingales*, reveals what happens to a clean-cut young athlete named Swifty (Jeremy Trout) when he is framed for a crime he did not commit and locked in a cell with hard-talking and acting convicts. In Episode Six of *Nightingales*, entitled “Mr. Olympics,” cell-block leader Butch O’Fallon gives Swifty, the new boy, the treatment: “*Butch jerks Swifty up by the collar and hoists him by the seat of his pants to the upper bunk*” (51). The only welcome Swifty receives is from Queenie, Williams’s first gay character, who erotically observes: “He looks athletic” (52). Fearing that he will go crazy locked up in a prison cell, Swifty claims that his earlier victories as a high school athlete (he “held the 220 state record for three years”) might be his salvation:

SWIFTY: "I like anything that's moving, that don't stay put. It's not an ordinary thing to see me, it's kind of an obsession. I like to kill distance. See a straight track—get to the other end of it first, before anyone else—That's what I was made for—running—look at my legs!"

JOE: "Pips, huh?"

SWIFTY: " That's from training. If this hadn't happened I'd be on my way to the Olympics right now. I could still have a chance at the New York eliminations if my lawyer can spring me before the fifteenth. [*He flexes his legs*].—But look at that! Getting loose already!—If I could get permission to run around the yard a few times—say, before breakfast or supper—why, I could keep in pretty good shape even in here. Even if I had to stay in here a year—that way I could keep in condition." (52–53)

But, Swifty's past athletic heroics, calisthenics, and self-congratulatory schemes to turn the prison into a training ground elicit only mockery and warnings from the inmates who predict that he, like Sailor Jack, will go insane. Swifty's dreams of having an Olympic career and getting out in time to make "the New York eliminations" deadened in his new prison world. Sadly, he is a caged animal whose obsession to run is thwarted by his environment, the other prisoners, and the heartless Warden Whalen.

In this early play, as in many of his later ones, Williams represents sports dreams as foolhardy illusions, life lies, that young men tell themselves to face the future fortified with hope. Sports become both the vindication and victory of these young athletes' lives. But the names attached to this impressionistic young athlete, Swifty and "Mr. Olympics," undercut his runner's desire to "kill distance." His prison nickname, Swifty, is cruelly ironic for a runner whose track is the size of a prison cell while his surname, "Trout," likewise evokes places and things that can run with unstoppable speed—brooks, fish—as he cannot. But "Swifty" is a trout out of water, quite literally imprisoned on an island in the middle of New York City harbor. He ends his race for life in the convict-packed infernal hole, sardonically labeled "Klondike," where the warden keeps the temperature at near boiling point to torture the prisoners for initiating a hunger strike. Trying to breathe in the Klondike, Swifty dies with his "inert body" lying over the small air hole. In pronouncing him dead, Butch resorts to a sports metaphor acknowledging Swifty's slaughtered idealism, "I guess he's beating a cinder track around the stars now" (141). The cinder track image hauntingly segues with the hot place where Swifty was "burned up."

A different set of sports, and rules, govern *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Sports are Stanley Kowalski's passion and forte, and a means for Williams to interrogate Stanley's brand of manliness. The stage direction in the reading edition of *Streetcar* announcing Stanley's entrance ascribes to him the requisite qualities of both an esteemed player and an avid fan—"The channels of his life are . . . his heartiness with men, his appreciation of rough humor, his love of good drink and food and games" (265). "Strongly, compactly built," Stanley is a sexualized, proletarian Adonis, the Alpha athlete. To this image of the muscular athlete Williams welds Stanley's "luck" in war, the sport of combat, where he survived the brutal Italian campaign at Anzio, earning the rank of Master Sergeant, a masculinized hyperbole for the leader-victor. Another sports identity Stanley assumes is that of the primitive hunter. In the acting edition of *Streetcar*, he "tosses" a package of blood-stained meat to Stella as he comes home, a fetish of his love of the sport of battle. Regardless of the sport he plays, Stanley loves "roughhouse," and, not surprisingly, his favorite sports, after gambling, are fighting and bowling, both are loud and pummeling, whether it be noses or pins. He is the muscular brawler, the streetfighter. Fusing fiction and reality, role and self, Marlon Brando, who has been synonymous with Stanley for theatre and film-goers worldwide, kept a punching bag in the boiler room of the Barrymore Theatre in New York, where *Streetcar* premiered in 1947, to practice his fighting techniques and, when he was not on stage, to spar with his understudy Jack Palance or Nick Dennis who played the role of Pablo Gonzales (Kolin, *Williams: Streetcar* 26).

Always striving to be the winner, Stanley is a master bowler, the captain of his team. As Stella declares, he "loves it." In Elia Kazan's 1951 film of *Streetcar*, unlike in Williams's script, Blanche gets her first horrifying look at Stanley as he quarrels with his cronies in a bowling alley, the sound of falling pins and rolling balls; his roughhouse symphony, a sign of her imminent destruction at his hands. As diving did for Chance Wayne, bowling unerringly characterizes Stanley—the worker, the common man, the tribal player. As the proliferation of bowling alleys in the 1940s and 1950s attests, in addition to the coverage the sport received on national television during those years, bowling appealed to a large segment of the American population as a healthy, red-blooded, democratic sport. One of the most popular Hanna-Barbera feline animations, shown in the U. S. and to troops overseas, was *Bowling-Alley Cat*, released in 1942.

True to his blue collar roots and temperament, Stanley is inevitably attracted to the sound and fury of bowling alleys. The fact that he will not allow his team to play at Riley's—"I don't bowl at Riley's. I had a little trouble with Riley last week" (375)—combines his brawling and bowling interests. Stanley orders, "We're gonna bowl at the West Side or the Gala!"—two highly symbolic sports names for the bowling alleys Stanley most likely would have patronized. "West Side" suggests the Wild West, the frontier, and, proleptically, the land of

gangs and tough neighborhoods (e.g., *West Side Story* in 1961). “Gala” speaks to the perceived amplitude/magnitude of Stanley’s own athletic prowess, matched only by his conquests of women. The name surely reinforces the intensity of pleasure Stanley craves. The last line of *Streetcar* in fact sexualizes Stanley’s most heinous gala sport—“The game’s seven-card stud” (419). Stud-bowler Stanley racks up a win by knocking down the aristocratic dreams of his sister-in-law, Blanche DuBois. Even when critics write about *Streetcar*, they often resort to violent sport imagery to describe Williams’s plot. For example, Jan Hoffman observes: “*Streetcar Named Desire* is, after all, a tragic gladiators’ battle between the coarse, menacing Stanley and Stella’s sister, the elegant, unraveling Blanche DuBois” (“The Importance of Being Stella”).

Williams also evokes “physical culture” to represent Mitch’s character, whose sport in *Streetcar*, like Williams’s own, is swimming, an anodyne to Stanley’s brutish bowling. Mitch boasts, “Last Christmas, I was given a membership to the New Orleans Athletic Club,” where Williams himself was a member in the 1940s and 1950s. Speaking of this Club, Mitch boasts, “I work out . . . with the weights and swim and keep [myself] fit. When I started there, I was getting soft in the belly but now my belly is hard. It’s so hard that a man can punch me . . . and it don’t hurt.” But no man will “punch” him in this scene. Instead, Blanche “pokes lightly at him” (346), a gesture that diffuses Mitch’s claims of manly valor. On the other hand, Stanley and his friends would know precisely how to test/poke Mitch’s bravado concerning his physique and his ability to play sports. Worried about his weight, his perspiration, and his awkwardness, Mitch is burdened with “a heavy build,” but he is described as “sensitive” (292) and “superior” to others in Stanley’s circle. Mitch’s sensitivity is easily and often mocked by Stanley and his brutish team who paint him as a mama’s boy who needs a “sugar-tit” (288).

Given the fact that Mitch works in “the spare parts department” (292), Williams may also be hinting that Mitch is sexually unendowed. His membership at an athletic club may prompt Mitch to think he has a hard stomach and is in sound physical shape, the attributes of an athlete. But, in point of fact, Mitch only performs at being a man through a masquerade of masculinity represented through sports and “physical culture.” Stanley’s bowling—knocking down pins with hard balls—contrasts with the awkward fumbling of the “sensitive” Mitch whose troubled physicality (sexuality) was superbly encoded by Karl Malden in the *Streetcar* film. Returning from the amusement park at Lake Ponchartrain in Scene Six, Mitch holds the prize he won at the shooting gallery, “a plaster statuette of Mae West,” the famed burlesque queen, “upside down” (340). With this physical image, Williams skewers Mitch’s athleticism and sexuality simultaneously. He cannot shoot outside of an amusement park (Blanche pushes his advances away in Scene Six and frightens him off in Scene Nine) and he cannot even hold a woman (sex idol Mae West) the right way.

Prizefighting, one of the most aggressive sports, is also featured in several of Williams's plays, chiefly "The Palooka" and *Camino Real*. Possibly written in the mid-1930s at the University of Iowa or earlier, but first published in 2005, Williams's one-act play "The Palooka" is set in a "*dressing room of a boxing arena*" where a "*worn-out boxer in an old purple silk dressing robe*" cynically tutors a "*kid about to engage in his first professional fight*" ("Palooka" 29). In the lingo of "the fighting game," the Palooka, the old boxer, critiques his past foes and believes the Kid's challenger is really "a sucker for a left uppercut" (30). Most of the play, however, is devoted to the two fighters lionizing a "light heavy-weight champ" named Galveston Joe who personified all the virtues ("He wasn't no Palooka") and won all the financial rewards of the sport. We hear that Joe left the ring a wealthy, successful businessman "who made good on Wall Street" and in Argentina, too (33). The Kid confesses, "I had his picture posted up in my bedroom," and the Palooka elatedly recalls that women "fought like wildcats to get a button off his vest or snatch a green carnation from his lapel" (34). As the Kid eulogizes Galveston Joe, the Trainer enters to tell the Palooka that his fight is "on." Walking "*slowly, lifelessly through the door*," the tired old fighter goes off to his match, and another part of the Kid's lesson begins when the Trainer reveals that the palooka to whom the Kid was talking was actually Galveston Joe himself, "the biggest *has-been* in the racket" (35). Meanwhile, off stage, the crowd roars—"like feeding Christians to the lions"—as the Palooka "with a glass chin" is soundly defeated.

As he had done in the "Mr. Olympics" episode of *Not About Nightingales*, Williams plays up the dark side of sports by stressing that one of its heroes is beaten physically and also psychologically through the illusions he has had about his success in the sport. The defeated athlete's self-image is tragically tied to the game. The Palooka lives the life of his fiction—the sports hype—in the locker room by verbally sparring with the Kid. Yet the truth is that the old fighter never acquired the wealth or security of his fantasized earlier inflated identity ("Galveston Joe") and had to switch to a "new moniker" that did not "fool the old timers," though it did the Kid. Seen contextually in terms of how the fight game has been represented in popular culture, "The Palooka" predates many films from the 1940s onward that uncovered the treacherous lures and cruel reality of the ring (e.g., *The Harder They Fall*, *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, or, more recently, *Million Dollar Baby*). Like these later film protagonists, the Palooka is not a triumphant, walk-away hero, an all-American athlete, but the victim of the sport's brutality intensified by the fickle endorsement of the fans and their cruel rejection later. Rather than having "wild-cat" women tear at his clothes, the Palooka is torn apart off stage by the savage cries of fans hungry for blood and broken bones.

In this early one-act play, Williams shoots holes through several linked American sports myths all at once—(a) sports heroes retire with honor, (b) they achieve great wealth through their sport, and (c) the younger generation of

athlete need to emulate such sports heroes. The ending of "The Palooka," though, is chillingly bitter, given the tenor of the Depression-ridden 1930s when it most probably was written. When the Trainer asks the Kid, "How are you feeling" as he waits for his fight, the fledgling boxer replies "slowly": "Yes, I'm feeling okay." But the play ends with the damning politics of sports noise for Williams—as "*Roars continue. Blackout,*" signaling that the Kid's hero-champ is really a "palooka" being devoured by the cruel mob of fans, a fate also in store for him if he stays in the fighting game. Williams's title punches the lights of desire out of the old and young fighter alike.

More than a decade after writing "The Palooka," Williams dug up another defeated fighter, Kilroy in *Camino Real* (1953). Named for the ubiquitous and victorious GI, who in World War II scribbled "Kilroy was here" on every wall and latrine in Europe, Williams's Kilroy, "the young adventurer" (369), is forced to retire from the ring because of a bad heart. His experiences in the ring lead him to the Camino Real, a dystopia where love, honor, and romance are vanquished in the absurd world run by the Generalissimo. Symbolic of his loss of prestige as a sports hero, Kilroy is forced to wear a Patsy outfit and wins "the Booby Prize," Esmeralda, the Gypsy's daughter, whom he is told will have her virginity restored with the new full moon. Both betraying and betrayed by his sport, Kilroy foolishly trades his "golden gloves" for a look at the Gypsy's daughter (563). Forfeiting the accolades due "the Champ," Kilroy descends to the ignominy of the Patsy, the grotesque antithesis of the manly pugilist-hero. He is finally accosted by the piping streetcleaners, the hit men of *Camino Real*, who are dispatched to take him away in a dustbin. But in a last-round attempt to recapture his glory days in the ring, Kilroy "*swings*" at the streetcleaners as they gather around him. "*They circle about him out of reach, turning him by each of their movements. The swings grow wilder like a boxer. He falls to his knees still swinging and finally collapses flat on his face*" (577). Williams characteristically debunks the legendary mythos surrounding an American sports hero, the Champ, by discrediting his superhuman athletic abilities and, even more biting, turning a traditional sporting event of manly bravery into a tragicomic brawl with absurd garbage men.

In the following Block of *Camino*, Kilroy makes a posthumous appearance as the proud but ultimately defeated boxer. As a corpse on "*a low table on wheels*" where his "*sheeted figure*" is positioned for an autopsy (578), Kilroy "*stirs and pushes himself up*" after the pathology instructor dissects his body, dislodging his golden heart in the anatomy. Seizing his heart, Kilroy throws it "*like a basketball to the Loan Shark,*" and then cries to Esmeralda, "Doll! Behold this loot. I gave my golden heart," as jewels and sequined gowns are cast at his feet. But this is no garland of victory; it is a travesty of a sports triumph. Kilroy has, sadly, sold out; the heroic fighter is reduced to a harlequin, an anti-sports hero, seduced by a whore. Pounding on the Gypsy's door, the only thing the disgraced boxer receives is the slopjar that she hurls at him,

symbolically besmirching his golden gloves, the insignia of his previous wins, with excrement. Like the Palooka's illusions, Kilroy's romantic dreams are shattered, but even more devastatingly. For his final gesture Kilroy crosses out the "is" of "Kilroy is here" and replaces it with "was." Williams links Kilroy's degradation on the Camino to his mythic reputation as the prizefighting champ and as the national soldier-hero. The unheroic boxer and has-been soldier, Kilroy is reduced to an absurd palooka in his dual roles.

Football is vital to the plots of three Williams plays—an early one-act work entitled "The Big Game" (1937); an early three-act play, *Spring Storm*, that he wrote for a playwrighting class at the University of Iowa, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). Set in "a small men's ward in a city hospital," the "Big Game" contrasts two young men, each 20 years old, who have spent "two months together" in the hospital. Tony Elson is a "college football star" who has been hospitalized for a knee injury while Dave his friend, "a charity case," has a terminal disease. Like many other Williams's athletes, Tony is filled with drive, impatience, and foolish, untested illusions. All he knows is that as the "best damned halfback the Bears have had in years" (93), he is eager to get back into to the game. He does not want to miss "the one with Mizzou" (79), Williams's alma mater which, ironically enough, Tony wants to play against. He pretends to throw passes from his bed, brags about his teammates, and exults in being discharged. In fact, he orders the nurse, "Let's get going! I'll miss the whole first quarter! Most spectacular aerial attack ever witnessed" (92). He encourages Dave by confidently predicting, "We'll have you up in time to see the play in that Thanksgiving game with the Blues" (86). Throughout Tony's exclamations of an unbounded faith in an all-American sports optimism, Dave listens lovingly but admits, "I never seen a real football game. Some kids in our neighborhood used to play Saturday afternoons in the corner lot" (86). But the more Tony anticipates and rejoices, the more painful his lesson, according to Williams. Learning from the doctor there is no chance for Dave, the exuberant athlete needs to realize "you're luckier than you think, Tony, just having to set out a few football games" (88). The "big game" Tony has to understand involves life and death, not football plays and hype. The invincibility of the athlete fades before crueler realities. Tony's view of life, conditioned by his myopic athletic outlook, changes radically, "I never thought about things like that before. Of course, before I knew people got incurable diseases and died. But I never saw them happening!" (88).

In *Spring Storm*, Dick Miles is another one of Williams's disappointed high school football heroes, "quite a power on the . . . team" (8). But that was at least eight years ago and he has risen no higher in Port Tyler, Mississippi, where the play is set, than as a clerk in Kramer's drug store. Yet the Episcopal priest, Dr. Hooker, tells him, "Your laurels are still green, my lad, your laurels are still green" and then turns to Heavenly Critchfield, Dick's girlfriend, and says, "glorious sunset, Heavenly, glorious." (8). To which an old spinster traveling

with the priest ironically responds, "Dr. Hooker, look at those clouds." As with Williams's other athletes, Dick's "glorious" career in sports does not assure him of bright happiness, success, or even love. Though Dick is "a good-looking boy . . . about twenty-three or four, tall and athletic in build" (5), he "does not share Heaven's desire for social position" and, in fact, wants to escape her "responsibility of having fine blood" (54). Advised by her mother to have nothing to do with Dick, "whose people are so low, so common" (49), Heavenly nevertheless tries to convince him to keep his job, curry favor with prominent people in town, and, most of all, marry her.

But Dick has "a fund of restless energy and an imagination which prevents him from fitting into the conventional social pattern" (5). Instead, he wants Heavenly to go with him to his new job "or a Government levee project" on the river (100). With the apt surname of *Miles*, Dick, understandably, loves travel, distance, and "will never be able to hold a job" (47). Putting "social position" and her own "laurels" over Dick's wanderlust and love, Heavenly resigns herself to marry Arthur Shannon, the scion of a wealthy family, but at the end of *Spring Storm*, she is left by both young men to become a "porch maiden" or old maid. Though Heavenly hopes that one or the other of her former wooers might return, her chances for love seem slim. The glory and garlands of Dick's high school football career and his "athletic" stature clearly brought more promise to Heavenly than to him. She realizes that a football star does not always make a good husband, a lesson Maggie learns in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

Football, with all the manly strength and vigor it denotes, is central to understanding Brick in Williams's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. In fact, *Cat* may be Williams's most sports-intensive play. One of the key relationships in the play, and a catalyst for almost every other, is Brick's with Skipper, articulated in terms of football and track. One of Williams's erased homosexuals (like Allan Grey in *Streetcar* or Sebastian Venable in *Suddenly Last Summer*), Skipper loved Brick as Brick did him. But because of his guilt over Skipper's death, Brick refuses to sleep with his wife Maggie the Cat whom he implicates in his friend's death. Jealous over Skipper, Maggie had confronted him about his feelings for her husband, taunting him to sleep with her or to "tell the truth." After she "poured in his mind the dirty, false idea," Skipper does indeed sleep with her but shortly after he "broke in two like a rotten stick—nobody ever turned so fast to a lush—or dried out so quick" (125). Fighting Maggie's accusation of being gay, Brick falls into a bottle, shutting himself off from her and Big Daddy.

In *Cat*, the wounded lover is also the wounded athlete. Framing and symbolizing Brick's love for Skipper, sports in *Cat* become a metaphor for self-destruction in a Big Daddy-dominated culture. This is physicalized throughout the play by Brick hobbling on a crutch after jumping hurdles on the high school track at night. Attacking her husband for such foolish athleticism, Maggie

mocks: "Just fantastic. Got in the paper. *Clarksdale Register* carried a nice little item about it, human interest story about a well-known former athlete stagin' a one-man track meet on the Glorious Hill High School athletic field last night, but was slightly out of condition and didn't make the first hurdle!" (22). Trying to recapture the glory of his youth as a high school athlete, just as Jeremy "Swifty" Trout attempted to do in *Not About Nightingales*, Brick is brought down by his liquor-induced lack of coordination and guilt over his friend Skipper's death. Foregrounding the image and themes of Brick as the fallen athlete-hero, the enormously popular 1958 film of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opens with Paul Newman replicating Brick's midnight jump.

By deconstructing the hallowed place sports (especially football) have in American popular culture, Williams actually used them to veil his own sexual agenda in *Cat*. Brick's broken leg received in his foolish imitation of a bygone sporting event was an acceptable sexual metonymy by 1950's standards for his incapacity as a husband to Maggie and his ill-fated love affair with Skipper, both intimately connected to football. While homosexuality was taboo on stage and in film in the 1950s, football was more than a safe topic and trope. It was the all-American ritual, almost a national religion, as it remains today. But in *Cat* Williams appropriated the sport to symbolize Brick's relationship with Skipper. Invoking the totems of acceptable masculine bonding, Williams stresses that the two men were members of the same fraternity at Ole Miss and that they played on the football team together. Being team members in such an aggressive, manly sport seemingly deflected any suspicion away from Brick and Skipper being seen as homosexuals. But not for those like Maggie who read between the goal posts. She recounts that the summer she married Brick, football again separated them. Brick and Skipper "organized the Dixie Stars . . . so that [they] could keep on bein' teammates forever!" (60). Williams feminizes the name of their football team, just as Blanche's metaphoric description of the stars (the Pleiades) as a women's bridge party does in Scene Ten of *Streetcar* (342). The name of Brick and Skipper's team—"Stars"—is more poetic and far less macho than the Steelers, Oilers, the Bears, the Rams, or even the Ole Miss Rebels.

Symbolizing the fate of their relationship, these two "pro-football heroes," Brick and Skipper, are benched because of injuries. Because of a perceived spinal injury, Brick "couldn't play the Thanksgiving game in Chicago and watched it on TV from a traction bed in Toledo" (60), unlike Tony in "The Big Game" who believed he would be ready for this major sporting event on a national holiday. Attempting to prove his manhood in bed with Maggie, Skipper is "hauled out of a game for stumbles, fumbles" and, as a result, "the Dixie Stars lose because poor Skipper was drunk." Interrogating the popular creed that football is a "man's game," that its heroes are made of stronger stuff, and that the sport builds character and *esprit de corps*, Williams instead encodes the sport as a meeting ground for the two male lovers and thus undermines the defining ethos of one of America's most popular sporting events. Skipper's

“stumbles, fumbles,” like Brick’s broken leg, may be multivalent symbols for Williams’s own lament over his closeted/erased homoeroticism as well as a reminder of society’s inevitable punishment for such behavior in the conservative Eisenhower years when *Cat* premiered.

Williams’s later plays occasionally introduce sports but almost always within the context of the Theatre of the Absurd, or, as Linda Dorff has argued, “within the two dimensional aesthetics of the cartoon” (16). In *The Gnadiges Fraulein* (originally published in *Esquire* in 1965), for instance, Williams spoofs the sport of fishing by having the Fraulein (a vaudeville singer), wearing an “aureole of bright orange curls” and a “large blood stained bandage” over one eye (230), battle the “parasitical” cockaloonny birds each day on the southernmost Florida Key. As a “permanent transient” (227) at Molly’s roominghouse, the Fraulein has “to deliver three fish a day to keep eviction away” (239). But her fishing is portrayed as an absurdly unconventional sport. Competing with the cockaloonies for “throw-away fish,” the Fraulein “shamelessly” runs to the docks. “*When a fish-boat whistles and the cockaloonies waddle rapidly forward, out she charges to compete for the catch*” (239). But the birds pluck out her other eye and tear her flesh apart in Williams’s parodic reversal of angler and bait. In foolishly competing with the birds, the Fraulein becomes the catch that at the end of the day a fisherman unhooks and cuts open. In a wickedly hilarious reversal of the fisherman’s story of “the one that got away,” a cockaloonny chases the Fraulein off the docks and back into Molly’s roominghouse. For many critics, Williams’s fishing story is a parable of the cruel fate of the artist (the Fraulein) at the hands of critics (the birds).

References to sports, athletes, and “physical culture” played an important, symbolic role in Williams’s life and canon. Sports participate in and articulate the paradoxes at the heart of many of his works. An avid, lifelong swimmer who averred aggressive, contact sports, Williams nonetheless relished the gory spectacle of bullfighting, writing about perfume and death in the afternoon. Reflecting the extremes found in physical exercise, his two most significant lovers were Kip, the delicate ballet dancer, and Frank Merlo, the hefty sailor. Williams’s plays for the most part ironically link failed dreams of success, romance, Hollywood stardom, or even freedom with past athletic victories or boasts of “physical culture.” Yet Williams deflates the mythos of all-American sports to reveal the vulnerability and defeat of the players who enshrine such myths. The garlands of yesterday become the bitter ashes of defeat for Swifty Trout, Kilroy, and Brick. Athletic men in Williams who once nurtured, or think they still display, golden bodies are sacked by age or worse—Chance Wayne, the Palooka, and Jimmie in “Interval.” In several stories and poems, Williams demonizes the body, especially in several black characters whom he puts in settings (training rooms, road gangs) that suggest the athletic. Sadly enough, the only clear sports winner in Williams’s canon is Stanley

Kowalski, the muscular brawler and bowling team captain. But it is fatal, though, to play by his rules, as Blanche DuBois's scorecard shows.*

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Notes

* I am grateful to Allean Hale for reading an earlier draft of this paper and for calling to my attention Williams's short-lived career as a college wrestler.

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Risk-as-Pleasure

“Anything becomes a pleasure if you do it too often.”

—Oscar Wilde

Entertain: to provide amusement for (a person or audience), to show hospitality to (guests), to give pleasure, diversion (C15: from Old French *entre-tenir*: to mutually hold)

—Collins English Dictionary

Let us examine the principle premise on which gaming activities are based and to tend to the ethical and epistemological principles, at least in fundament. Evidence of the pursuit of risk-taking goes back to the early Lower Pleistocene man who understood that a trap for animals would yield different outcomes depending on placement. The odds against his getting a meal would be smaller if he left less to chance.¹ Clearly such deliberation on maneuver-over-outcome is a process we almost always assume in even simple decisions. In gaming, and in play, such deliberation is isolated from its usual working-world associations. Risk, play, and leisure are interestingly connected in the game environment.

Leisure serves as an important component of human productivity. “No society can exist on production alone. It must devise principles to organize time and space—it must develop and maintain a healthy environment for its citizens to continue to foster economic and cultural growth, educate its young, make provisions for the sick, elderly and the disadvantaged and for the workers to relax and play. A surplus of energy and resources always remains. The problem of leisure is how to use this surplus.”²

Rojek [p 1, 2] mentions traditional societies such as the Azande, where the occult and the religious are bound together to coordinate the tribe’s surplus energy and is dominated by the individual’s observance of witchdoctors and oracles. The mystical forces at work in the lives of the tribe determine the individual’s “general life-course—the Azande’s notion of time is that there is overlap between the present and the future. Unlike the characteristic Western concept, time is not linear—space is not defined according to a rational-legal criteria.” Shamanism seeks to reconnect the powers of the medicine man to reconnect earth with the highest heavens. The “epic journey” away from the mundane world allows the shaman to bring back knowledge of the future after travel to the superhuman world of the gods.

Leisure and travel [Rojek p 2] is a legacy of the epic journey or pilgrimage. Mundane life is demanding in its highs and lows and relentless in its burden to the worker. We are so bound by workplace requirements that we are

often “prey to feelings of inauthenticity.” Conventionally defined as an activity that acts as complementary to the vocational endeavor, as Rojen³ puts it, leisure lets us “get in touch with ourselves” and makes “status statements about ourselves to others . . . placing us culturally in relation to others.” As we move toward a post-work society, the ethical framework to deal with this transition has yet to be fully explored and accepted by our culture. “The main challenge facing students of leisure is to devise ethical principles of private well-being and public responsibility which are compatible with post-work society.”

If leisure is a way of spending “useful” time as a “surplus” away from work, we also now need to examine the role of play, which at a fundamental level, is seen to provide a diversion from the occupational routine, a deviation or respite from the continuum of the work treadmill. We seek to engage in leisure-time play pursuits to refresh our vigour. It gives the player a way to detach from daily transactionary intimidations, the hazards of vocational proceedings and decision-making, a respite from the exchanges and dealings in our hectic working lives. In its many forms, we play games that exploit our otherwise under utilised physical selves—aerobics, competition sports, chess and other board games, bush exploration, water adventures, car rallies, a game of cards.

We choose these activities for their ability to distance us from the mechanical aspects of work. This distancing may provide the individual alternate perspectives of life and life- strategies by the active sharing of leisure interests with other individuals. Play is a “free” activity outside “serious” ordinary life—“outside the sphere of necessity and material utility.”⁴

[It is] an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of necessity and material utility. The play-mood is one of rapture and enthusiasm, and is sacred or festive in accordance with the occasion. A feeling of exaltation and tension accompanies the action.⁵

There are also significant purposes for play quite apart from its therapeutic and recreational functions. Play is necessary for development. Ideas are playful reverberations of the mind. Language is the playing of words until they can impersonate physical objects and abstract ideas. Play is an open-ended willingness to explore the unknown.

Animals play when they are young as rehearsals for their later adult functions: “. . . it invites problem-solving, allowing a creature to test its limits and develop strategies; survival belongs to the agile not the idle.”⁶ In human education, one of the most effective styles of learning is that of discovery, the linking of information with its possible applications. For experiments in the science labs, making art in its exploratory moves has its essence in play.

Colour delineates play in mental space: purposeful and exploitative; in nature colour is used as trickery, designed by perpetrators to communicate important life-and-death information, to deceive, attract, and to signify danger. Dr. M. Kasperbauer of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Coastal Plains Research Centre⁷ discovered that plants react to far-red, a colour beyond human vision, as if threatened by a rival, spiraling high and boosting the production of chlorophyll and protein in their leaves. In the insect world, femme-fatale lightning bugs decode the semaphore of their rivals in order to lure and steal other females' mates.

For humans, the choice of colour in casinos and in game design and furnishing has been subjected to psychological and intuitive interpretation. Tradition is categorical: green and red is always used, blue is incidental. Chinese superstition extends equally to colour as in numbers and symbols. In the new casino parlours in Macau, Feng Shui is a prerequisite in the logistics needed to make players feel at ease.

In Feng Shui (wind water) and according to Chinese philosophy, one's success is determined by five areas of influence (the first two are not within the control of any individual, therefore the other three should be understood and developed to optimum levels⁸):

Yiming -	destiny
Eryun-	lucky and lucky eras
San feng Shui -	art of placement
Shi daode -	virtue
Wu dushu -	background, culture, education, experience, exposure

Feng Shui is recognized in the western world now by other than the advocates of superstition. Astrological elements are strategized by complementing conditions and settings to temper and harmonize impulsive spirits and desires. Energizers and enhancements in the environment are instrumental to comfort and poise.

Play is bounded by freely accepted rules and is conducted in an orderly manner, promoting "social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their differences from the common world by disguise or other means."⁹ Caillois goes further by describing play as "spectacular and ostentatious . . . play exposes, publishes and expends and that it removes the very nature of the mysterious . . . and that the secret, the mask or the costume fulfills a sacramental function one can be sure not play, but an institution is involved."

Caillois also notes that missing from Huizinga's definition of play are games of chance played for money and that a distinction need be made where the definition of play affirms or implies the absence of economic interest. Caillois classifies play into four types:

- Agon: contest of skill [chess, football, golf]
 Alea: games of fate/ chance and requiring luck to win
 [cards, roulette, dice]
 Mime: adopting a different identity [charade]
 Ilinx: contains the pursuit of vertigo or loss consciousness
 [dancing, acrobatics, psychotropic drugs]

	type	mass	limits
A G O N	<i>cultural forms found at the margins of the social order</i>	<i>institutional forms integrated into social life</i>	<i>corruption</i>
competition	<i>sports</i>	<i>economic competition</i> <i>competitive examinations</i>	<i>violence</i> <i>will to power</i> <i>trickery</i>
A L E A chance	<i>lotteries</i> <i>casinos</i> <i>hippodromes</i> <i>pari-mutuels</i>	<i>speculation on stock market</i>	<i>superstition</i> <i>astrology</i> <i>feng shui</i>
MIMICRY simulation	<i>carnival</i> <i>theatre</i> <i>cinema</i> <i>hero-worship</i>	<i>uniforms</i> <i>ceremonial</i> <i>etiquette</i>	<i>alienation</i> <i>split</i> <i>personality</i>
I L I N X vertigo	<i>mountain climb</i> <i>skiing</i> <i>tightrope walk</i> <i>speed</i>	<i>professions requiring control of vertigo</i>	<i>alcoholism</i> <i>drugs</i>

roger caillios 1958

The diagram above adapts Caillios' synthesis to show the application and limits of each grouping of play. The extrapolative diagram proposes that play may degenerate into self-indulgence or else transforms into a new facet of exploration.

Ackerman differentiates between simple play and deep play [Deep: The most intense or extreme part—profoundly absorbed and immersed¹⁰]. Deep play is a state of transcendence, which alters our notion of time, space, and spirit, bringing out our “best selves”—a state of unselfconscious engagement with our environment¹¹. He also links play with risk. Risk drives us forward, challenges our sense of the logical, the status quo. The act of risk-taking is empowering and enabling, giving us pleasure.

Risk-as-Pleasure: Risk-as-Necessity

Risk is defined as the potential loss or harm arising from an intended action. We may be either risk averse or loss averse. Kahneman¹² speaks of a “delusionary optimism” in association with loss aversion: “people are generally timid and dislike risk—they are more prudent than they think they are—they think too small.” “Bounded rationality” is the norm in our decision-making, especially during periods of uncertainty. Most of the time we don’t know that we’re taking risks.¹³ *Fate is going to be kind to us* is the self-perception in gauging our own wellbeing. Kahneman cites the fundamental example of the 2 to 2.5 odds gamble, and demonstrates that the level of willingness to participate is predictable by proportion. In the community, players take the highest risk and property owners the lowest.

Games People Play: Game Theory and its Broad Context

Game Theory is a mathematical theory dealing with game-like situations in which participants wish to maximize some property (such as utility) in positions of uncertainty, not only with respect to the state of nature but also the actions of other players whose interests may be opposed or parallel to those of the participant. Typically, when deciding what to do, one must predict the actions of others with the knowledge that they themselves, when deciding which action to perform, will predict the actions of others including oneself. Complexity may be increased by allowing coalitions between players. Game Theory has been used to analyze and calculate best possible strategies in game-like situations such as business, war, politics, and social activities. It has been extensively developed in the 20th century by John Von Neumann (1903–57) and Oskar Morgenstern (1902–).

There is a relationship to decision theory, viz.: a theory whose subject matter is the situations in which a decision problem arises, a situation in which one may be typically faced with a set of alternative actions and uncertainty as to the consequences of all or some of these actions. The problem is in deciding which action to undertake, that is, which action is most rational relative to the information available.

One common approach is to assign probabilities to the occurrence of the consequences of each action, estimate utilities (welfare, happiness, etc.) associated with each consequence, and to select as most rational the action with

the maximum expected utility. However, in many situations inadequate information may make it impossible to assign probabilities or estimate utilities with certainty or near certainty. The approach also takes no account of risk aversion.

In response, weaker principles have been adopted, such as the minimax (maximin) principle which recommends choice of the action which has, as its worst outcome, a consequence which is better than the worst consequence of any alternative action. The principle is often criticized as being too conservative except in a small class of situations (zero sum games in which one's opponents are rational).

One of the main problems facing decision theory is that there is no adequately accepted notion of what is involved in rational decisions. Attempts have been made to develop axioms (assumptions) which any intuitive concept of rationality must satisfy. It seems that suggested decision criteria do not satisfy all such axioms.

The "rationality of randomness," the notion that numerical chance and probability have structure outside their mathematical bounds, is often associated with intuition, rhythm, and cycles, and also noticed in biological contexts, including fractal theory.

Risk: An Epicurean Pleasure

As deemed by the principles of Epicurus ("philosopher of the garden" 341–270 BC) *ataraxia* is the experience of soul-satisfying emotional bliss, and is the moral goal of his philosophy. According to Epicurus, "no activity experienced is indefinitely pleasurable, otherwise one might be inspired to dedicate every waking hour to one single task"¹⁴ [Anderson, 1991]. Indeed, as Epicurus states in his eighth principal doctrine:

If every pleasure could be intensified so that
it lasted and influenced the whole organism or
the most essential parts of our nature,
pleasures would never differ from one another.

Anderson posits six fundamental avenues of pleasure which, following Epicurean principles, optimizes the viability of the human species through a rotation or "full" spectrum of experience. *Ataraxia* is thus accomplished through an equilibrium of pleasures.

"To mitigate the 'daily grind,' humanity had simultaneously devised numerous diversions that we collectively regard as recreational outlets: vacations, the arts, hobbies, sports, clubs, parties, dating, dining, dancing, and many other facets of leisure. We find these pastimes intrinsically pleasurable because they incorporate essential attributes of prehistoric lifestyles. 'Having fun' is how we pay homage to our evolutionary heritage" [Anderson]. He

proposes a conceptual matrix which remedies and retrieves the missing “genetic” conditioning lost since industrial “specialisation” and the multiplying of divisions of labour.

The Anderson matrix grids Epicurus’ leisure experiences in a hierarchical order, much like Maslow’s hierarchy of need or Bloom’s taxonomy. Emotional satisfaction is perhaps optimized through a rotation of vital activities at the depth and breadth most appropriate for the human ecological niche: e.g. eating, bonding, mating, exploring, hunting, learning, contemplating, innovating. The lateral partition differentiates the external versus internal realms of experience; the three columns characterize differing intensities of volitional effort. The resulting categories (sensation, adventure, mission, imagination, communication, and speculation) Anderson regards as representing the six fundamental routes to pleasures which invigorate the human soul.

Thus, the Anderson diagram represents the grid of pleasures according to Epicurean principles:

- **Spontaneous presentations:** the sensuous pleasures are derived from any sensory experience that we find to be gratifying in and by itself. Of these pleasures, quenching our sexual and stomachical appetites is paramount on the list of human preoccupations.

Epicureanism:

For my part I find no meaning which I can attach to what is termed good, if I take away from it the pleasures obtained by taste, if I take away the pleasures which come from listening to music, if I take away too the charm derived by the eyes from the sight of figures in dance, or other pleasures produced by any of the senses of man as a whole. É I have often asked men who were called wise what they could retain as the content of goods if they took away those things I’ve mentioned.

Unless they wanted to pour out empty words, I could learn nothing for them; and if they want to babble on about virtues and wisdom, they will be speaking of nothing except the way in which those pleasures I mentioned are produced.

(From Cicero’s Tusculan Disputations, 3.41)

- **Interactive presentations:** The adventurous pleasures are the experiences of sheer enjoyment we receive from exploring the unknown: revelation, novelties.
- **Proactive presentations:** The mission-oriented pleasures are evoked by the thrill of the chase. Among the most ancient human missions was surely the hunt accomplishment of some objective game: when there is a goal that is well-defined.
- **Spontaneous representations:** The imaginary pleasures emanate from the realm of fantasy. The theatre of the imagination plays a pivotal role in the human psyche.
- **Interactive representations:** The communicative pleasures are derived from all facets of shared experience. Through the symbolic means of language, be it written, spoken, or signed: brainstorming, gossiping, and other freestyle forms of conversation, the Confession. Communication can also be carried out through touch and action. The lover's kiss and caress are often more than just sensual delights, but also explicit expressions of affection.
- **Proactive representations:** The speculative pleasures emerge from predictions about the future. The keen ability of the human mind to model reality naturally entices us to contemplate "what-if scenarios" as a prelude to decision making. The institutions of investing and gambling allow us to place stakes on how precisely the outcome of real events conform to our expectations. Winning many kinds of games in general often depends upon how good we are at outguessing our opponents. Speculation also facilitates the advancement of knowledge, since by doing so we lay the initial groundwork for discovery. There also exists a great human fascination with prognostication, even when the methods employed are known to be dubious (such as astrology and other forms of fortune telling).

Balance is the key, rather than intensity. Happiness is maximized by a regimen of pleasurable activities. This analogy hints at the reason why the pursuit of happiness so often goes awry for so many people. It is because they plunge into their favored routines with counterproductive voracity, so that sensations become obsessions, adventures become misadventures, missions become crusades, imagination becomes escapism, communication becomes clamor, and speculation becomes rumination. Spiritual equilibrium is overlooked in favor of "living on the edge," and what results is emotional "burnout" rather than emotional fulfillment.

An Assessment of Risk

Risk is the potential future harm that may arise from some present action. It is often combined or confused with the probability of an event which is seen as undesirable. Usually the probability and some assessment of expected

harms must be combined into a believable scenario combining risk, regret, and reward probabilities into expected value. However, there are many informal methods which are used to assess risk or to “measure” it although it is not usually possible to directly measure a concept.

Risk is Not the Same as Threat

In scenario analysis “risk” is distinct from “threat.” “Threat” refers to a very low-probability but high-impact event which cannot typically be assigned a probability in a risk assessment because it has never occurred and for which no effective preventive measure is available. The difference is most clearly illustrated by the precautionary principle which seeks to reduce threat by requiring it to be reduced to a set of well-defined risks before an action, project, innovation, or experiment is allowed to proceed.

A more specific example is the preparedness of the United States of America prior to the devastating attack on September 11th, 2001. Although the Central Intelligence Agency had often warned of a “clear and present danger” of planes being used as a weapon, this was considered a threat not a risk. Accordingly, no comprehensive scenarios of probabilities and counter-measures were ever prepared for the type of attack that occurred. In general, a threat cannot be characterized as a risk without at least one specific incident wherein the threat can be said to have “realized.” From that point, there is at least some basis to characterize a probability, e.g. “in the entire history of air travel, X flights have led to 1 incident of . . .”

Professions and Governments Manage Risk

Means of measuring and assessing risk vary widely across different professions; indeed, means of doing so may define different professions, e.g. a doctor manages medical risk, a civil engineer manages risk of structural failure, etc.

A professional code of ethics is usually focused on risk assessment and mitigation (by the professional on behalf of client, public, society, or life in general). Some theorists of political science, notably Carol Moore and Jane Jacobs, emphasize that smaller political units and careful separation of the roles of regulator and trader can improve professional ethics and subordinate them to uniform risk limits that would apply to a particular locale, e.g. an entire urban area. The political ideal of bioregional democracy arose in part in response to these ideals, and created the problem of professional jargons and associations alienating power from real people living in real places.

“A profession by definition is in a conflict of interest with respect to the risk passed on to its clients.”

—Steven Rapaport

Risk as Regret?

Risk has no one definition, but some theorists, notably Ron Dembo, have defined quite general methods to assess risk as an expected after-the-fact level of regret. Such methods have been uniquely successful in limiting interest rate risk in financial markets. Financial markets are considered to be a proving ground for general methods of risk assessment. However, these methods are also hard to understand. The mathematical difficulties interfere with other social goods such as disclosure, valuation, and transparency. In particular, it is often difficult to tell if such financial instruments are “hedging” (decreasing measurable risk by giving up certain windfall gains) or “gambling” (increasing measurable risk and exposing the investor to catastrophic loss in pursuit of very high windfalls that increase expected value). As regret measures rarely reflect actual human risk-aversion, it is difficult to determine if the outcomes of such transactions will be satisfactory. In financial markets one may need to measure credit risk, information timing, as well as source risk, probability model risk, and legal risk if there are regulatory or civil actions taken as a result of some “investor’s regret.”

Tough Choices

Financial markets illustrate a more general problem in defining and assessing risk: the ways that different types of risk combine. It can be hard to see how the relative risks from different sources should affect one’s decisions. For example, when treating a disease a doctor might have the choice of either using a drug that had a high probability of causing minor side effects, or carrying out an operation with a low probability of causing very severe damage.

According to the regret theory, the only way to resolve such dilemmas might be to find out more about the patient’s life and ambitions. If, for instance, the patient’s greatest desire centered on raising children, one might prefer the drug even if it limited their mobility or physical capacity somewhat. However, if the patient has already risked their own life several times in extreme sporting events, the decision to do so one more time and recover full capacities may be far preferable. This highlights a major problem in professional ethics: knowing when the cognitive bias of the professional versus the client (or “patient”) must dominate, and what choices each is best able to make.

Framing

Framing is a fundamental problem with all forms of risk assessment. The above examples: body, threat, price of life, professional ethics, and regret show that the risk adjustor or assessor often faces serious conflict of interest. The assessor also faces cognitive bias and cultural bias and cannot always be trusted to avoid all moral hazards. This represents a risk in itself, which grows as the assessor is less like the client.

For instance, an extremely disturbing event that all participants wish not to happen again may be ignored in analysis despite the fact it has occurred and has a nonzero probability. Or, an event that everyone agrees is inevitable may be ruled out of analysis due to greed or an unwillingness to admit that it is believed to be inevitable. These human tendencies to error and wishful thinking often affect even the most rigorous applications of the scientific method and are a major concern of the philosophy of science.

But all decision-making under uncertainty must consider cognitive bias, cultural bias, and notational bias. No group of people assessing risk is immune to “groupthink”: acceptance of obviously wrong answers simply because it is socially painful to disagree.

One effective way to solve framing problems in risk assessment or measurement (although some argue that risk cannot be measured, only assessed) is to ensure that scenarios, as a strict rule, must include unpopular and perhaps unbelievable (to the group) high-impact low-probability “threat” and/or “vision” events.

This permits participants in risk assessment to raise others’ fears or personal ideals by way of completeness, without others concluding that they have done so for any reason other than satisfying this formal requirement.

For example, an intelligence analyst with a scenario for an attack by hijacking might have been able to insert mitigation for this threat into the U.S. budget. It would be admitted as a formal risk with a nominal low probability. This would permit coping with threats even though the threats were dismissed by the analysts’ superiors. Even small investments in diligence on this matter might have disrupted or prevented the attack, or at least “hedged” against the risk that an administration might be mistaken.

Insurance

Although military decision-making tends to dominate risk theory, its most sophisticated daily practice is in the insurance industry. The insurers have well-defined roles of actuary, underwriter, agent, auditor, and adjustor. Each of these is an assessor in somewhat different circumstances or stages of the insuring, reinsuring, adjustment, recovery, and claims payment processes.

Military Leads Insurance Leads Finance Leads Government

In very broad terms, military and insurance decision-making is quite a bit more formal and sophisticated than equivalent processes in financial markets; regret theory has done much to equalize this by incorporating many common military and insurance practices and putting formal trappings on them.

Generally, the military, insurance, financial, and other professional fields must work through methods before they become prevalent in government policy. Risk assessments with differing ways of determining public concerns are

a major concern of political parties. These parties compete to impose these views on foreign policy, the judicial system, law enforcement, and in legislation.

The techniques flow slowly from one field to the next. To illustrate the long timelines involved, scenario analysis matured during Cold War confrontations between major powers, notably the USA and USSR, but was not widespread in insurance circles until the 1970s when major oil tanker disasters forced a more comprehensive foresight. It entered finance until the 1980s when financial derivatives proliferated. It did not reach most professions in general until the 1990s when personal computers proliferated. Governments are apparently only now learning to use sophisticated risk methods, most obviously to set standards for environmental regulation, e.g. “pathway analysis” as practiced in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Civilization as Risk Reduction

“Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them.”

—Alfred North Whitehead

If Whitehead is right, then the perfect civilization is the perfect risk reduction algorithm—capable of warning us long in advance of foreseeable problems, and assuring us that surprises were unforeseeable in principle. Unfortunately, this vision of a risk-reducing symbiote or prosthetic for human judgement remains elusive, fragmented, and unlikely to be realized.

Fear as Intuitive Risk Assessment?

For the time being, we must rely on our own fear and hesitation to keep us out of the most profoundly unknown circumstances. In “The Gift of Fear,” Gavin de Becker argues that “True fear is a gift.” From the book jacket: “It is a survival signal that sounds only in the presence of danger. Yet unwarranted fear has assumed a power over us that it holds over no other creature on Earth. It need not be this way.”

Risk could be said to be the way we collectively measure and share this “true fear”—a fusion of rational doubt, irrational fear, and a set of unquantified biases from our own experience. The field of behavioral finance focuses on human risk aversion, asymmetric regret, and other ways that human financial behavior varies from what analysts call “rational.”

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Notes

¹ Wykes, A.(1964): Gambling, Aldus, London, p.28

² Rojek, C.: “The Culture of Leisure,” p.2

³ Ibid, p.3

⁴ Ibid, p.13

⁵ Huizinga, Johan: *Homo Ludens*

⁶ Ackerman, Dianne: *Deep Play*, p.4

⁷ Ibid p.180

⁸ Rossbach, S.: *Feng Shui, The Art of Placement*, Arkana, NY 1983

⁹ Caillois

¹⁰ Webster Dictionary

¹¹ Ackerman, Dianne: *Deep Play*, p. 162

¹² Dr. Daniel Kahneman: The Psychology of Risk, U of Sydney: RC Chambers Research Memorial Lecture, Thursday July 3, 2003

¹³ A very specific version of behavioral finance, prospect theory, was first advanced by Amos Tversky and Kahneman in 1979.

¹⁴ Anderson, on Epicurus in Wikipedia

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Secularizing the Saint: The Journey of St. George's Day from Feast Day to Horse Race

By the mid-fourteenth century St. George was accepted as the patron saint of England, and his feast day, 23 April, was celebrated in communities large and small throughout the kingdom. With the coming of Protestant reforms under Edward VI and Elizabeth, that feast day was abolished, and official St. George Day celebrations largely disappeared in England. Yet the cities of Chester and Norwich in particular had traditionally staged elaborate celebrations to mark St. George's feast day, and prominent citizens and city fathers strove to find some way to preserve some sort of St. George's Day festivities while attempting to purge the celebration of its Catholic and religious overtones.

Veneration of St. George gained in popularity in England as a result of the Crusades. William of Malmesbury wrote that Saints George and Demetrius were seen aiding the Crusaders at the siege of Antioch in 1098, and Richard the Lionhearted seems to have believed in St. George's intercession on behalf of the English forces during the Third Crusade. In 1222 St. George's Day was included among the English church holidays (*Butler's* 120–1). Kings Henry III and Edward I adopted the red cross of St. George for their royal banners (REED *Kent* 1: lxxxix), and Edward III named St. George the patron of the Order of the Garter in the mid-fourteenth century. Under Henry V, in 1415, St. George's Day was elevated to one of the chief feasts of the English church calendar (*Butler's* 120–1). St. George clearly was connected to the reigning monarch, and, by implication, to the nation. For instance, records of a visit in 1486 by Henry VII to Hereford describe a welcoming pageant including spoken parts for St. George, who promises his intercession for the king for the rest of his life (REED *Herefordshire* 114). And when Henry's heir, Prince Arthur, visited Coventry in 1498, St. George was presented killing the dragon, and then giving a speech in which he promised his protection to the prince (REED *Coventry* 90).

Though provincial records dating before the fourteenth century are sketchy, perhaps as early as the twelfth century religious guilds dedicated to St. George were established in numerous parishes throughout England. From the fourteenth century into the sixteenth century local records indicate that the feast day of St. George was widely celebrated with religious plays, pageants, and processions (REED *Kent* 1: lxxxix, Norland 3).

About all that is relatively certain about the historical St. George is that he was a Roman soldier, probably a cavalry officer, probably from Cappadocia, probably martyred around A.D. 303 in Palestine during the persecution of Christians carried out by the Emperor Diocletian (*Butler's* 120). By the time

eneration of the saint reached England St. George's story presented him as a Roman knight who rode about the countryside righting wrongs and preaching Christianity, who saved a city and a princess from a voracious human-eating dragon, and whose martyrdom under Diocletian was a miraculous event. St. George was twice killed, twice brought back to life, dying only on the third attempt at execution, when he was beheaded (Caxton 3: 129).

Most of the elements of this legend appeared in the numerous plays, pageants, and processions mounted by English parishes, large and small, rich and poor, to celebrate St. George's Day (Riches 1). Many churchwardens' accounts record an image of St. George being carried about, a dragon being made, actual performers dressing as St. George, and other performers costumed to take part in processions and plays (Hutton 26–7). Records from the counties of Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, Devon, Dorset, Cornwall, Lincoln, and Warwickshire attest to the time, care, and substantial amounts of money spent in several localities for celebrations on the Feast of St. George (REED *Coventry* xiii, 90, 115, 151; *Devon* 63, 130, 230, 442; *Dorset/Cornwall* 499; *Malone Norfolk/Suffolk* 131–2; Wickham 103).

St. George plays and processions may have featured the hero vanquishing not only the dragon but also characters named the Black or Moroccan Prince, the Turkish Knight, the Noble Captain of France or the Bold Slasher. A doctor also may have been featured who cures his patients or brings St. George back to life (Norland 327), and many may have included a king, queen, and princess (Davidson 61). The conditional verb tense is used in this description for a reason. The only surviving scripts of folk plays featuring St. George date from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, most recreated from memory (Chambers *Folk* 170; Norland 50, 53, 57). Hence descriptions of medieval and early modern St. George celebrations are suppositions drawn from these scripts, and from the descriptions of costs, costumes, personnel, and so forth found in the parish and municipal records of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries.

Ridings, a common feature of St. George celebrations, were similar to a procession, or sometimes incorporated within processions. E. K. Chambers writes that St. George Ridings emerged around the end of the fourteenth century and were organized by the various St. George's guilds for the worship of the saint. As far as we can tell, from various local records, the Ridings conducted in smaller parishes involved a man costumed as St. George who rode a horse from point A to point B, perhaps accompanied by some sort of attendants (Chambers *Folk* 222).

The most famous St. George Procession and Riding was established in Norwich by the city's Guild of St. George, founded in 1385, and granted a perpetual charter by Henry V in 1417 (REED *Norwich* xxvi), in 1408, guild records provided that: "George shall go in procession and make a conflict with

the Dragon and keep his estate both days.” The celebrations began on the evening before St. George’s Day. In 1547 they were described as follows:

Also it is ordered and agreed. That on the even of Saint George By the howre of Three of the klokke in the afternoon The Mayour Shereves with all the rest of the alderman of the same Cittie after the Sommoning of the Waytes and every other Brother Citesan of the seide Company after the olde custome shall Repare to the seide Cathedrall Church of the holy Trynytye of Norwich Their to assemble them selves and there to here such Dyvyne Servyce as then shalbe there seide or song. And from thens to Repayre to the seide Common hall there to take parte of the ffeast makers provyson (REED *Norwich* 23).

The following day the procession was held, led by a man carrying a gilded wooden sword with a carved dragon’s head on the handle. The man who played George was accompanied by St. Margaret, a club-bearer, henchmen, minstrels, standard and banner bearers, the guild-priest, the members of the guild, the mayor and other city officials, and a dragon bearer inside the frame of the mechanical dragon that had iron hoops for its belly, a stained head, and moveable wings and tail (REED *Norwich* 11, 70, 78, 91). The framework of the sixteenth-century dragon (named Snap) still exists in the Norwich Castle Museum (Goodman 118).

The guild’s inventory lists from 1550 indicate that St. George was costumed in a gilded helmet, armor beaten with silver, and wore an over garment of white satin with a red cross on the chest. St. Margaret was garbed in a gown of “tawney” or “Crymesen velvet wrought pirlid [trimmed] with golde,” and wore a chain of jewels. Their horses, respectively, were harnessed in black velvet with copper and gilt buckles and crimson velvet with gold flowers. Attendants, such as their footmen, and banner bearers were similarly richly costumed (REED *Norwich* xxvii, 26–30).

The procession traveled throughout the city and outside the city at the “wood” where the conflict is assumed to have occurred (REED *Norwich* 5–102). E. K. Chambers (*Medieval* 1: 222–224) labels the celebration as nothing more than a collection of so-called “dumb shows,” but Norwich records list expenses for writing down the “parts” for Sts. George and Margaret. Those entries suggest that the procession included scripted, or semi-scripted, skits or playlets. Following the procession a mass was offered in honor of St. George, followed by another feast for guild members and city officials (Grace 14–21, REED *Norwich* xxvii).

Between 1540 and 1591 the Norwich Guild of St. George spent a total of 10,128 pence on St. George celebrations. The amounts gradually decreased

through the years. The largest annual amount spent on the celebrations occurred in 1544: 2640 pence, a sum close to the annual salary of an endowed priest in the rich London parish of St. Mary's Woolnoth (Woolnoth xvii). Seventy-one percent of the larger costs resulted from an increase in the stipends paid to musicians, but unfortunately no reason is given for that year's large inflation in their wages.

In 1540 the man playing St. George was paid 80 pence, a sum equal to about nineteen days' wages for a laborer (Ludlow 35). There also were payments to standard bearers, the dragon bearer, who was inside the figure of the dragon and worked the controls which made its mouth open, its wings flap and tail wag (Nelson 122), to footmen assigned to Sts. George and Margaret, gloves for both of them, and for mending the dragon, harnesses for the horses, a canopy, an altar and candles (REED *Norwich* 4-5). Similar payments for St. George's Day continue annually through 1546, after which detailed expenses for St. George's Day celebrations disappear in the financial records until 1581.

What caused this hiatus in what had been a traditional celebration for almost 150 years? Quite simply it was the radical Protestant reforms of the government of Edward VI. At the outset of his reign most religious holidays, included St. George's Day, were abolished. Processions and pageants and the veneration of all religious images were forbidden, and all images and high altars were removed from churches (Forse "Flow and Ebb" 47-63). St. George celebrations disappear from virtually all local records during Edward's reign. For instance, in the city of York St. George's Days were not celebrated throughout the reign of Edward VI, even though the holiday was not abolished officially until 1552. Almost at the beginning of Edward's reign city officials learned that Edward's government intended to disband its St. George's Guild, and sent a representative to London in an attempt to preserve it (Hutton 82).

York's records for 1554 show that under Mary the traditional St. George's Day celebrations were revived. But in 1558, when Elizabeth came to the throne the St. George play was cancelled and never again appears in the York records (REED *York* 327). Yet why did few other St. George's Day events reappear under Catholic Mary, and Norwich's celebration in particular not reappear until years into Elizabeth's reign? The simplest answer here is lack of funds, as well as the uncertain religious/political climate. Edward's reforms involved almost the total gutting of the interior of churches and the selling off of all Catholic paraphernalia, including processional or dramatic costumes and props. Five years later Mary's reforms insisted that the churches be restored to their state before the reign of Edward, and five years after that Elizabeth ordered them re-renovated to the specifications of Edward VI. A sampling of selected parish records reveals that the costs of reform from Edward to Elizabeth could be substantial in terms of the average income of a parish. In Ashburton (Devonshire) reform costs amounted to 5.8% of the parish's income (Hanham 83-156); in Cambridge's Great St. Mary's it amounted to 10.8% (Foster 94-

155); in Marston (Oxfordshire) it amounted to 33.9% (Weaver and Clark 14–23), and in London’s St. Mary Woolnoth it was as high as 89.2% of that parish’s income during the reform years (Brooke and Hallen xvi–xxvi).

When Norwich resumed its St. George Day celebrations under Elizabeth, Sts. George and Margaret were removed. Guild records from 1559 state: “at the ffeast nexte to be holden for the company and fellowshipp of Saynt George for dyuerse cawses Weyed and considereid Ther shalbe neyther George nor Margett But for pastyme the dragon to com In and shew hym self as in other yeares” (REED *Norwich* 47). When detailed records concerning the procession resume in 1581, costs for the dragon, musicians and standard bearers are listed, but there is no mention of Sts. George and Margaret. Similar costs continue annually until 1591, when all costs for a St. George’s Day procession cease. For whatever reasons, authorities in Norwich after 1591 seemed to have believed that even a St. George’s day celebration minus St. George was inappropriate. Snap the dragon, however, lived on as a secular, civic symbol. Snap appeared in the annual inaugural processions for the lords mayor well into the eighteenth century (REED *Norwich* xxvii.47, 58, 63–102). Keeping the dragon in the city’s annual processions maintained the link St. George had to the citizens of Norwich despite the religious reforms of the sixteenth century, which sought to eliminate the cults of the saints.

No records from before 1554 are extant from Chester which detail a St. George’s Day celebration, but then most of Chester’s extant documents do not pre-date the mid-sixteenth century (REED *Chester* xi). A *Breviary*, begun by Archdeacon Robert Rogers (died 1595) and continued by his son David (between 1609 and 1637), suggests that celebrations in Chester date at least to the appearance of Chester’s Corpus Christi and Whitsun plays of the fourteenth century. St. George celebrations may, in fact, have overlapped these events. Rogers’s *Breviary* states: “And before these playes there was a man which did Ride as I tak it vpon St Georges daye throughe the Cittie” (REED *Chester* liiii-iv, 338–9). The fact that St. George’s Day celebrations appear in Chester’s records annually each year during Mary’s reign also suggests a certain antiquity for the event. Though records from earlier than the mid-sixteenth century are lacking, it seems unlikely that St. George Day celebrations only came into being at that late date.

A total of 562 pence, equal to about 98 days’ wages for a laborer, was spent on St. George’s Day events between 1554 and 1558 (REED *Chester* 55–62). Other than the fact that mock prisoners were paid and banners were carried, there are few other details about these celebrations. Yet records dating from the reign of King James detail the resumption of games and plays as held in the past which dictate: “St. George fighting with ye dragon &c.” (REED *Chester* 338).

With the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 the celebration of St. George’s Day ceased. And with good reason, since attempts to continue the Whitsun Day plays in 1572 and 1574 in the face of ecclesiastical and royal prohibitions

resulted in the Lord Mayor being summoned to London (REED *Chester* 109). After that date, the events usually coupled with Whitsun became subsumed under the secular festivities associated with the Midsummer Watch when the militia, accompanied by the town musicians and the city official, paraded about the city.

A similar secularization of St. George's Day occurred in 1609. In that year the Lord Mayor and a former sheriff of Chester established an annual horse race to be held on St. George's Day, with prizes of silver bells or cups to be made annually to the horses who finished first, second, and third in the race. An elaborate procession was planned to accompany the horserace. Its purported purpose was for "homage to the kyng & prynce with that noble victor St george to be Continued for euer" (REED *Chester* 238). Participants included men on horseback costumed to represent elves with clubs, Mercury, the City of Chester, Love, Envy, Peace and Pomp, men carrying the arms of King James and Prince Henry on shields, and men carrying the silver prizes to be awarded at the race. Most were to deliver "an Oration" in honor of the tokens each carried. And there was to be "St George himselfe on horseback in Complete Armor with his flagg and buckle in pompe & before him a noyse of drums" (REED *Chester* 279–80).

Several years' records list assessments on a number of the city guilds for their contributions towards the costs of making the silver prizes (REED *Chester* 258, 287, 307, 314, 323, 354, 368). After 1610 little else specifically related to St. George appears in the records connected to the annual horse race. In 1621, however, plans were made to add "St. George fighting with ye dragon &c." to the annual Midsummer Watch. Plans included men representing St. George, the Nine Worthies, the Nine Worthy Women, the Four Virtues, and the Four Seasons. Plans specified "all the showe aboue saide to ryde on white and red horses." The records note that in the end "nothinge was done therein" (REED *Chester* 338–40), but reasons for abandoning the show are not given. Nonetheless, it is clear that the citizens of Chester, like those of Norwich, sought ways to continue the commemoration of St. George, first through creating an annual horse race on his feast day that was divorced from any overt religious connection, and by reintroducing the legend of St. George as "entertainment" into Chester's secular, civic Midsummer Watch.

Provincial records suggest most other communities did not preserve such links to St. George. Or did they? Dramatic records from other localities in England show an almost universal end to St. George celebrations after 1547. Yet the cross of St. George remained on the royal standard, was later incorporated into the Union Jack, and St. George still remains the symbolic patron of the Order of the Garter. Norland surmises that after Edward VI St. George plays "seem generally to have been performed indoors at major houses in the community and later at public houses" (Norland 53). And the descriptions of St. George mummers' plays dating from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries suggest that St. George celebrations may have continued in England

long after the Protestant reforms of Edward VI and Elizabeth I, perhaps as some sort of underground folk culture.

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Jacques Derrida Visits Cicely: The Deconstruction of *Northern Exposure*

“We were Mayberry R.F.D. with a Ph.D.,” Barry Corbin once joked when describing the prime time comedy series *Northern Exposure*.¹ Corbin, one of the series regulars, was highlighting the blend of intellectual sophistication and gentle comedy that transformed a well worn narrative motif into entertainment for the brain as well as for the heart. Indeed. More than once the series, which aired on CBS from July 1990 until July 1995, was praised by both viewers and critics for its intellectual chutzpah. It often took up subjects—language, cultural linguistics, history, psychoanalysis, art, and literature to name a few that appeared frequently—more likely to be discussed by graduate students in a humanities seminar than by characters on a popular television program. On at least one occasion, CBS itself was applauded for stepping boldly where other networks feared to tread; it aired a story about Deconstruction. This particular episode surprised humanities professor Sanford Pinsker who gave CBS much credit for airing it. “I kept wondering,” he said, “if PBS, for all the brouhaha about its elitism, would dare run the same episode, with its tough questioning about the ‘objective correlative’ and generous references to the likes of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. I suspect PBS would not, but CBS, in fact, did.”² And the series did not restrict its interest to ivory tower topics. The show, said one viewer, covered “broad themes such as the meaning of life, concern for the environment, and respect for religious and ethnic differences.” Its “complex” plots dealt with “meaningful issues,” said another, who praised the series for having “the guts to tackle the hard issues.”³ Critics agreed with the viewers’ assessment. The *New York Times*’ John J. O’Connor, for instance, commended the series for commenting “courageously” and “insightfully on matters like education, culture and art,” and Betsy Williams found in its episodes a “rigorous negotiation of social, sexual, and spiritual issues.”⁴

This kind of praise must have gratified co-creators Joshua Brand and John Falsey, as ideas were intended to be as important to the series as its characters. “Ideas scare networks” and “they offend people,” Brand said in defense of the series’ intellectual orientation, but they “are legitimate things to explore dramatically.”⁵ The narrative premise was simple. A self-absorbed and somewhat arrogant newly minted Jewish physician from New York named Joel Fleischman is coerced into spending several years practicing medicine in the isolated Alaskan community of Cicely (pop. 856) to work off the money the state lent him to pay for medical school. His exile forces him to grapple with an assortment of free-thinking, articulate individuals with well stocked intellects whose views of the cosmos and the life it harbors are often in conflict with his own supposedly more educated, sophisticated views. Thus are a variety of conflicts

set up: “east versus west, frontier versus civilization, science versus mysticism, male versus female.”⁶ Eschewing linear plots in favor of episodes loosely constructed from multiple storylines and often in dialogic relationships, the writers were able to explore these conflicts from a variety of perspectives.⁷

The show’s intelligence clearly appealed to viewers. The series did well in the rankings, coming in sixteenth (making it as high as third one week) its first complete season, and the following two seasons eleventh and sixteenth respectively.⁸ It also earned a substantial number of prestigious honors, among them consecutive George Foster Peabody Awards for excellence in 1991 and 1992, a “rare” occurrence, according to the Peabody Award’s website.⁹ In 1992 the Television Critics Association named it program of the year, and in 1992 and 1993 it was nominated for thirty-two prime time Emmy Awards, taking home six of the gold statuettes in 1992. Between 1991 and 1993 it had ten Golden Globe Award nominations, and walked off with two wins, both for best television series, 1991 and 1992. Although it went off the air ten years ago, the show is still popular. It has a plethora of websites devoted to it; it is still in syndication; and it is now available in its entirety on DVD.

The series’ intellectual liberalism and social commentary enabled it to present itself as America’s humanist conscience, and, to its credit, it did occasionally offer insightful and sometimes brassy commentary on targets favored by those of the liberal persuasion. But, Brand and Falsey’s daring notwithstanding, the show was also, on occasion, very careful about the social critiques it offered, its caution being most evident in its musings on Deconstruction. The show aired two episodes that took up aspects of this critical theory, and in both instances, the show was anything but courageous and insightful; in fact, it was downright defensive. Why? The answer I wish to propose is that the episodes reflect broader cultural anxieties created by concepts associated with Deconstruction. Over the past three or four decades, these concepts have made available an unsettling critique of American society, and rather than exacerbate cultural anxieties by validating this critique, *Northern Exposure* chose instead to relieve them.

The Threat of Deconstruction

The concept of *différance*, a French word appropriated by Deconstruction theorist Jacques Derrida in the late 1960s to signify not only “difference” but also deferral, could easily be the source of considerable generalized cultural anxiety. Derrida was calling attention to the instability of meaning attached to anything that signifies. This concept originated in the work of the turn-of-the-century linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, considered the father of Structuralism, who proposed that signification in spoken language is located not in the words themselves but in the difference between their sounds. We are able to understand that a speaker means “cat,” feline animal, rather than “hat,” article of clothing, because we perceive the difference in sound between the two

words. Derrida took the linguistic concept a step further, pointing to the fact that signifiers never signify a “signified,” an objective reality. Rather, they refer only to other signifiers, so meaning merely shifts along a web of language; it never directly signifies a “transcendental signified” (an objective reality not subject to the slipperiness of language). There is never any place at which the deferral of meaning stops, nor is there any uncontested authority regarding meaning.

A number of critical theories appropriated this concept and took it a step further by applying the signifying capability of difference to ideologies and the value systems that support them. Differences that “signify,” i.e., distinguish the valued from the not-valued and the superior from the inferior, are not rooted in objective reality but in an ideology that valorizes these differences by equating difference with superiority—racial superiority, political superiority, economic superiority, spiritual superiority, intellectual superiority, and so on. Put another way, these differences structure a society’s value system and legitimate the ideology that apportions social power and privilege at the expense of people and ideas that are devalued by being judged inferior. To deconstruct a society’s value system is to expose the perceived differences that structure it to be socially constructed linchpins holding the power and privilege of a dominant group in place at the expense of “the other.” In the face of such a demonstration, holding on to power, privilege, and a sense of superiority becomes, at the very least, selfish.

This concept poses no direct threat to American society: few encounter modern critical theory in the raw outside the college classroom. But the public is forced to confront a critique of American society based on these concepts indirectly through cultural discourses. Modern critical theory’s understanding of the role socially constructed difference plays in the maintenance of privilege and power and the disenfranchising of minorities has been appropriated by a variety of advocates who wish to “deconstruct” supposedly significant differences and reveal their functioning in the marginalization and disenfranchisement of minorities and ideas hostile to dominant groups. Proponents of women’s rights, for example, attack gender discrimination based on biological sex differences by arguing that the differences validating discriminatory attitudes and practices are insignificant in modern society and that it is the supposed significance of these differences that is holding male power in place. By the same token, supposedly significant racial and ethnic differences underpin disaffirmation against minority groups. Advocates for racial and ethnic equality make the same argument, that the racial differences which legitimate discriminatory practices are also insignificant and serve only to maintain white power. More recently gay advocates have taken up the same line of reasoning and argue that sexual orientation is not so significant a difference that it warrants depriving homosexuals of benefits commonly available to other citizens.

While it is unlikely that many viewers of a quality series such as *Northern Exposure* would support discriminatory practices based on

insignificant differences, it is no stretch to see a more general threat emanating from modern critical theory's questioning of the signification value of difference and the superiority it confers. It makes a powerful argument that any society needs to rethink the differences it values and examine their implications. Where does this leave average American viewers? Few would be comfortable viewing themselves as mongers of power and privilege oppressing helpless women and minorities for their own selfish benefit. But, from modern critical theory's point of view, acceptance of a value system that valorizes insignificant differences to disenfranchise the many for the benefit of a few makes those who fail to question the validity of these differences—or unwilling to relinquish them—complicit in cultural oppression.

It is this concept of *différance* that is interrogated by the *Northern Exposure* episodes, and in both, viewers are reassured that they really have nothing to be concerned about. For the benefit of those unfamiliar with the particular *Northern Exposure* episodes that take up these concepts or who do not remember them in detail, I offer lengthy but useful summaries of the relevant storylines.

The Death of the Author

The most explicit resistance to the concept of *différance* is mounted by an episode titled "The Graduate" written by Sam Egan and aired on March 8, 1995. Ostensibly, this episode interrogates the status of "the author" and "literature." Deconstruction was an early voice questioning the legitimacy of authors being considered the source of meaning constructed from the texts they produce, a view that calls into question their status as the ultimate authority over that meaning. Deconstruction also suggests that a literary work is more the product of an ideology expressing itself through a writer than it is the product of an individual consciousness with a unique perspective. Because authors have no privileged status, questions about authorial intent or literary quality are moot. This episode dismisses such a proposition.

The story chronicles the efforts of the local DJ, Chris Stevens, a devotee of Walt Whitman and a man who loves the literature that he often shares with his radio audience, to complete the requirements for his master's degree in comparative literature. When the story opens, Chris has only one requirement left to complete: an oral examination. Two professors from the University of Alaska—one a hip young deconstructionist named Aaron Martin, and the other, a paunchy, balding "traditionalist" named Dick Schuster—have come to Cicely to administer Chris's oral exam. But there is a crinkle in his parchment: his "homespun" thesis, "An Anti-Filo-Piestic Metaphor for America's Role in Post-Cold War Geopolitics," a title that parodies and mocks academic studies that draw on such theories as Deconstruction and Post-Colonial theory, has caused a conflict between the two faculty members on his orals committee. They disagree

on the validity, and thus the worth, of Chris's thesis and, by extension, the appropriateness of awarding him a degree.

Martin, who prefers Chris call him Aaron, is "blown away" by Chris's thesis and warns him about Professor Schuster, who, he confides to Chris, thinks little of it. Chris offers Aaron a beer and proposes an unintentionally ironic toast that had to tickle the funny bones of at least half the college professors in the country who heard it: "To academia. In a world of ever more compromise and pettiness, the last refuge of ideas and idealism for their own sake." Shortly thereafter, Professor Schuster, who prefers Chris call him Professor Schuster, arrives, and he soon expresses his disapproval of what Chris has written. Writing in 1888, says Schuster, Thayer could hardly have predicted the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of terrorism. "I know," replies Chris, indicating just how thoroughly he has accepted the tenets of modern critical theory, "It's just a metaphor."

"The scalpel of which," replies Schuster, "irrevocably cleaves the work from the artist's intent. God forbid we should pay homage to a poem as a poem and not just a code." He has standards to uphold, he tells Chris, so he has no intention of awarding a diploma for glibness, or even erudition.

Conflicting opinions over the status of "the author" surface in questions the two ask at Chris's orals. The traditional Schuster, posing the first question, asks Chris to define "objective correlative," identify the source of the concept, and provide an example. The concept of the objective correlative was formulated by the American poet T. S. Eliot, who is also credited with being one of the earliest and most influential proponents of New Criticism, the "traditional" view of literature that privileges authorial intent to which Schuster owes his allegiance.

Martin's lack of concern for authorial intent shows up in his question. "In what way," he asks when it is his turn, "does the relativism embedded in [Herman] Melville's duality of evil presage the moral ambiguities of twentieth-century colonialism?" Chris answers both questions satisfactorily, and, it is suggested, passes his orals with no difficulty.

The professorial conflict over literary theory erupts into comic violence during a dinner at the home of town patriarch, Maurice Minnifield. An argument begins when Chris announces that he has been re-reading essays "on the Deconstruction thing" written by Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes [his pronunciations]. He finds himself "whacked out" by the contradictions he's found in their theories. "Whatever happened to beauty is truth, truth beauty?" he asks.

"The very multiplicity of interpretations is at the heart of Deconstruction," answers Martin. "It is only when you remove the author as the final arbiter that all the suppressed meanings are allowed to proliferate."

"Ergo," interrupts an exasperated Schuster, "misinterpretation and plagiarism are no longer literary crimes."

“Think of the interpretive freedom that allows,” says Martin, who takes Chris’s analysis of Thayer’s poem as an example. Casey is not just a .400 slugger, argues Martin. He’s [Friedrich] Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*. Chris agrees, explaining that the poem’s Mudville fans waiting for Casey to knock the ball out of the park are like the countries in the rest of the world waiting for the United States to solve their problems.

“Hermeneutic license at its best,” exclaims Martin, but Schuster fails to see the benefits of this license.

“In one fell swoop,” he complains, “you and your car-jacking protégé there have put two thousand years of accumulated knowledge into a rhetorical osterizer and grinded it into oblivion.”

Heated by the argument—and several glasses of wine—both professors become increasingly agitated by the discussion.

“Ah,” counters Martin, “the last gasp of the dead white European male, or as I prefer to call it, the pale penis people.” The remark agitates Schuster even further.

“Anything that smacks of reverence for tradition or that supports objective standards falls prostate before the almighty God of political correctness.” He shakes his head. By this point, his frustration with those who reject traditional attitudes toward literature has honed itself to a fine edge. “Throw out Jane Austen. All she did was validate imperialism. Who needs Shakespeare, an elitist punster at best. And all the while we are shamelessly pandering to the loudest of the disenfranchised. It’s college through a boom box!”

This last remark is too much for Martin. “Well done, Dick,” he exclaims sarcastically. “Bigotry with panache!”

Shouting, “You son of a bitch,” Schuster jumps up from the couch where he’s been sitting and grabs the standing Martin, who is urging him on, by the throat. Maurice, utterly erasing all differences that mark literary texts, grabs both men by their collars to separate them and scolds: “It’s only literature, for goodness sake.”

Later that evening, Chris has a nightmare that clarifies and dramatizes the issues for him. He dreams he is a World War II sergeant in charge of the remnants of a platoon of respected artists pinned down in a farmhouse by a sniper. The only ones left are Beethoven, with a machine-gun belt over his coat; Vincent Van Gogh, with a bandage covering his ear; Edgar Allan Poe, chewing nervously on a piece of cloth and muttering “never more”; and William Shakespeare in a Renaissance doublet.

He asks for volunteers to take out the sniper when suddenly, Poe is shot and tumbles over. Shakespeare rushes to the prostrate writer. “They got Eddie,” he screams. Sgt. Chris, peering out the window through a set of binoculars, cries: “By God, they’ve taken out the whole Transcendental 45th—Emerson, Fuller, Thoreau.” He grabs a two-way radio and begs headquarters for

immediate artillery support. "We're dying out here," he screams. "They've taken out the whole western canon." In a nutshell, this humorous exclamation of literary horror encapsulates the devastating effects Deconstruction is thought by many to have on literary studies.

Suddenly an enraged Shakespeare jumps to his feet. Rifle in hand, he rushes to the door, his cry of "You dirty sons of . . ." being drowned out by the gunfire that cuts him down. Sgt. Chris rushes to him. "Am I slain," Shakespeare asks, then utters, "It is a far, far better thing I do."

"Shakes, that's Dickens," Sgt. Chris says as the playwright expires.

Shakespeare's death causes Sgt. Chris to spring into action. Braving continuous gunfire, he snake-crawls through the door toward the sniper. At a berm, he raises his rifle to aim at the enemy, who he discovers aiming back at him. But he cannot shoot: he is aiming at himself. "You," he whispers in shocked disbelief.

The next day, with Ray Charles's "What'd I Say," playing in the background, Chris muses aloud on the air that he might have been wrong in thinking that authorial intent is irrelevant to a literary work. What is the point of asking "brother Ray" what he meant, he asks, adding, "doesn't art speak for itself? What'd I say," he asks again, "someone please tell me."

The storyline concludes with a mock baseball game in which Chris, pitching, strikes out Martin, telling him that the feeling in the pit of his stomach is what "Casey at the Bat" is really about, the implication being that this is Thayer's intended theme.

By having Chris realize his error in reading "Casey at the Bat" in a way Thayer could not possibly have meant it, "The Graduate" flatly denies any legitimacy to a view that, as Martin says, removes the author as the "final arbiter" of the meaning of a work. In repudiating his own reading and accepting what seems to have been Thayer's intent, Chris affirms that authors as creators of their texts are the source of and authority for the meanings embedded in those text. There is a point to asking Thayer what'd he say, and Chris earns establishment approval in the form of a degree as a reward for his return to the fold. He has also, the episode's title implies, "graduated" to a higher level of literary sensibility.

But, ironically, this episode, an example of 'intertextuality,' ends up proving the very point it disputes. Intertextuality acknowledges that texts often generate responses in the form of other texts. Would this episode exist if Derrida's texts didn't? The ideas it defends have been around for centuries, and the arguments Egan makes against Deconstruction have been used previously by others who resist its conclusions. So how can Egan be credited as the originator of this story? The episode, it would seem, contradicts itself.

Personal Identity Deconstructed

“The Graduate” was not the first *Northern Exposure* episode to take up issues associated with *différance*. It was also addressed by parallel storylines in an earlier episode titled “Altered Egos,” written by Jeff Melvoin and aired on October 11, 1993. This episode contemplates the importance of a felt sense of difference to personal identity. Three characters experience an intense identity crisis when their sense of difference, and thus uniqueness, is erased.

One storyline concerns the half-brothers Chris and Bernard (who is also a Stevens). Bernard is a CPA living in Portland who makes occasional visits to Cicely. Both men have the same father, but Chris’s mother was white; Bernard’s black. On the surface, they would seem to be as different as night and day, despite the fact that Chris has declared himself “a person of color.” But over the course of several preceding episodes that recount Bernard’s visits to Cicely, it becomes clear to frequent viewers that these differences are simply matters of appearance, for they are consistently depicted as being almost the same person: they talk alike, they act alike, they have the same tastes, they have each other’s dreams, they often speak in unison, and frequently one expresses what the other is thinking. Thus each is the other’s “alter ego,” or “double.” But the visit chronicled in this episode becomes traumatic when an innocuous contest “alters” the “ego” of each.

Bernard arrives in Cicely accompanied by a woman named Ann McGrath who, it turns out, had lived with Chris several years earlier, although he does not remember her. That Melvoin had Deconstruction in mind when writing this episode is evident when Ann, a philosophy major at the time, reminds Chris that they had met at a “feminist Deconstruction conference.” (Feminist criticism draws heavily on Deconstruction.) A drunken Chris had crashed into the conference on his Harley Davidson, shouted a few lines from *Leaves of Grass* (a poem about identity), then passed out. For reasons not explained, she dropped out of school to spend time with him, but six months later he left her for no apparent reason. She cried for a couple of weeks, then moved on to get an MBA at Stanford. Evidently he “deconstructed” her identity as a philosopher, for at the time of her visit to Cicely, she is on the fast track in corporate America.

That evening during dinner, Bernard makes the same mistake Chris used to make when trying to identify wine. The two are so much alike, Ann says in amazement, that they “are even ignorant the same.” She unwittingly issues a challenge when she jokingly bets that with her eyes closed she would not be able to tell them apart if they kissed her. They do not believe this possible, but a blind kissing contest proves her right, and the results are devastating.

Both men become deeply depressed. Chris begins contemplating the nature of “doubles” on the air and playing such brooding music that Holling Vincoeur, owner of the local tavern, comes by to ask for something a little “bouncier,” like Harry Nielson’s “Me and My Shadow,” humorously reinforcing

the theme of the white man dogged by a black double. Ann tries to repair the damage, but to no avail; the visit is ruined and Bernard prepares to leave Cicely.

The nature of the identity crisis caused by Ann's failure to distinguish between the two men on the basis of what they perceived to be a significant difference between them is articulated when Chris explains to Holling that he had never seen Bernard as a threat to his identity. But now they are "two halves of a divided self." The male id, he explains, "is driven by its own sense of its uniqueness. How can I believe in my own uniqueness when there's a cat out there who is exactly the same as me. The whole shebang goes right out the window. There's no changing it; no escape. I don't know what to do." Without the difference that constitutes his uniqueness, he no longer has an identity, a sense of self. Later he tells Shelly Tambo, Holling's mistress at the time, that he had to ask Bernard to leave because he was "not going to live in the same town feeling like some existential Xerox of someone else."

The second storyline concerns Joel, who, while Chris and Bernard are coping with the disruption of their senses of identity, is also grappling with an identity crisis triggered by an erasure of difference. Joel's sense of identity is rooted in the New York Jewishness that he feels distinguishes him from his more rustic neighbors, but this difference is erased in his mind when he forgets his wallet at Holling's tavern, something that as the "consummate New Yorker" he would never have done. In twenty-eight years, he tells Ed Chigliak, "I never lost a dime to the streets." He was an animal, a panther. "What's happened to me," he asks. "Where's the edge? The panther?" His concern deepens when he realizes during a conversation with a long-time resident of Cicely that he's eating seeds and having a conversation about winter clothing—a conversation any resident of Cicely might have. "What's happening," he mutters as he retreats to his office. Later that day he asks Maggie O'Connell, his on-again off-again romantic interest, if she notices anything different about him. She observes that he seems more relaxed and more involved in the community. "It's worse than I thought," he replies. As an "emergency" measure, he orders special coffee, bagels, pastrami, and other food items associated with New York Jewish delicatessens to be flown in and takes home an armful of movies featuring the city.

Joel whines to Maggie that he is experiencing "a complete and serious personality meltdown." She does not seem to understand the problem, so he explains it to her. "I'm Joel Fleischman the Jewish doctor from New York," he insists. "Take that away and who am I? What am I?" His situation calls to his mind the 1950s Cold War science fiction film *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. In this film, which treats the perceived dangers of communism, invaders from outer space take over a small California town by putting seed pods in the community's bedrooms. When the victims fall asleep, the pod forms a duplicate of them, absorbs their consciousness, and becomes an exact copy

except for one significant difference—they have no emotions, thus they are all essentially alike.

“It’s like the invasion of the body snatchers,” he explains. “I am being replaced by some insidious replicant, a Joel Fleischman look-a-like who talks crop rotation and carburetors. I’ve got to stop this thing before it’s too late. I feel like I’ve lost a part of myself.”

The crises for the three characters in this episode are resolved when each finds a way to restore the sense of difference on which their personal identities are founded.

The difference between Chris and Bernard is restored unwittingly by Shelly. She tells Chris the story of two hockey players, identical twins named Jacques and Jiels, who were so much alike they could trade women without, as Shelly says, being able to tell “which was slipping you the puck.” Not only did they look exactly alike, but they played hockey exactly alike. There was one referee, says Shelly, who hated Jiels for some reason and constantly called him on penalties. For one game the brothers traded jerseys in an effort to trip up the referee, but he was not fooled. He continued to call penalties against Jiels despite the fact he was wearing his brother’s jersey. It was weird that he knew which one was Jiels, says Shelly, but “he could tell; that’s how much he hated him.”

Just as a nightmare resolved Chris’s critical confusion, this little story resolves his identity crisis. Chris rushes back to explain his solution to Bernard, who is skeptical of their being able to find their separateness in the context of their sameness. Chris notes that it is Bernard who loves Ann, not him. “Down in the deepest recesses of our being, down in that crazy intersection of sense, and impulses and passion that we call the human heart, you have different wiring. He’s not me; he is not the same. You are a different person.” Bernard is delighted, and Chris breathes a sigh of relief.

Joel’s sense of difference is restored when he comes into conflict with the man who was supposed to have cleaned the heads of his VCR. When Joel tried to watch his New York movies, the VCR did not work. The repair man agreed to fix it for the cost of the parts, but Joel insists on having parts and labor free as the machine worked fine before he brought it into the shop. The man refuses, and Joel, asserting his consumer rights as he would have done at home, sues, and his response to this conflict once again distinguishes him from his easier-going neighbors.

“Let me get this straight,” Maggie says when she hears that Joel refused the man’s offer. “Instead of a VCR that works, you have a useless VCR, a pending lawsuit, and an enemy for life; and that makes you happy.”

“Yeah,” Joel replies.

The storylines in “Altered Egos” are clearly mediations on the importance a felt sense of difference has in the establishment and maintenance of personal identity.¹⁰ Without it, a sense of personal identity vanishes.

But there is more going on in these storylines. Both deny a concept that Melon associates with Deconstruction but is really more a product of post-structuralist and post-modern theories: the idea of the “decentered” self. The traditional view of the self, the one at the basis of most psychological and educational theories, is that each of us is rendered unique by the existence of an inner, “core” self that is stable, has characteristics unique to the individual, and is capable of development. This core is the source of individual meaning and agency. It is what makes us who we are and motivates us to do what we do. The concept of the decentered self denies the existence of this inner core. Rather, it asserts that the human personality is comprised of a multiplicity of selves constructed from cultural discourses or formed in response to our treatment by various social institutions. Thus human utterances are not expressions of an inner, core self but rather are expressions of discourse. We can utter only what available discourses enable us to say, so utterances become expressions of an ideology, not an individual consciousness. To the humanist accustomed to thinking in terms of individual agency, the implications are unsettling: individuals are not the source of meaning and initiative, so they lack autonomy in thought and behavior. Put bluntly, these are the theorists that have proclaimed the death of the author—and the individual.

“Altered Egos” resists the notion of the de-centered self. Chris’s feelings that he is one half of a divided self indicate that when he lost his sense of uniqueness, he also lost his center, his core. The same goes for Joel: his experience of a “personality meltdown” suggests he feels that his center has dissolved into an undifferentiated mass. He also lost his center. When the characters’ sense of difference is restored, so is their center, and they once again feel they are themselves. Thus this episode reaffirms the existence of an essential self centered deep down in the “that crazy intersection of sense, and impulses and passion that we call the human heart.” In its discussion of authorial intent, “The Graduate” makes essentially the same point. Recognizing Thayer’s authorial intent as the source of the poem’s meaning also affirms the existence of an essential core self with something unique to say. All three storylines at once affirm the Romantic view of the individual and resist not only the notion of the decentered self but also the erasure of individual differences by mass marketing and media manipulation strategies that view human beings, as did eighteenth-century thinkers, as essentially the same.

Larger Issues

But there are larger issues being negotiated here. Both episodes assert the ability of difference to signify an objective reality outside ideology, one that can serve as a legitimate basis of value. Take “The Graduate.” This story was no doubt written, as Pinsker suggests, to poke some good-natured fun at the “foibles” of the ivory-tower professorate.¹¹ But this story was nowhere near as daring as Pinsker thought it was. By accepting the validity of Schuster’s

traditional view of literature, Chris affirms that standards for evaluating texts are both possible and desirable, and that the standards which Schuster feels obligated to uphold constitute a legitimate means for privileging certain texts as “literature,” which at once devalues other texts as not-literature, and thus inferior. In accepting the legitimacy of a standard, Chris not only affirms the value and usefulness of a criticism that attempts to establish and maintain these standards but also discredits critical theories that consider all texts to be of equal value to a culture regardless of who wrote them or what they say. “The Graduate” assumes—and thus it does not argue for—the value of a culture’s possessing a privileged body of writing it can call “literature.”

To those unfamiliar with the arguments of modern critical theories and their orientation toward cultural studies, the issues of authorial intent and the value of literature would seem to be matters of common sense: if authors do not know what is in their work, who does? And if a culture cannot decide what is “literature,” how will it know which texts to value?

But as some modern critical theories argue, “common sense” often masks an ideology’s efforts at self-preservation, and this is a case in point, for the episode ignores the social and political implications involved in a culture’s “valuing” of certain texts over others. Deconstruction and other related theories argue that the standards by which literary works are judged embody the values of the group dominating the critical community and are structured so as to marginalize works by authors who earn, for whatever reason, the community’s disapprobation. It is unlikely that few in a television audience not part of academia question the value of valuing. It is because the critical community has not questioned it that women and minority authors have been excluded for so long from a literary canon that is only now thinking about admitting them, largely because powerful arguments based on modern critical theories have forced it to do so. When confronted with the issues it raises, this episode retreats in haste. It ignores the social and political implications of relying on a critical theory and standards that privilege one body of texts while devaluing other texts produced by writers who lack the critical community’s approval.

“Altered Egos” is equally reluctant to confront the hard issues it raises. By its uncritical affirmation of the validity of difference in the construction of identities, this episode refuses to consider the ways in which “difference” problematizes identity, especially group identity; it ignores the social, cultural, or political implications of valuing, and consequently privileging, differences in people. To Melvoin’s credit, his stories avoid valorizing ethnic or religious differences. But far too often in real life, as anyone who pays attention can attest, difference is assumed to confer superiority. People committed to a democratic way of life perceive themselves to have a form of government superior to those who do not; people of one color perceive themselves to be superior in a variety of ways to those with skins of a different color; people ambitious to acquire wealth and social status perceive themselves to be more

valuable to society than those with less ambitious goals; individuals who read Shakespeare are more intellectual than those who prefer Stephen King; those who watch “quality television” have better taste in entertainment than those who prefer such shows as “Gilligan’s Island” and “The Beverly Hillbillies.” By affirming rather than questioning the significance of individual difference as a component of identity, “Altered Egos” declares that there are no problems with an uncritical acceptance of a value system that privileges people on the basis of difference.

The failure to acknowledge the issues raised by Deconstruction in effect dismisses their claim to serious consideration, and by transforming these concerns into the stuff of comedy, both episodes reassure viewers that perceived differences are in fact significant, valuable, and nowhere near as problematic as modern critical theory argues they are. And the show’s intellectualism—John Thornton Caldwell calls it “a kind of Cliff notes intellectualism”¹²—gives it an air of cultural authority it probably ought not to have, for under its auspices, viewers can laugh, breathe an intellectual sigh of relief, and confess to themselves they knew all along that these arguments were really intellectual masturbation. But the issues raised by Deconstruction are really no laughing matter; they have important social, cultural, and political implications. It is hard to say whether Brand and Falsey have done the culture a favor by discussing important issues in such a grossly over simplified manner. But then again, *Northern Exposure* is entertainment, not academic discourse, and that’s a significant difference.

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Notes

¹ Tom Green, “‘Northern’ stars: Popularity of Alaskan burg snowballs,” *USA Today*, September 23, 1991. ID.

² Sanford Pinsker, “Academic Exposure,” *Academic Questions* 8, no. 3 (1995): 14

³ Dorothy Collins Swanson, *The Story of Viewers for Quality Television* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 59, 48.

⁴ John J. O’Connor, “Television Hit Show Examines Its Roots,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1992, C18, and Betsy Williams, “North to the Future”: Northern Exposure and Quality Television,” in *Television: The Critical View*, ed. Horace Newcomb, 5th edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 142, 143. Williams adds that the show also “interrogates the role of stories (and hence ideology) in the construction/formation of individuals. Any conclusions are always tentative and function to bring the dominant discourse into an arena of negotiation” (150).

⁵ Matt Roush, “Low-key hitmakers: Bringing TV a touch of humanity,” *USA Today*, December 17, 1991: Life, ID.

⁶ Williams, “North to the Future,” 143.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁸ Robert J. Thompson, *Television’s Second Golden Age, From Hill Street Blues to ER* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 164.

⁹ <http://www.peabody.uga.edu>. Accessed April 4, 2005.

¹⁰ Issues of identity in *Northern Exposure* are explored in two academic studies. Michael Hecht and his colleagues studied the portrayal of Jewish-American identity in *Northern Exposure*. They concluded that the series fairly accurately represents the complexities of Jewish-American identity in America. See Michael Hecht, et al., "Looking Through Northern Exposure at Jewish American Identity and the Communication Theory of Identity," *Journal of Communication* 52, no 4 (2002): 852–869. An earlier study explores how Native Americans felt about the depiction of Native Americans in film and television. Several respondents mentioned "Northern Exposure" positively, but the study does not discuss the series, nor does it draw any conclusions about it. See Debra Merskin, "Sending up Signals: A Survey of Native American Media Use and Representation in the Mass Media," *Howard Journal of Communications* 9, no. 4 (1998): 313–326.

¹¹ Pinsker, "Academic Exposure," 14, 16.

¹² John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 253.

Satirical Irony in Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* is premised, like so many other books by children of Holocaust survivors, on the impossibility of ever having direct access to the event itself. The immediacy of the event is bracketed off, consigned to ellipses, and available to Spiegelman only through mediation and representation. *Maus* is a text that is self-reflexively and playfully representational. The form of representation is not absolutist but satirical-ironic, calling attention to the difficult if not constructed nature of remembrance.

Satirical irony is a term that deliberately brings together two distinct, though often conflated, rhetorical tropes. Satire is most often used to ridicule folly. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *satire* is the use of ridicule, irony, and/or sarcasm in written or verbal form for the purposes of exposing folly. Irony is arguably most effective as a rhetorical device when it is in the service of sarcasm, as Jonathan Swift knew well. Yet a distinction between *satire* and *irony* is important, for irony might very well not be satirical. When one's actions lead to an outcome that is exactly the obverse of what is expected, that outcome is not satirical although it is clearly ironic. Of interest to me in *Maus* is the way in which Spiegelman draws on the irony of the Holocaust and the familial events that surround it and subjects both to satirical treatment. Thus, by satirical irony I mean to refer in part to *Maus*' technique of working within familiar Nazi tropes in order to subvert them. In so doing, the text critiques incisively the Nazi conception of Jewish (non)identity that made the logic of extermination possible.

But to what extent is satirical irony effective either in stepping outside the framework of essentialized racial ideology or in responding to ironic life events? In exploring a possible answer to this question, I will turn to another use of satirical irony in the text—Spiegelman's representation of his own search for the truth both about the Holocaust and his mother's suicide. That is, Spiegelman turns the satirical-ironic gaze on himself and the process of writing. In so doing, he poses questions about the possibilities and limits of using satirical irony as a defense against the ironic conditions of life.

* * *

Irony itself pervaded the Holocaust. Slavoj Žižek observes that “the bands playing while the Jews marched to the gas chambers or to work, [and] the notorious ‘Arbeit macht frei!’ inscription above the entrance to Auschwitz” were all “unmistakable signs that the ‘final solution’ was carried out as a gigantic joke which submitted the victims to a supplementary act of gratuitous, cruel and

ironic humiliation" (63). All of the trappings of civilization—the refinement of bands playing, the inspirational sayings such as "Arbeit macht frei!"¹—are simply in service to that joke.² For Žižek, conceiving of the Holocaust as a monstrous joke played on the Jews provides a way out of the temptation to isolate causal factors and to declare once and for all a particular determinant of the atrocities.³ The Holocaust is meaningless to Žižek, not in the sense that it is irrelevant but rather that it is "an ethical catastrophe" that occurred "without a purpose, just as a blind effect,"⁴ much like a joke that has no particular meaning but renders a particular result (65). Žižek's notion of the Holocaust as meaningless is useful, even if we do not accept his precise definition, because it calls attention to another dimension of the suffering of survivors—their inability to locate a sufficient reason for what happened.

One of the great strengths of *Maus* is that Spiegelman draws on the very device, irony, that the Nazis themselves used. In stretching irony to its satirical limits and drawing on the comic-book form with its close etymological and generic associations to comedy, *Maus* reveals the meaninglessness of the Holocaust and of the familial events that take place within and as a consequence of it. Indeed, *Maus* is mobilized not by an abstract question—why did the Holocaust happen?—but by a much more specific inquiry: why did Spiegelman's mother commit suicide? By situating this inquiry within the larger historical framework of the Holocaust, the two questions, in fact, become conflated. Spiegelman cannot access his mother's story except through the mediating role of his father. At the same time, second-generation Holocaust survivors, himself included, can retrieve the horrific event that so profoundly shaped their lives *only* through those who lived it, a generation now rapidly dying off. The historical and the familial narratives thus become intertwined in Spiegelman's inability to gain access either to the event itself (his mother's suicide, the Holocaust) or to a definitive reason for either occurrence. Thus, the process of writing the book becomes part of the representation as Spiegelman records the (im)possibility of telling the two stories which are the book's very subject matter. Spiegelman's best defense against both the ethical catastrophe of the Holocaust and the inability to recover its stories is satirical irony, which he enacts *in* the text as well as *through* it. The satirical-ironic mode thus has two immediate aims: to subvert Nazi logic by working within and satirizing a device the Nazis themselves deployed, and to highlight self-reflexively the impossibility of locating determinative causes.

Through an analysis of the animal characters in *Maus* we can begin to understand how satirical irony operates in the text. In Spiegelman's anthropomorphized animal kingdom, figural animals have been carefully selected to stand in for humans: Jews were hunted like mice; Nazis pursued Jews like cats; Poles were greedy pigs; and Jewish collaborators looked like mice but were really rats, the distinctions between the two, as the scene in Mrs. Monotowa's basement suggests, sometimes being elusive.⁵ W. J. T. Mitchell

notes that the “hyperbole of the animal imagery . . . [defends] the viewer against (or prevent[s]) an unbearable (or voyeuristic) access to the banal human forms of evil and abjection” (93). Yet Mitchell’s astute comments do not help us understand the form that Spiegelman’s hyperbole takes. I want to consider how Spiegelman’s hyperbolic animal imagery functions in conceptualizing satire through the ironic appropriation of Nazi propaganda and the attendant danger of such an appropriation.

Both Books One and Two are epigraphically framed by Nazi propaganda. The first book begins with a quote from Hitler—“The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but they are not human”—while the second begins with a quote from a German newspaper that deplores the supposed Jewish idealization of Mickey Mouse. Both quotes function as a form of satirical irony by referring explicitly to the uses of anthropomorphism in *Maus*. If the Jews are not human, Spiegelman asks, then what is it like to imagine a world in which the Germans, the Poles, the French, and everyone else are not depicted as human either? Indeed, Spiegelman is part of a tradition in which subjugated groups, as James Young points out, have “appropriated the racial epithets and stereotypes used against them in order to ironize and thereby neutralize their charge, taking them out of the oppressors’ vocabulary” (36). Spiegelman goes further, however, by mobilizing all of the stereotypes, rhetorical tropes, and images associated with the Holocaust.

For some readers, perhaps, depicting the Holocaust in cartoon figures runs the risk of trivializing atrocity insofar as the Nazis themselves conceived of Jews as nonhuman and, further, subjected them to ironic treatment. The depiction of Jews as nonhuman was part of the vast Nazi state apparatus that transformed German moral responsibility for their deaths into a moral responsibility for their *elimination*.⁶ Žižek points out that the Nazis “first brutally reduced the Jews to the subhuman level and then presented this image as the proof of their subhumanity” (78). Hitler did not simply engage in rhetorical declarations that the Jews were nonhuman. He understood that words alone were not enough and that by deploying verbal and imagistic rhetoric together he could produce meanings that any one medium could not. The totality of the two mediums successfully established Jewish subhumanity. By filming the Jews in the very ghettos that the Nazis created for them and then circulating these images as “proof” that Jews were not human and more akin to vermin, Hitler’s regime made mass extermination acceptable to various publics (Žižek 63). The images of Jews as nonhuman naturalized an ideological construction and interpellated the German population as morally bound to fulfill their obligations in exterminating the infestation.

The graphic novel form might thus be thought of as closely associated with the two mediums drawn on by the Nazis insofar as it relies on the text/image conjunction to produce its meaning. In fact, it is this mixture of word and image that leads Spiegelman to define *Maus* as an example of the “commix”

genre. Whereas the term *comics* implies an inherent element of humor and emphasizes the visual, *commix* may contain humor but is ultimately defined neither by it nor by the visual. This new generic form allows Spiegelman to avoid charges of trivialization insofar as *commix* have a decidedly different purpose. *Commix* “brings together words and pictures to tell a story,” generating a kind of “‘mental language’ that is closer to actual human thought than either words or pictures alone” (qtd. in Young 27).

Indeed, *Maus* is clearly not a comic book in the traditional sense. It is lengthy, words are essential rather than subordinate, and its use of written and oral history, ethnography, autobiography, and biography challenges generic expectations.⁷ The comic form from which *Maus* draws its genealogy is, as Froma Zeitlin notes, an “incongruous genre,” especially so in the case of *Maus* with its mixture of “the fantastic and the factual in graphic form” (129). In a series of deft moves throughout both volumes, Spiegelman shifts the emphasis away from the drawings to historical documents, photographs, or blocks of lengthy text and back again. “I wanted [the drawings] to be there,” Spiegelman explains in an interview, “but the story operates somewhere else. It operates somewhere between the words and the idea that’s in the pictures” (qtd. in LaCapra 148). That is, Spiegelman locates the meaning of the text not in words or in pictures but in the interstices of the two. There is, perhaps, nothing particularly distinctive in this vision insofar as it is characteristic of all comics in general. However, using satirical irony as a lens on Spiegelman’s text makes it possible to recognize that his desire for meaning to arise from the text’s effect on the reader, rather than from either the text or images alone, resembles the strategy that the Nazis themselves deployed.

Maus clearly uses such a combination for different ends. One effect of the satirical-ironic mode is its ability to unsettle complacency. Critics, however, have often thought otherwise. Adam Gopnick argues that one of the reasons *Maus* is so commercially successful is that “it evades the central *moral* issue of the Holocaust: How could people do such things to other people?” (qtd. in LaCapra 160). According to Gopnick, reducing the Holocaust to an animal kingdom ultimately effaces the specifically human dimension of the horror. Gopnick is less concerned with the depiction of the victims of the Holocaust than with its perpetrators. “The problem with the animal metaphor,” he writes, “is not that it is demeaning to the mice, but that it lets the cats off too easily” (160). In Gopnick’s reading of *Maus*, proper responsibility for the horrors cannot be assigned, because the Germans could only be horrible *enough* if they were depicted as human.

Does *Maus* really allow the reader to forget the human dimension of the Holocaust, as Gopnick asserts? Dominick LaCapra argues that animal representations in the text function at a much more complex level than simple allegorization. In fact, he notes, there are “‘real’ animals that contrast with the figurative ones” (161). Yet LaCapra does not explicitly state the purpose of this

differentiation.⁸ I would contend that one purpose of this differentiation is to remind the reader of the text's factuality. Hiding again in Mrs. Motonowa's basement, a moment to which I referred earlier, Spiegelman's mother and father suddenly become aware that they are not alone: "Th-There are rats down here!" Anja screams (147). The rat scurrying by them is a sudden eruption of reality *for the reader*. Confronted with an unanthropomorphized rat, the complacent reader is reminded that these events actually happened to real people and that the story being told—despite the form in which it is told—is true.⁹ This is one of the signal effects of Spiegelman's satirical-ironic mode. He takes the device that Nazi's used to render Jews nonhuman and reverses the effect. Their very nonhumanness, in being depicted as mice, is refigured as a way of making them all the more human through the eruptions of reality contained within the text.

Similarly, the reader's sudden encounter with documentary photographs and maps unsettles complacency. Marianne Hirsch and Susan Rubin Suleiman locate the *real* of the text in the reproduced documentary evidence while also noting the search for such evidence within the narrative:

Despite the numerous distancing devices that shape Spiegelman's book—the graphic medium and comix form, the adaptation of the animal fable, and an insistent emphasis on meta-narrative commentary—there is an equally strong reliance on documentary connections to the real (88).

This need for documentary evidence emanates, they argue, from the inability of the children of Holocaust survivors to gain access to the event that constitutes a vital part of their identity. In *Maus*, Spiegelman hopes to obtain his mother's diaries to shed further light on what she went through when she was separated from his father in the camps. After telling Spiegelman that he does not know where the diaries are, his father reveals that he burned them: "Those notebooks and other really nice things of mother . . . These papers had too many memories. So I burned them" (1:158). For Hirsch and Suleiman, the tension between the documentary evidence and the comic form illustrates the power that such objects hold for Spiegelman. The objects function as if history itself is embedded in them, making their loss all the more painful.

The distinction Hirsch and Suleiman make between the form that representation takes in *Maus* and the documentary evidence on which it is based is problematic, however. It suggests a false divide between the *real* of the documentary evidence and, presumably, the *unreal* of the comic form. Figural animals, I would argue, do not function as a distancing device but, ironically, as a way of making the story Spiegelman wishes to tell all the *more* real. By embedding in the text what I have called eruptions of reality for the reader, Spiegelman is able to accomplish two things. On the one hand, he is able to remind the reader that, although the author has chosen a vehicle associated with

fantasy and fiction, *Maus* is a factual account of both his and his father's story and thus broadens our definition of what counts as a medium through which authentic stories can be recounted. Thus, the comic and documentary aspects of Spiegelman's text are not pitted against each other but rather work in tandem. On the other hand, it is also a way for *Maus* to break through the cacophony and commercialization of Holocaust representations. This is itself ironic given that the comic book form is an essential feature of commercialization.

Spiegelman's concern with Holocaust commercialization is most explicit in Book Two which ironically appropriates Nazi propaganda to evoke *the* symbol of commercialization—Mickey Mouse. "Mickey Mouse is the most miserable ideal ever revealed," reads the epigraph. "Healthy emotions tell every independent young man and every honorable youth that the dirty and filth-covered vermin . . . cannot be the ideal type of animal. . . . Away with Jewish brutalization of the people!" Although the Jews were accused of brutalizing "the people" by idealizing Mickey Mouse, one of the central ironies of the Holocaust is that the Nazis justified *their* brutality by reducing the Jews to vermin. One of Spiegelman's concerns with commercialization is that it renders a similar effect to Nazi propaganda. That is, Nazi propaganda reduces Jews to nonhumans, thereby making their extermination possible. Similarly, commercialization reduces the Holocaust to a form of entertainment.

What might it mean for a book on the Holocaust to open with a reference to commercialization? LaCapra insightfully observes that "if one were tempted to object that Spiegelman himself does in a sense figure Auschwitz (or Mauschwitz) as Mickey-Mouse land . . . it would be equally important to note that his more challenging move is to bring Auschwitz to Mickey-Mouse land, that is, to bring the Holocaust past to the America that must have seemed to survivors like a Disneyworld in its distance from their experience" (160). Thus, by inhabiting the comic form popularized by Walt Disney, Spiegelman is, according to LaCapra, able to convey in America's own language, as it were, the horrors of the Holocaust. There is, however, another dimension to Spiegelman's evocation of Mickey Mouse. Sitting at his drawing table toward the middle of Book Two, Spiegelman imagines himself confronted by the paparazzi and entrepreneurs after the book's success. "Artie, baby," the entrepreneur says. "Check out this licensing deal. You get 50% of the profits. We'll make a million." He holds up a poster to Spiegelman that proclaims: "MAUS: You've read the book. Now Buy the Vest!" (2:42). As this moment of self-reflexive irony suggests, one of the great questions that mobilizes *Maus* is whether it is still possible to tell stories of the Holocaust, given the commercialization that attends it. Mauschwitz, however, as LaCapra makes clear, is no Disneyland, and the moments that act as sudden eruptions of reality for the reader are often more effective than—and break through the complacency that can result from—the many visual and written texts that are supposedly more "true." By making the writing process part of the representation and part of the reality that intrudes into

the text, an additional layer of irony is operative in those moments in which the text calls attention to itself: the many references to needing to write down quotes by his father, the scene in which Spiegelman at his drawing table expresses conscious awareness of the way in which his own story will become commodified, the moment when he and his wife discuss who should be assigned which animal, and many others.

Yet the effectiveness of satirical irony to achieve a depth of humanity that might otherwise be effaced in Holocaust commercialization begins to falter on the text's problematic relationship to stereotyping. Representing the Germans as cats, the Poles as pigs, the French as frogs, and so on, suggests certain innate, essential features on which the stereotypes rest. LaCapra notes that "nuances are introduced into the animal figures that mitigate one's initial response to stereotyping," though he acknowledges that in the case of the Germans, they "tend to remain the categorical perpetrators" (161). LaCapra even suggests that *Maus* undermines stereotypes of animals themselves by "transvalu[ing] the image of the vermin" (161). Nevertheless, despite nuancing certain qualities ascribed to each animal or rendering actual animals sympathetic through such ascription, the stereotypes that circulate in the text raise questions about the limits of satirical irony.

Spiegelman is well-aware of this problematic, calling attention to it at the beginning of Book Two. In a conversation between Spiegelman and his wife Francoise, while they are visiting friends in Vermont, she asks what he is doing with his sketch pad. "Trying to figure out how to draw you," he responds (2:11). Spiegelman expresses his difficulty in finding an animal form for his French wife. When he asks what kind of animal she should be drawn as, and she responds that she should be a bunny rabbit, he is quick to dismiss the idea: "Nah. Too sweet and gentle. I mean the French in general. Let's not forget the centuries of anti-semitism." Thus, Spiegelman is caught in a dilemma needing to find the proper form to depict Francoise, the individual, and grappling with the related problem of depicting the French "in general." Satirical irony thus becomes a means of reflecting on the self and on the problems of identity; these problems are, in fact, self-consciously incorporated into the text. After all, in some sense *Maus* is really about identity. It is about who counts as human and about the representational forms that determine (ethnic, national, ideological) distinctions.

After reflecting on the problem of depicting Francoise, Spiegelman ultimately draws her as a mouse, rather than a frog, as the French are depicted, not because she converted to Judaism—that conversion was only to make their marriage possible—but because she is not like "the French." Here Spiegelman self-reflexively highlights the entanglements of attempting any form of collective vs. individual representation and the limits of working within a trope in order to subvert it. Francoise is not like the other French, so he depicts her as being like him—that is, as a mouse. This suggests there are only a limited

number of possible identities in circulation, because being different from the French in general does not make her *unique*. She must conform to some already established image. Spiegelman determines that Francoise is not like “them” but like him (and therefore like “us”).

Indeed, the text also does not solve—although it asks—the question of whether these identities are chosen or imposed. In two scenes in Book Two, Spiegelman draws himself and others wearing masks, rather than as anthropomorphized animals. In Book One, he is able to slip in and out of the city streets by wearing masks. In these moments Spiegelman raises the possibility of identity’s fluidity and malleability. Nazi propaganda with its fixed notions of beauty, idealism, and essentialism, the seduction of which made Auschwitz possible, denies exactly such a possibility. What is of interest in these scenes is not that a real human might exist underneath the mask but rather that the wearing of one mask implies the possibility of wearing others. Or that identity, clearly evoked in the psychoanalytic scene between Spiegelman and his psychologist, is a series of masks—not only those that one is forced to wear but, perhaps, those that one can choose to wear. Thus, through satirical irony the text exposes and inscribes the contradictory logic on which generalizations rest. On the one hand, generalizations elide difference by emphasizing homogeneity where heterogeneity should thrive. They relegate the individual to the collective. On the other hand, generalizations are a way of making sense of the world by conceiving of individuals not as atomistic but as connected to something larger than themselves. Indeed, what would *Maus* be like if every character was drawn as a different animal?

One of the lessons of the satirical-ironic mode may very well be that it allows for conscious reflection on its own limits. It is a way of responding to the changes and chances in life, not a means for defining or delineating the causes. In *Maus*, the satirical-ironic mode is used not only to raise significant questions about the nature of individual and collective identity but also to highlight the problematic nature of both representational forms and the processes of telling stories about the self and about others.¹⁰

Independent Scholar

Kevin A. Morrison

Notes

¹ Translations include “work brings freedom” or “work liberates.” These quotations function ironically, of course, because they refer not to the condition of the Jews but rather to German National-Socialist Work Programs, seeking to remind citizens of the high rates of unemployment in the 1920s until the work programs created jobs and thus reduced poverty and hunger.

² The notion of the Holocaust as a “gigantic joke” is consistent with Žižek’s aim of subjecting the Holocaust to a psychoanalytic reading. He is concerned with the way in which the violence of the Holocaust exceeds rational and political cause.

³ Žižek's rejection of historical causality is problematic and may be unsettling for some readers. My own work tends to be historicist in nature, and thus I have difficulty accepting this line of thinking wholesale. However, I find Žižek's underlying warning compelling. We must be careful, he insists, not to buy into the notion that history is simply the past that makes the present. Rather, he argues throughout his many works that the present always makes the past that, in turn, makes the present.

⁴ Žižek finds it reprehensible that in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* the director ascribes complex psychological motives to the villain in a scene where a Nazi officer has an affair with a Jewish girl: "The fact [is] that the scene presents a (psychologically) impossible position of enunciation of its subject: it expresses his split attitude towards the terrified Jewish girl as his *direct psychological self-experience*." In other words, Spielberg depicts the Nazi officer with complex psychological depth, fully aware of the way racist ideology constitutes him as a subject. This is, for Žižek, a completely false and rather naïve assumption about the way ideology operates (70). During his monologue the officer has no difficulty narrating his torn loyalties between his attraction to the woman and the racist ideology to which he subscribes. The true horror of the Holocaust, for Žižek, is that individual psychological profiles would provide *no* clue as to why it occurred.

⁵ See the panels on page 147 of Book One in which Spiegelman's parents are confronted with a rat.

⁶ For an important if frightening exploration of the way in which evil can become a moral duty, see Copjec.

⁷ Dominick LaCapra notes that "words [do not] merely punctuate, gloss, or float unmotivatedly above the images. Nor does language become condensed into one-liners. Words are a crucial component to the text" (147).

⁸ Additionally, LaCapra places emphasis on a scene in Book One in which a Nazi officer kills a child. He sees this scene as a "marked departure from the animal figure, and instead a human child (whose head is hidden) is depicted. This occurs in [sic] a forceful image of a German holding the child by the leg and smashing it against a wall" (161). Yet it is difficult to understand why LaCapra reads the scene in this way. The frame beforehand clearly depicts a young mouse crying, and it is this same mouse in the following frame that the German bashes against the wall.

⁹ In Book Two Spiegelman visits with his psychiatrist and notes that his place is "overrun with stray dogs and cats" before asking, "Can I mention this, or does it completely louse up my metaphor?"

¹⁰ I am grateful to Debbie Nelson for her comments on an earlier version of this essay and to the anonymous reviewers of *Popular Cultural Review* for their comments.

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Calamity Jane and the Social Construction of Gender in the 1930s and 1950s

Films often say more about the audiences they play to than their subject matter does. In his analysis of the Cold War classic film, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, historian Stuart Samuels writes that films reflect existing ideologies by reproducing the myths and symbols of a time. They also produce their own expression of reality by either reinforcing or undercutting specific ideologies. In this way, argues Samuels, "All films are . . . ideological and political inasmuch as they are determined by the ideology which produces them. Fictional characters are only prototypes of social roles and social attitudes; every film speaks to some norm. They deem some behaviors appropriate, others not. Some acts are condemned, others applauded."¹ Samuels shows how *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* presents an air of forced conformity and suppression of individualistic tendencies through "podism," and applauds the efforts of the film's hero to resist the conformity and publicize his findings.

Films also socially construct gender. Movies were at once vehicles for and instigators of mass culture during the early twentieth century. As such, they both mirrored and defined appropriate behavior for women. During the prosperous twenties, nymphs, vamps, and the "It" girl, Clara Bow, celebrated women's newfound freedom and celebrated her outward sexuality. During times of troubles, though, such as the 1930s and 1950s, traditional attitudes prevailed. Although a few films portrayed strong, self-determined women during the Great Depression, the characters usually suffered for their success.² During the 1950s films encouraged women to retreat from the public world in favor of domestic pursuits. The films *The Plainsman* (1936/7) and *Calamity Jane* (1953) exemplify cinema's treatment of women during the 1930s and 1950s by discouraging or punishing independence and promoting traditional, domestic behavior for women.

Films often use popular historical figures and cultural myths to construct ideologies. This is especially true of films about the American West. Westerns have their roots in literature aimed at creating and preserving a unique American identity. Especially significant are the dime novels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which told stories about American icons such as Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, Jim Bowie, Wild Bill Hickok, and Calamity Jane. Novels, too, such as those of Zane Grey, touted the virtues of the frontier in American mythology, and celebrated its rugged heroes and heroines. The trend continued with the advent of moving pictures.

The theme of most western films is the maintenance of law and order on a rugged and chaotic frontier. Common scenarios include cowboys and Indians (*Stagecoach*), outlaws and lawmen (any film about Wyatt Earp), and

cattlemen and farmers (*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*). Extended to personal behaviors, Westerns stress culture over nature (*Destry Rides Again*) or corruption versus honor (all of Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns). Women figure prominently in these pictures. Some films deal with schoolteachers versus dancehall girls, wives versus prostitutes, and godly versus heathen women (*Duel in the Sun*, *Johnny Guitar*).

Within this context, filmmakers must deftly construct alternate interpretations of icons who are, from the start, unorthodox.³ Calamity Jane presented a paradox for filmmakers during conservative times. Her legend rests on the life of a woman named Martha Jane Canary Burke who lived in the Dakota territory during the 1876 Gold Rush.⁴ She was a legend during her own lifetime because dime novelist Ned Wheeler named a female character "Calamity Jane," allegedly after making Canary's acquaintance. Although biographer Richard Etulain argues persuasively that the "real" Calamity Jane sought to fashion herself as a dress-wearing frontier woman, the legendary Calamity dressed like a man and performed the same tasks as men. According to her larger-than-life legends, she rescued the Deadwood stage from warring throngs of Indians, scouted for General Custer, married Wild Bill Hickok, and rode for the Pony Express.⁵ A woman named Jean Hickok McCormick, who claimed to be Calamity Jane and Bill Hickok's daughter, produced some forged letters and created a stir in a 1941 radio program. McCormick's letters spawned a litany of books and movies, including Jane Alexander's *Calamity Jane* and Larry McMurtry's book, *Buffalo Girls*, subsequently the subject of a film starring Anjelica Huston as Calamity.⁶ Recently, a group of revisionist scholars claimed that Martha Canary was a lesbian.⁷ How could such a flamboyant figure be tamed for tradition-minded audiences?

Films encouraged and enforced gender-appropriate behaviors and condemn behaviors considered inappropriate for women during the 1930s and 1950s. In order to achieve this, filmmakers used a popular cultural icon to fit the needs of American society and government during years of conservative backlash to significant social change.⁸ As Samuels said, films create ideology by applauding some actions and condemning others. Filmmakers used Calamity Jane to exemplify bad behavior for women and to show what rambunctious women needed to do to gain acceptability. *The Plainsman* and *Calamity Jane* reveal much about the social construction of gender during the pre- and post-World War II years in the United States. An examination of these films' denigration of gender deviation, alternative courtship practices and family structures, and the resolution that monogamous heterosexual marriage is the only acceptable forum for romantic love and sexual desire classifies both films as conservative.

The thirties were a decade of economic desperation and clinging to traditional values. The United States government encouraged women to stay at home and leave available employment for male heads of households. Eleanor

Roosevelt encouraged women to perform deeds of heroism as wives and mothers, not by gender-bending exploits.

The 1950s were economically prosperous, but the prosperity existed simultaneously with fears, both real and contrived, of nuclear devastation and outside forces such as communism. For this reason, World War II's Rosie the Riveter needed to doff her coveralls and don an apron. The films of the late 1930s and early 1950s encouraged women not to have careers.⁹

Calamity Jane appears, at first, an odd choice for a figure to illustrate normative behavior because she dresses and behaves like a man. Rather than depicting mainstream femininity, she defines the boundaries of how far a woman may push. Calamity is, in many ways, a radical figure whose existence rests on her ability to be something different from the social norms of her time. When she deviates from proper femininity to do good things for her community (killing outlaws and Indians, etc.) she retains the respect of her community. Such exceptions exist for women when dire circumstances demand that they act outside their prescribed social constructs. This explains the popularity of Revolutionary icons Molly Pitcher and Deborah Sampson and World War II's Rosie the Riveter. The crossing must be temporary, though. A true American Amazon's heroism rests on not only her extraordinary feats, but also her ability to step back into the bounds of feminine propriety when she finishes them. If she does not retreat, she suffers social scorn, heartbreak, and destitution. During years of conservative reaction to drastic social change, such as the 1930s and 1950s, filmmakers used Calamity Jane to show the disastrous effects of feminine independence taken too far (*The Plainsman*) and feminine independence successfully contained (*Calamity Jane*).

Peter Biskind discusses portrayals of independent women in *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties*. "Conservative films," says Biskind, "don't like career women . . . women had to return to the home."¹⁰ To decide which films are conservative, Biskind asks questions about who is in control (men or women), how the women dress, and who represents nature and who represents culture.¹¹ By these criteria, both of these films are conservative. Although Calamity Jane does men's work and appears in control, she ultimately either marries or suffers punishment for her independence.

The Plainsman

Cecil B. DeMille's *The Plainsman* draws on Courtney Ryley Cooper's story, "The Prince of the Pistoleers," and places Calamity Jane alongside Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill Cody, and General Custer in the years immediately following the Civil War. Admittedly, the story "compresses many years, many lives, and widely separated events into one narrative." DeMille intended to "do justice to the courage of the plainsman of the West."¹²

To make his film historically convincing, DeMille built three acres of carefully researched sets, and hired residents of the Rosebud Reservation in Montana to make all the Indian costumes for the film.¹³ He cast Gary Cooper as plainsman Bill Hickok, and Jean Arthur as Calamity Jane.

In a gender analysis of Hollywood icons, Rebecca Bell-Metereau touches on the cultural expectations of the 1930s and suggests that Arthur's Calamity is "thoroughly representative of the industry's standard treatment of the masculine heroine of the thirties—a mixture of tomboy features and stereotypically feminine attributes." Bell Metereau identifies the gender aspect of DeMille's calamity, saying "... whether she is attacked or defended, it is on the grounds that she is a woman"¹⁴ Bell Metereau may be right. Tomboyishness was not new to Arthur. She played tough working girl in John Ford's *The Whole Town's Talking* two years before *The Plainsman*. A year later, she played a reporter alongside Gary Cooper in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*.¹⁵

Some claim DeMille's modifications in Jean Arthur's Calamity from the historical Martha was the "... easiest way to make her life conform to the moral values of the thirties"¹⁶ Actually DeMille goes much farther than cleaning up a rowdy Calamity to suit a rather conservative audience. He consciously used Calamity in the person of Jean Arthur to demonstrate a monstrous side of womanhood.

Consider the difference between Lucille Ball's comedic television persona and her sinister secretary in *The Dark Corner* (1946). Now, imagine Ball playing a serious dramatic role using her comedic demeanor and voice. The result would be grotesque – a disturbing mix of haphazard buffoonery amid dire circumstances. This is the way Jean Arthur plays Calamity Jane. The portrayal was, no doubt, a conscious effort on Arthur's part, and especially DeMille's. Far from a casting error, DeMille's decision to use Arthur, and to play her as a whining clown oblivious to the suffering she imparts, was a shot at the strong, pants-wearing women popularized by actresses such as Joan Crawford and Loretta Young during the 1930s.¹⁷

The film's narrative revolves around Hickok's efforts to prevent a greedy firearm salesman named John Lattimer (Charles Bickford) from selling his wares to the dangerous Cheyenne. Arthur's Calamity is Hickok's femme fatale. She loves him but refuses to surrender her independence, choosing self-determination and promiscuity to devoted loyalty. When questioned about her infidelity, she whines a nasal, "Awww Beeeel, them fellows didn't mean anything to me." Later she divulges critical information to the Cheyenne to prevent them from torturing her beloved Bill. Her betrayal causes the slaughter of Custer's (John Miljan) cavalry troops and ultimately leads to Bill's death at the hands of gambler Jack McCall (Porter Hall). The end of the film leaves Calamity Jane heartbroken, holding her dying lover.¹⁸

DeMille's Calamity works as a stagecoach driver and later as a bartender, both masculine professions. She rides and shoots like a man,

appearing in a dress only once. She wields a bullwhip, which she uses to snatch off Bill Hickok's hat, possibly a gesture of symbolic castration. Louisa Cody (Helen Burgess), Buffalo Bill's (James Ellison) young, genteel wife, mirrors the grotesque Calamity. Louisa is kindhearted, domestic to the core, and she abhors violence. She announces early on that she intends to tame Buffalo Bill. By comparison, Calamity Jane is brash, uncouth, and brazen. The first time Calamity sees Louisa, she assumes she is with Bill Hickok, clearly her love interest. "Is that chipmunk yours?" she quips. Louisa tries several times to "tame" Calamity, even loaning her dresses. Calamity resists, though, and suffers for her truculence in the end.

The social and political ideology of DeMille sought to promote lies in the social fabric of the audience he addressed. The most significant social event of that period was the Great Depression. The 1929 stock market crash shocked the American people who had put their faith in capitalism. Many sought scapegoats. The rural conservatives who had joined the revitalized Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s blamed northeastern banks, foreigners, African Americans, and liberated women for the economic calamity. Celebrations of individualism, nostalgia for a simpler, rural past and yearning for basic American virtues punctuated social life. Patriotic celebrations emphasized historical characters such as the pioneer.¹⁹ Americans wanted heroes—strong men who by the force of their will could rescue their society.

Besides the Depression, the specter of Hitler loomed on the horizon. Between 1929 and 1933, Hitler's Nazi Party rose to power. Hitler was a charismatic dictator served by armies of Brown Shirts and Black Shirts. His seemingly magical ability to manipulate the German population made him an especially frightening persona. Many conscientious Americans feared him as much as economic destitution.

The Depression fueled the old cliché that "a woman's place is at home," and that the workplace is for men. Many believed that with unemployment, married women should stay home and leave jobs for men. Government policies tried to keep women out of the labor force. From 1932 to 1937, federal laws forbade more than one family member to work for the federal civil service. State and local governments had similar policies. Some barred married women from all government jobs. Half the state legislatures proposed bills to keep women from any jobs. Only a vigorous lobbying effort by women's organizations defeated these bills. Married women workers encountered enormous resentment. Their critics accused them of seeking "pin money" rather than subsistence. Popular opinion complained that married women had no right to hold jobs with so many men out of work. In a 1936 Gallup poll 82 percent of Americans said that a wife should not work if her husband had a job. Many cities refused to employ married women as schoolteachers and even fired women teachers who got married.²⁰

The Plainsman echoes all these themes. The show begins with Abraham Lincoln mulling over the plight of returning Civil War soldiers. Knowing that United States industry could not absorb them all, he wanted to “attract our band of disbanded soldiers to the hidden wealth of our mountain ranges.”²¹ The villain in the film is a crooked businessman—the likes of whom many thought caused the Great Depression. The story line about fear of someone selling guns to the Indians might parallel concerns about selling guns to the Nazis or other European nations.

The social expectations of women in the film are consistent with the expectations of American women in the 1930s. Calamity works at jobs typically done by men – such as returning Civil War soldiers or, to American audiences, unemployed husbands. Her promiscuous behavior and her proclivity for lying to save things dear to herself made her unsuitable as a wife. Her plight is unresolved in the end. She still works, but she loses her love object (Hickok) and the respect of her peers (Cody, Custer). This film succeeds in its effort to suppress independence in women.

Calamity Jane

Calamity Jane starring Doris Day addressed suburban America during the 1950s. For women, the fifties usually represent a conservative backlash to the freedom and economic gain they experienced during World War II. Many scholars have questioned this scenario, though. The books and films popular during the fifties were full of contradictory messages. James Baldwin’s novel, *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, dealt with a young African American from Harlem struggling with his religion, his family, and his homosexuality. Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy* magazine encouraged men to remain single and sexually active. Popular films of 1953 included establishmentarian classics such as *From Here to Eternity* and *The Robe*, but other films revealed severe discomfort with popular constraints. Frank Ross’s *Roman Holiday*, starring Audrey Hepburn, challenged norms about feminine propriety by showing a princess on a binge holiday with a newspaper reporter, whom she “marries” for one night. In *Lili*, Leslie Caron plays an adolescent orphan who falls in love first with a circus magician and then with a deranged puppeteer with some serious sexual identity issues.

Calamity Jane presents several instances of deviant sexual behavior and alternative family structures.²² Set in Deadwood, South Dakota – an almost all-male community. It includes several examples of cross-dressing and features a marriage-like relationship between two independent and self-supporting women. In the end, the women sacrifice their independence and marry men. The film never condemns or punishes their prior experiment or the lifestyles of several apparent homosexuals in Deadwood. The popularity of this film attests that mainstream Americans were more broad-minded than many people think they were.

Calamity Jane was Warner Brothers' response to MGM's 1950 hit, *Annie Get Your Gun*. A musical comedy about a woman from the Wild West, *Annie Get Your Gun* starred Betty Hutton and revolved around the career of sharpshooter Annie Oakley. Warner Brothers borrowed parts of the romantic story line from *Annie*, and even hired the same leading man, Howard Keel. With rising star Doris Day in the leading role, *Calamity Jane* surpassed *Annie Get Your Gun* in popularity and catapulted Day to superstar status with her Academy Award-winning rendition of the song "Secret Love."

Day's clean-talking character never drank anything harder than "saspirilly." She bore little resemblance to the swearing alcoholic historical figure whose name she took. Day's character shared Canary's masculine attire and her friendship with Bill Hickok; everything else, including all the other characters, is fictional.²³

The story features a tomboyish Calamity Jane and her clean-cut friend, Bill Hickok (Keel). The owner of Deadwood's Golden Garter Saloon got himself into trouble because he hired an actress named Frances Fryer to perform for his all-male clientele. When Frances turns out to be Francis, a female impersonator, the community is furious. Calamity travels from Deadwood to Chicago to fetch a famous actress named Adelaid Adams to save the Golden Garter.

In Chicago, a star-struck young woman named Katie Brown (Allyn McLerie) fools Calamity, pretending to be Adelaid Adams. She returns to Deadwood with Calamity. Eventually, the two women move into Calamity's cabin, which they majestically transform from a hovel to a cozy abode for two. Calamity converts their bunks into a double bed, and Katie paints "Calam and Katie" on their door. Problems arise when Calamity and Katie both show an interest in a young Army Lieutenant, Danny Gilmartin. When Gilmartin and Katie fall in love, Calamity boots Katie out of her cabin. She spills her emotions to her friend Hickok, and in the process begins to see him in a new light. He, in turn, recognizes her inner feminine charm. They fall in love, and in the end, both couples—Katie and Danny, Calamity and Bill—marry.

Tomboy characters were not new, especially for Doris Day.²⁴ Tomboys were immature, and capable of being molded into grown women. American audiences therefore accepted Day's Calamity even though she dressed and acted like a man.²⁵ She did, after all, grow up and get married. At a time when American women were supposed to be giving up their careers in favor of marriage and motherhood, Day's Calamity proved reassuring.

Like *The Plainsman* in the 1930s, *Calamity Jane* reflected women's realities during the 1950s regarding work. Americans could forgive a woman for working and dressing like a man, the way thousands of American women had done during World War II, if she gave up her work after she got married.

Other aspects of the story remain troubling, though. Was the relationship between Calamity and Katie a lesbian marriage? Film historian Vito

Russo writes that during the 1950s, censors forbade direct references to homosexuality in movies. Russo suggests that screenwriters learned to write between the lines about homosexuality.²⁶ Eric Savoy typifies Calamity as a butch lesbian and insists that Day often played characters that challenged compulsory heterosexuality.²⁷ Apparently, the gay community agreed with this interpretation. The song "Secret Love," taken by the homosexual community to mean the secret love between Calamity and Katie, was a huge hit in fifties gay bars.²⁸

Calamity probably was a lesbian character, and so was Katie. Katie was a showgirl's maid with a shady past and a questionable relationship with her employer, diva Adelaid Adams. In Katie's first scene backstage with Adelaid, she asks her mistress whether she would recommend her for a small part on the stage. Adelaid rebuffs her. "You're not serious, Katie . . ." she says, eyeing the young woman's body, ". . . My dear, it isn't just your voice, it's . . . well, your other equipment is hardly adequate." Katie pouts, and Adelaid places her fingers gently under Katie's chin and reassures her: "Aw, cheer up. Maybe I'll send for you when I get to Paris." Then she smiles, and says "Goodnight, darling," as she exits. The relationship is clearly more than that of a maid and her employer. Remember—Katie was also associated with drag queen Frances Fryer!

Another troubling specter in Calamity Jane is the all male city of Deadwood. This was positively un-American. Biskind points out that in the films of the fifties men did not belong in groups without women. "Most films wanted them married," says Biskind, "not alone or hanging out with other men. Men without women . . . were usually bad, except in circumstances where it couldn't be helped, such as war . . ."²⁹ This problem remains unresolved in Calamity Jane, except for Bill Hickok and Lt. Gilmartin, who marry.

There are several suggestions in the film some men in Deadwood are attracted to each other. A drunken miner winks at Francis Fryer during his drag performance, and two Sioux Indians fondle Fryer in the stagecoach upon his arrival in Deadwood. There is also a hint about the relationship between Golden Garter owner Henry Miller (called Milly) and Fryer. When Fryer tries to inform Milly that Katie Brown is not Adelaid Adams before her opening performance, he stammers, then offers to have "two fast horses at the stage door," suggesting an elopement should the crowd decide to run them out of town.

The heterosexual men in Calamity Jane were handsome, sensitive, and clueless about women. This was new in the films of the 1950s. Tough wartime heroes were out of style.³⁰ Keel does not play Bill Hickok as a tough gunfighter. He is a reluctant gunslinger who fires only once during the film and that only to save Katie from embarrassment when she tries to shoot a glass out of Calamity's hand to prove herself Calamity's equal.³¹

To explain why Americans saw same-sex marriages and communities as dangerously deviant during the Cold War, historian Elaine Tyler May points to the foreign policy of containment popularized by John Foster Dulles. This

political policy officially targeted Communism, a perceived threat to American democracy. May argues that political containment coexisted with a domestic counterpart centered on the home. The home became a sphere of influence, which constrained dangerous social forces, especially sexually deviant women.

Fifties women were supposed to find gratification by having and raising children. Experts such as Lundberg and Farnham labeled ambitions such as education and career masculine and therefore unseemly.³² Domestic containment made sense because the home provided a safe haven from the dangers of the outside world. More than that, domestic containment was “bolstered by a political culture that rewarded its adherents and marginalized its detractors.”³³ In other words, nuclear families in “normal” communities found rewards, while sexual deviants in communities that did not fit the norm, both socially and legally, drew scorn.

During the 1950s, all kinds of subversive forces were associated with Communism. “Popular culture,” says May, “gave full play to the fears of sex and communism running amok . . . the most severe censure was reserved for gay men and lesbians.”³⁴ Indeed, the first official censures of homosexuals took place during this time, labeling sexual deviants official threats to national security.

Alfred Kinsey shocked conservative America with his 1948 study of male sexuality. Kinsey claimed that nearly eight percent of Americans lived a gay lifestyle, and that many men experienced homosexual contact at some time. Homosexuality, said Kinsey, existed throughout American society.

During World War II, gay communities proliferated in urban areas. Women joined the military and took jobs outside the home in unprecedented numbers. Working women often shared living quarters. The sexual and financial freedom enjoyed during the war did not survive in peacetime. During the 1950s popular literature linked lesbianism to a frightening collapse of gender distinctions that threatened stable marriages and families, the social units upon which American society rested.³⁵

Donna Penn writes that during the 1950s, experts did not view homosexuality as a genetic or natural condition, but rather as a psychological illness.³⁶ Citing a 1954 study by Frank Caprio, Penn argues that lesbianism represented more than a flight from heterosexual relationships; it represented a shirking of the responsibility to marry and have children; to form a family.

In October 1953, President Eisenhower signed executive Order # 10450, which tightened loyalty and security regulations and, for the first time in civil service law, explicitly stated that “sexual perversion” was necessary grounds for not hiring and for firing federal workers. With Eisenhower’s executive order, the government’s anti-homosexual policies expanded to include every agency and department of the federal government and every private company or corporation with a government contract, such as railroad companies and aircraft plants. This affected the job security of more than six million workers.

By the mid-1950s, similar policies existed in state and local governments. More than twenty percent of the labor force had to sign oaths attesting to sexual moral purity in addition to loyalty oaths to keep their jobs. Vice squads raided homosexual bars and gathering places

Amid these repressive policies, a thriving gay and lesbian subculture retaliated. Henry Hay formed the Mattachine Society in 1951 to begin a fight for gay rights. Four years later, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon organized the Daughters of Bilitis for lesbians. All these things were underway in 1953 when Warner Brothers made *Calamity Jane*, and the film dealt, both explicitly and subtly, with sexual deviation. Audiences of the 1950s learned to “read between the lines” to find the subtle gay and lesbian subtexts in mainstream films.³⁷ For this reason, the film, though ultimately conservative, was a huge hit in the gay and lesbian community.

In the end, both *The Plainsman* and *Calamity Jane* impart conservative messages. Jean Arthur’s Calamity suffers for her defiant independence and Doris Day’s Calam relinquishes her buckskins and her relationship with Katie for marriage to a man. Both films are products of eras that encouraged social constrictions. During both decades, marriage and family were the only acceptable scenarios for independence-minded women. Behaviors discouraged included dressing and acting like men, dykishness, doing men’s work and sexual promiscuity. “Good” behaviors included submissiveness, feminine dress, and monogamous heterosexual marriage.

If these two films shared the common goal of modifying a nonconformist cultural icon to satisfy contemporary social norms, DeMille’s was the most successful. Jean Arthur’s Calamity, though strikingly beautiful, suffers in the end. She is a self-absorbed monstrosity who caused innocent men to die. Audiences of the 1930s probably thought she deserved her plight of heartbreak and destitution at the end of the film. Doris Day’s Calamity Jane, on the other hand, was a less threatening figure. Her tomboyishness has a juvenile quality, leaving open the possibility that she will grow into a mature and fully heterosexual woman. She starts wearing dresses and marries. Curiously, though, she retains her spunk—and her weapon. At the end of the film, when the two happily married couples start to ride off into the sunset, Hickok discovers Calam’s pistol. She smirks, “that’s in case any more actresses ride in from Chicagee.”³⁸ This “P.S.” could be the film’s acknowledgement that Eric Savoy’s assessment of Day’s character is accurate. Though officially contained, Calamity, keeps a smattering of her independent self—perhaps a fitting reward for her sacrifices.

Notes

¹ Stuart Samuels, "The Age of Conspiracy and Conformity: Invasion of the Body Snatchers," in *American History/American Film: Interpreting the Hollywood Image* by Stuart Samuels (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., Inc. 1979).

² See, for example, *Stella Dallas* (1937, dir. King Vidor, starring Barbara Stanwyck) and *The Devil is a Woman*, (1935, dir. Josef von Sternberg, starring Marlene Dietrich).

³ For a discussion of the use of women as icons in films, see Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema," in *Taking up the Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), pp. 31–40.

⁴ The details of Maratha Canary's life remain obscure, despite the meticulous efforts of several biographers to sort them out. See Duncan Aikman, *Calamity Jane and the Lady Wildcats* (University of Nebraska Press, 1927, 1954), D. Faber, *Calamity Jane: Her Life & Legend*; Roberta Beed Sollid, *Calamity Jane: A Study in Historical Criticism* (The Historical Society of Montana, published by Western Press, 1958), and Glenn Clairmonte, *Calamity Was the Name for Jane* (Boulder, Colorado: Western Sage Paperbacks, 1959). James D. McLaird and Richard Etulain are currently writing biographies of Canary. For a good discussion of Calamity Jane's alleged tryst with Bill Hickok, see James D. McLaird, "Calamity Jane and Wild Bill, Myth and Reality," in *Journal of South Dakota History*, 28:1–2, Spring 1998. McLaird shows that the two people were briefly in the same town at the same time, and that they were friends, but the romantic relationship and supposed marriage are popular myths, not facts.

⁵ Kemp P. Battle, "Calamity's Bet," *Great American Folklore: Legends, Tales, Ballads, and Superstitions from All Across America* (New York: Simon & Schuster), pp. 478–79.

⁶ James D. McLaird, "Calamity Jane's Diary and Letters," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, 45:4, 1995, pp. 20–35.

⁷ For a list of documents, see *People with a History: An Online Guide to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans* History*, <http://www.fordham.edu/hallsall/pwh>. Though not absurd, this claim is difficult to substantiate. James D. McLaird found evidence that Canary procured dance hall girls and probably prostitutes, and that she caroused and danced with women. Much as historians of homosexuality want to claim her, though, hard evidence that she was a lesbian eludes them.

⁸ Peter C. Rollins, *Introduction to Hollywood as Historian* (University Press of Kentucky, 1983), p. 1.

⁹ Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1983).

¹⁰ Biskind, *Seeing*, p. 196.

¹¹ Biskind, *Seeing*, p. 277.

¹² *The Plainsman*.

¹³ Charles Higham, *Cecil B. DeMille* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973).

¹⁴ Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁵ Dennis Drabelle, "'What do you think I am, a goop?' Jean Arthur," *Film Comment*, 32:2, 1996, pp. 18–25.

¹⁶ Jennifer Ann Rivers, *Cecil B. DeMille's Vision of the West: A Comparison of History and Film* (M.A. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1996).

¹⁷ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, third edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000, 1994, 1984), pp. 468–71.

¹⁸ Jean Arthur had to learn to wield a bullwhip for two scenes in this film.

¹⁹ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). John E. O'Connor, "A Reaffirmation of American Ideals: Drums Along the Mohawk (1939)," in O'Connor, *American History/American Film*, pp. 98–119.

²⁰ Alice Kessler-Harris. *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); William Chafe. *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920–1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

²¹ *The Plainsman*.

²² Several authors have analyzed the sexual implications of Calamity Jane's relationship with Katie Brown. Eric Savoy, "That Ain't All She Ain't: Doris Day and Queer Performativity" in *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film*, ed. Ellis Hanson (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 151–182. Savoy offers a sophisticated analysis of homosexual representation in this film. He suggests that gendered "performativity" and sexual identity are not the same thing, and speculates about what gay and lesbian audiences of the 1950s saw in the film. See also Mandy Merck, "Travesty on the Old Frontier," in *Move Over Misconceptions: Doris Day Reappraised*, ed. Jane Clarke and Diana Simmonds (London: British Film Institute, 1980). These authors reassess Day's onscreen persona and suggest that her tomboy image appealed to persons of nontraditional sexual orientation.

²³ Interestingly, a number of reviewers picked up the supposition that Martha Canary was a lesbian, and comment in reviews that Doris Day "plays a heterosexual version of the real-life lesbian cowgirl . . ." Kara Fox, "Of Two 'Beautiful Minds,'" <http://www.washblade.com/national/02011a.htm>. Another reviewer says Day "stars as every tomboy's hero . . . the real-life lesbian cowboy Calamity Jane") <http://www.planetout.com/kiosk/popcornq/db/getfilm.html?1558>.

²⁴ Molly Haskell, *Holding My Own in No Man's Land: Women and Men and Film and Feminists* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Haskell offers a more complicated interpretation of Day's mainstream films in the chapter "Icon of the Fifties: Doris Day." *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*, second edition (Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press, 1987).

²⁵ A few critics find her performance troubling. Filmographer Jon Tuska calls Day's portrayal of Calamity Jane absurd. *The American West in Film: Critical Approaches to the Western* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985). James Harvey calls Day's performance "frenetic and charmless." *Movie Love in the Fifties* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), p. 47.

²⁶ *The Celluloid Closet*, dir. Rob Epstein, based on the book *The Celluloid Closet* by Vito Russo, 1995.

²⁷ Eric Savoy, "That Ain't All She Ain't," in *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film*, ed. Ellis Hanson (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 151–182.

²⁸ Club Verboten 1977 DCC Compact Classics, CD boxed set.

²⁹ Biskind, *Seeing*, p. 255.

³⁰ Biskind, *Seeing*, p. 255.

³¹ Interestingly, Keel played a very different kind of character in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* in 1954. He and his six wild brothers had to be domesticated by Jane Powell to make suitable husbands for the women in their 1850s Oregon town. See Biskind, *Seeing*, p. 268.

³² Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

³³ May, *Homeward Bound*.

³⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*.

³⁵ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 9–53; Alan Berube, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Donna Penn, “The Meanings of Lesbianism in Post-War America,” *Gender and History* 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 190–203; Wini Breines, “The 1950s: Gender and Some Social Science,” *Sociological Inquiry* 56 (Winter 1986), pp. 69–92.

³⁶ Donna Penn, “The Meanings of Lesbianism in Post-War America,” *Gender and History* 3 (Summer 1991), pp. 190–203.

³⁷ “Homosexuality in Film,” Sony Pictures Classics. <http://www.sonypictures.com/classics/celluloid/misc/history.html>.

³⁸ Read according to Eric Savoy’s “queer performativity” criteria, the pistol could be a symbolic penis, suggesting Calam was allowed to retain her dubious sexual orientation as long as she adopted the outward appearance of normality.

America's New McCarthyism: Homosexual Stereotypes, Myths, and the Politics of Fear

Stereotypes fall in the face of humanity. You toodle along, thinking that all gay men wear leather after dark and should never, ever be permitted around a Little League field. And then one day your best friend from college, the one your kids adore, comes out to you.

—Anna Quindlen

Throughout history stereotypes and myths have been used to incite fear and fuel prejudice against minorities and people who are “different.” African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Jews and, of course, women have all suffered from fraudulent (and usually mean-spirited) misrepresentations used by those in power to keep minorities “in their place.” As gay Americans strive toward equality for themselves and their families, stereotypes and myths have once again become primary weapons to keep them “in their place.” And once again, those using the most vile stereotypes and myths bill themselves as “Christian” defenders of morality and “traditional values.”

One of the most frequently heard stereotypes claims homosexuals are inveterate child molesters: crazed sexual perverts who prey upon and recruit children. But as University of Chicago historian George Chauncey pointed out in *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate Over Gay Equality* (Basic Books, 2004), the claim that homosexuals recruit children and the stereotype of them as child molesters are relatively new and grew out of:

... the anxious years following the Second World War, when communists, criminal syndicates, and other half-invisible specters seemed to threaten the nation and when demonic new stereotypes of homosexuals were created and backed by government sanctions. ... The old tropes of anti-Semitic rhetoric ... were especially influential in shaping depictions of homosexuals. ... And like Jews, they were depicted as a threat to children. In the most dangerous element of this new image, the escalation of antigay policing was accompanied, inspired, and justified by press and police campaigns that fomented stereotypes of homosexuals as child molesters. (18–19)

The linking of Jews and child molestation is as old as Christianity. The “common knowledge” was immortalized by Geoffrey Chaucer in the tale the Prioress told on the way to Canterbury. Shakespeare used a similar stereotype in *The Merchant of Venice*. Anti-Semitism has a long history in America as well. It seems less than coincidental that the two Americans executed for treason during the McCarthy era were Jewish: the “Communist spies” Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Homosexuals were a “natural” addition to Jews and Communists, especially since they were defined primarily by their sexuality, an uncomfortable topic rarely openly discussed in post-WWII “Christian” America.

The stereotyping worked and quickly took root. During the McCarthy era more homosexuals were “weeded out” and fired than Communists. Gays were regularly barred from taverns and restaurants, barred from public assembly, and barred from using the U.S. Postal Service to send newsletters. In 1953 President Dwight Eisenhower signed an executive order barring homosexuals from government jobs as well as other forms of employment. And, as Professor Chauncey noted, homosexuals had no freedom of assembly or speech and could be arrested on simple “suspicion”—behaviors such as “gesturing with limp wrists,” walking “with a sway to the hips,” and “wearing tight fitting trousers”—and sent to mental hospitals until “cured,” despite claims by prison doctors that “cures” were not possible. Those prison doctors were correct. In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of disorders. The American Psychological Association followed suit in 1975. Today, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics all agree that homosexuality is not an illness or disorder and that it cannot, therefore, be “cured.”

Nevertheless, the Christian Right has made extensive use of the “mental illness” myth by claiming that homosexuality is just a perverted “lifestyle choice” and that homosexuals can be cured. The mental illness myth helped intensify the recruiting molester stereotype and both played right into the stereotype of “AIDS, the gay disease” and the myth that homosexuals are *responsible* for AIDS and are little more than walking, talking HIV incubators waiting to strike.

Just as Joseph McCarthy used stereotypes and myths to incite fear and bigotry in order to justify denying certain American citizens their civil rights, so too the Christian Right and its political minions have embarked on a similar campaign in relation to gay Americans and their quest for equal civil rights.

The Language of Language

Language grows and evolves, leaving fossils behind.
—Lewis Thomas

The clinical separation of homosexuality and child molesting began with the appearance of the words “pedophilia” in 1906 and “pedophile” in 1927. From the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

Paedophilia. An abnormal, esp. sexual, love of young children.

1906 H. ELLIS *Stud. Psychol. Sex* V. i. 11 Paedophilia or the love of children . . . may be included under this head [*sc. abnormality*]. 1926 *Med. Jnl. & Rec.* CXXIV. 161/1 One must keep clearly in mind in dealing with pedophilia the distinction between that mediating homosexuality, and the much more pure perversion which is our subject. . . .

Hence paedophiliac, -philic *adjs.*, pertaining to or characterized by paedophilia; also as *n.*, a paedophilic person.

1927 *Psychoanal. Review* XIV. 191 It is only in rare cases that one encounters an individual who has pedophilic predilections and at the same time is suffering from venereal disease. *Ibid.*, Krafft-Ebing . . . in his attempt at psychological explanation falls back on ‘a morbid disposition only’ on the part of the pedophalic [*sic*] as the motivating factor. . . . 1960 *Spectator* 8 July 69 The . . . survey . . . shows the paedophiliac to be a type altogether distinct from the adult-seeking homosexual. . . . 1976 *Publishers Weekly* 26 Apr. 52/1 He contacted fellow pedophiliacs and through them was able to sample many kinds of young girls.

In reality, there are mentally ill heterosexuals who are child molesters and there are mentally ill homosexuals who are child molesters. The only role sexual orientation plays seems to be in selecting the victim. Nevertheless, the Christian Right persists in painting only gay men as crazed child molesters and abusers. For example, the Traditional Values Coalition’s web site religiously reports any story that allegedly involves a gay man and child molestation, but has nothing to say about the pedophile scandal in the Roman Catholic Church, nor do they report on cases involving heterosexual (or Christian) child molesters. According to the Partnership Against Child Abuse, one in four girls is abused before the age of eighteen. Those pedophile abusers and molesters are not gay men. According to PACA, the figure for boys is one in seven. Excluding

Catholic priests and heterosexual women who have sex with male minors, the rest no doubt do include gay men who, like their heterosexual (and Christian) counterparts, have serious mental health problems that have little to do with their sexual orientation.

The “1960 *Spectator* 8 July 69” reference cited in the *OED* is particularly pertinent in this regard. The quoted excerpt below is from Penelope Gilliatt’s lengthy review of the book *A Minority: A Report on the Life of the Male Homosexual in Great Britain* (Longmans, 1960) by Michael George Schofield (the book was published under his pseudonym, Gordon Westwood). Ms. Gilliatt makes some critical observations in her review that are as applicable to America today as when they were written in 1960 about the British view of homosexuality and treatment of homosexuals. (Not only did Britain decriminalize homosexuality, today the U. K. is poised to legalize same-sex civil unions.)

It is often said, for instance, that any modification of the law [i.e. Legalizing homosexuality] would open the flood-gates to a wave of homosexuality; but Mr. Westwood, like everyone else who has really gone into it, can find nothing to suggest that there would be any increase in the incidence of homosexual behaviour . . . We are also familiar with the proposition that legalised homosexuality would increase the threat to young boys, is fear most often being voiced by the class that self-righteously skimps itself to educate its sons at all-male boarding schools, where homosexuality is innocently uninhibited as never again . . . Westwood’s research, however, like the Curran and Parr survey in the *British Medical Journal*, shows the paedophile to be a type altogether distinct from the adult-seeking homosexual. (69)

Ms. Gilliatt and Mr. Westwood—in 1960—also had some astute things to say about the faith-based notion that homosexuals can be “cured”:

. . . the suggestions that the cure for homosexuality lies with medicine, or psychiatry, or the Church—cheerfully disregard[s] the fact that the first two have explained that it really is not possible to cure something that is not an illness, and that the third has undertaken to deal with it only on the fanciful basis that a predominantly irreligious people can be persuaded to abstain from homosexuality because it is declared a sin. (69)

Ms. Gilliatt cited another source and drew a timely conclusion:

After a few hours of reading *Marriage: Studies in Emotional Conflict and Growth* [edited by Lily Pincus; Methuen, 1960] it becomes obvious that the only really effective way of putting down homosexuality [as a perceived aberration] is marriage. (69)

Nevertheless, despite medical knowledge and social history, the Christian Right (particularly Louis Sheldon's Traditional Values Coalition—a “grassroots” Christian lobbying group and media empire that claims to be “empowering people of faith through knowledge”) have resurrected the stereotype of gay men as crazed child molesters recruiting America's youth and used it in their campaign to deny gay Americans equal rights, particularly the civil right to enter into the civil union called “marriage.”

On July 31, 2004, TVC's web site featured their “Top Ten Reports”:

1. Homosexuals Recruit Public School Children
2. Homosexuality 101: A Primer
3. Homosexual Propaganda Campaign Based on Hitler's ‘Big Lie’ Technique
4. A Gender Identity Disorder Goes Mainstream
5. Homosexual Behavior Fuels AIDS and STD Epidemic
6. Homosexual Sex = Death from HIV Infection
7. Traditional Values Coalition Exposes Homosexual Agenda
8. Judicial Tyranny
9. Homosexual Child Molesters
10. Federal AIDS Dollars Fund Homosexual Proms and Fisting Seminars

What's clear from this malodorous list of titles is TVC's obsession with using stereotypes, myths and the distortions they demand in order to demean, smear, and stigmatize in any way possible gay and lesbian Americans. The goal is also self-evident: deny those American citizens anything resembling equal civil rights or equal protection under the law. Combined, those means and that end define McCarthyism.

The titles and the often hysterical (determined by the number and frequency of multiple exclamation points used) articles they represent illuminate the threadbare tapestry of stereotypes and myths TVC uses in its assaults. Specifically, they deploy the recruiting molester stereotype fused with the stereotype of gay people as nothing more than HIV incubators waiting to strike and the myth that inevitably “Homosexual Sex = Death from HIV Infection,” all topped off with an assault on “judicial tyranny” packaged with “Traditional Values Coalition Exposes” self-aggrandizing ego, and wrapped up in the fanciful notion that homosexuals are mentally ill and can be “cured.”

On November 10, 2004, Traditional Values Coalition's executive director Andrea Lafferty spoke at the "Regeneration" conference. Regeneration is a Christian ministry dedicated to "curing" homosexuals. Ms. Lafferty claimed homosexuals have targeted and recruited children for the past twenty years in public schools and urged the attendees to work to stop the recruitment of children into homosexuality. She also encouraged parents to remove their children from "pro-homosexual teachings." Her accusations relied heavily on the recruiting molester stereotype delivered with McCarthy-like flare. In Ms. Lafferty's own words, "What most parents don't realize is that homosexual teachers have included recruitment materials into nearly every subject—from math problems to English assignments" (www.traditionalvalues.org).

Ms. Lafferty's repertoire is not limited to the recruiting molester stereotype. In early June 2004, TVC issued a statement claiming "Federal AIDS Funding Fuels AIDS Epidemic." Lafferty was TVC's spokeswoman:

On Sunday afternoon (June 3), hundreds of homosexual AIDS activist groups will descend upon Washington, DC to demand cheaper AIDS drugs, taxpayer-funded AIDS programs overseas, and more federal funding of AIDS educational programs.

"This coalition is demanding more money for AIDS education, yet it never advocates discouraging *the main cause of AIDS infection: homosexual sex*," said Andrea Lafferty, Executive Director of Traditional Values Coalition today. (italics mine)

Ms. Lafferty seems unaware that the HIV virus is the *only* "cause" of AIDS infection and that AIDS afflicts millions of heterosexuals and children in this country and abroad. Nevertheless, her McCarthy-like attack and use of stereotypes and myths intensified with the non sequitur assertions that "homosexual activism" spreads AIDS and those activists involved in the fight against the disease are like drug dealers:

TVC believes the federal government should prohibit homosexual AIDS activist groups or health organizations controlled by homosexuals from receiving tax dollars. "This money is fueling homosexual activism and spreading AIDS. It should only go to AIDS organizations that do not have a homosexual agenda," said Lafferty. "We don't give money to drug traffickers to stop the flow of drugs into our country. Nor should we be giving AIDS money to homosexuals who

continue to engage in the sexual behavior that spreads AIDS.”
(www.traditionalvalues.org)

Once again, Ms. Lafferty targeted only gays while ignoring heterosexually transmitted HIV that is rampant globally, especially in Africa and India. But then again, she and TVC also object to humanitarian “taxpayer-funded AIDS programs overseas.”

The founder and chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition is Louis Sheldon, a Presbyterian pastor who, in 1972, became obsessed with fighting what he saw as the “homosexual agenda.”¹ As Gerry Shih accurately noted in his *Stanford Daily* article following an April 20, 2005 “gay marriage” debate between Sheldon and Evan Wolfson at the university, “Since then the cause has consumed his [Sheldon’s] life as the Traditional Values Coalition has risen to become the most prominent anti-gay marriage organization in America.”²

Reverend Sheldon has become notorious for his vitriolic attacks on gay Americans as well as his use of the recruiting molester stereotype. In a February 10, 2005, attack on public school teachers in Santa Cruz, California, for supporting programs that promoted respect for all students, Sheldon once again used the recruiting molester stereotype: “Parents in Santa Cruz County must remain vigilant. Homosexual activists in the classrooms seek to control their children.” In the article “Santa Cruz Parents Must Act to Protect Public School Children” that appeared on TVC’s web site, Rev. Sheldon urged parents to “mark our children with” crosses to ward off the vampiric trinity of diversity, tolerance, and respect for others.

The Traditional Values Coalition has repeatedly used the recruiting molester stereotype as a scare tactic in its attacks on the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network that sponsors discussion groups in junior and high schools meant to foster understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect among all students. In TVC’s own words, “GLSEN targets children for recruitment into the homosexual lifestyle as well as cross-dressing/sex change operations through GLSEN chapters that sponsor hundreds of Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs on junior high and high school campuses across the United States” (www.traditionalvalues.org). Aside from propagating the recruiting molester stereotype and the “lifestyle” myth, TVC outdid Joseph McCarthy with its frenzied “cross-dressing/sex change operations” scare tactic.

Sheldon’s hysteria was matched by others in the Christian Right who also targeted any public school program that aimed to foster diversity, tolerance, and respect for others. On January 4, 2005, the Christian news service AgapePress ran a story entitled “Researcher Says Children’s ‘Tolerance’ Video Promotes Homosexuality.” The DVD version of the video—an earlier edition aired on Nickelodeon, PBS, and the Disney Channel in 2002—was scheduled to be delivered free of charge by Federal Express to 61,000 public and private elementary schools nationwide in early 2005.

And who were the on-screen advocates of this perceived corruption? According to American Family Association “researcher” Ed Vitagliano, none other than SpongeBob SquarePants, Barney the Dinosaur, Arthur, Dora the Explorer, JoJo, Clifford the Big Red Dog, Big Bird, Bob the Builder, Winnie the Pooh, Cookie Monster, Elmo, Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy and a host of other children’s TV characters. And what did Mr. Vitagliano claim was the source of this alleged homosexual recruiting effort? According to the posted AgapePress story:

“When you go to the We Are Family Foundation website, there is a ‘tolerance pledge’ that children and others are encouraged to sign, which includes sexual orientation,” he [Vitagliano] explains. That, he says, is the crux of the problem. “While we want everyone to respect other people’s beliefs, we do not consider it appropriate for children’s television to be used in an effort to indoctrinate children to accept homosexuality.”

The pro-family researcher sees an age-old tactic being employed by those behind the project. “This is a bait-and-switch approach. It’s been used for years,” he says, “and homosexuals are now using well-known and beloved children’s television characters in an effort to use [them] as bait and switch.”

Diversity, tolerance, and respect are bad things? The WAFF “Tolerance Pledge” read:

Tolerance is a personal decision that comes from a belief that every person is a treasure. I believe that America’s diversity is its strength. I also recognize that ignorance, insensitivity and bigotry can turn that diversity into a source of prejudice and discrimination.

To help keep diversity a wellspring of strength and make America a better place for all, I pledge to have respect for people whose abilities, beliefs, culture, race, sexual identity or other characteristics are different from my own (www.wearefamilyfoundation.org).

Could it be that the AFA’s “pro-family researcher”—and Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family who joined the campaign against diversity, tolerance, and respect for others, urging Christians to stand together to stop the

“pro-homosexual” WAFF video as part of their ongoing “spiritual battle” for the country—were just performing the McCarthy role of seeing alleged homosexual conspiracies everywhere and using baseless stereotypes and myths to encourage bigotry and promulgate hatred for their own political purposes?³

Vitagliano said “we want everyone to respect other people’s beliefs,” but apparently “other people’s beliefs” do not include those of the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics in relation to the nature of homosexuality and the quality of same-sex families. Nor do “other people’s beliefs” seem to include the widely held belief that *all* American citizens deserve equal *civil* rights. Vitagliano and Dobson seem concerned that America’s youth not be “indoctrinated” with science, facts, or civic values, only *their* distorted religious dogma. Perhaps Rev. John H. Thomas, president of the 1.3 million member United Church of Christ, said it best: “While Dobson’s silly accusation makes headlines, it’s also one more concrete example of how religion is misused over and over to promote intolerance over inclusion” (www.ucc.org).

Moreover, although Vitagliano and Dobson always refer to themselves and their organizations as “pro-family,” none really seems to be so. According to the Adoption Family Center, there are an estimated six to fourteen million children who have a gay or lesbian parent, and between eight and ten million children being reared in gay and lesbian *families* (www.adoptionfamilycenter.org). How can one claim to be “pro-family” and simultaneously fight to prevent these families from receiving any legal, economic, or social benefits?

In 2005, January 24th to 28th was designated “No Name-Calling Week.” The event was organized by GLSEN. They worked with *Misfits* author James Howe to develop a program that won the endorsement of the Girl Scouts, the National Associations of Elementary and Secondary School Principals, and the National Education Association. This was the second year for “No Name-Calling Week.” More than 600 schools around the country participated in the inaugural year. More than 5000 educators in 36 states participated in the 2005 program. “No Name-Calling Week” was by no means specific to gays. It encouraged civil speech and respect for all students. Nevertheless, the Christian Right condemned the program and labeled it another attempt to push “the homosexual agenda.” But as the director of the National Education Association’s Health Information Network Jerald Newberry noted, “People who would criticize this [program], regardless of who came out with it, are people with bad hearts” (www.nea.org).

One of those “bad hearts” belonged to Warren Throckmorton, a professor at Grove City College in Pennsylvania and an avid proponent of therapies meant to “cure” homosexuals: “It appears that No Name Calling Week may be another effort on the part of GLSEN and other event organizers to tell those who object to homosexuality on religious or philosophical grounds to

‘drop dead’” (CNSNews.com, January 24, 2005). Apparently Professor Throckmorton believes that if people object to homosexuality “on religious or philosophical grounds” that gives them the right to use derogatory insults and indulge in hateful name-calling. Religion and philosophy were also used to justify slavery and segregation; racism is full of name-calling. Dr. Throckmorton’s “drop dead” suggestion speaks for itself.

In early 2005, the new McCarthyism was also being practiced by the man behind the campaign to recall former California governor Gray Davis. Armed with the usual stereotypes and myths, Tony Andrade renewed his campaign to limit sex education in California’s public schools. His motive, he said, was a fear that “homosexuals are using high schools as a recruiting ground.” In his campaign, Mr. Andrade dredged up the worst stereotypes and made them even more vile. He linked classroom discussions of homosexuality and domestic partnership to bestiality, pedophilia, and necrophilia. This was Mr. Andrade’s second attempt to restrict sex education in the state’s public schools. His first effort in 2004 was cosponsored by Louis Sheldon’s Traditional Values Coalition. As Jackie Burrell reported in *The Contra Costa Times* (January 6, 2005), Andrade’s:

... ballot initiative bans elementary school sexual health lessons, which in most districts cover menstruation and other body changes caused by puberty. And it restricts health instruction—including lectures, counseling, questions, books and posters on the wall—for older students unless they have specific written parental permission. The only exception would be for individual students who request confidential counseling from a school psychologist or police officer. . . .

If the initiative passes it could restrict not just health education, but high school history and social studies classes too—forcing parents to give daily, written permission before their children could even discuss last winter’s gay marriages, Catholic church scandals and potentially other current events.

As already noted, Louis Sheldon’s Traditional Values Coalition and Tony Andrade’s Civil Rights for Families were not the only “Christian” groups using the recruiting molester stereotype to infuse fear and intolerance into the political debate over civil equality for gay Americans. Although he began his career authoring Christian self-help books that encouraged parents to spank their children, in late 2004 Michael Crowley, a senior editor at the *New Republic*, dubbed Dr. James Dobson “the religious right’s new kingmaker” and “America’s most influential evangelical leader” (www.slate.msn.com). Dobson and his organization, Focus on the Family, have an ongoing campaign against

GLSEN and the National Education Association. From the FOF web site, July 17, 2004:

Citizen Magazine Feature—Never Too Young to Indoctrinate

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network has teamed up with the National Education Association to plant its *pro-homosexuality* message in every American classroom. (www.family.org/cforum/citizenmag/features/a0013413.cfm; italics mine)

“Pro-homosexuality.” That’s a favorite rhetorical tactic of those perpetuating and using myths and stereotypes. The tactic has become a mainstay and is perhaps most familiar in the Christian Right’s attacks on what they term “pro-abortion” activists. No one is “pro-abortion.” No woman is saying “Oh please let me get knocked up so I can have an abortion.” No one advocates abortion. They advocate choice. They’re “pro-choice.” Similarly, not even the most radical gay rights activists are “pro-homosexual.” They are not advocating heterosexuals become homosexuals. They advocate equal civil rights for gay citizens. They’re “pro-equality.” But equality does not seem to be one of the “traditional values” the Traditional Values Coalition, American Family Association, and Focus on the Family support. They do, however, all strongly support government-sponsored, faith-based “abstinence-only” sex “education” programs that use stereotypes, myths, and outright lies to target gay teens and mislead heterosexual ones.

In late 2004, the office of Representative Henry A. Waxman (Democrat-California) released a report on the government sponsored and funded “abstinence-only” sex education programs in public schools. From Doreen Brandt’s 365Gay.com report, December 2, 2004:

The Republican controlled Congress three years ago endorsed the abstinence program. It is in use in 11 states. Earlier this month, the Bush Administration secured nearly \$170 million in additional federal funding for these programs, bringing the five-year total in federal taxpayer support for such programs to nearly \$900 million.

The Waxman staff report found that two thirds of the abstinence programs in use in schools distort the facts on the use of condoms.

It also found that the program is teaching teens that abortion can lead to sterility and suicide, *that half of the gay male*

teenagers in the U.S. have tested positive for HIV, and that touching a person's genitals can result in pregnancy. . . . (italics mine)

To state as “fact” that half of all gay male teenagers—presumably those in and out of the closet—have been tested is preposterous enough, but to compound it with the assertion that “half tested positive for HIV” is almost beyond belief . . . until one considers another “fact” these government-sponsored faith-based programs offers as “education”: “touching a person’s genitals can result in pregnancy.” In a *Crossfire* program broadcast on CNN in December 2004, Genevieve Wood of the Family Research Council⁴ repeatedly refused—five times, according to the transcript—to disown the idea that masturbation can cause pregnancy (www.cnn.com).

From Causes to Effects

There is no act that is not the coronation of an infinite series of causes and the source of an infinite series of effects.

—Jorge Luis Borges

The increasingly stereotyped antigay rhetoric coming from the Christian Right and their political minions has had and continues to have an effect. The Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies (IGLSS) “is an independent think tank that bridges the gap between the world of research and the world of policy debate and public opinion.” A report entitled “The Dangers of a Same-Sex Marriage Referendum for Community and Individual Well-Being: A Summary of Research Findings” by Dr. Glenda M. Russell appeared in the June 2004 edition of IGLSS’s Policy Journal and was featured on their web site (www.iglss.org). Some of the main findings included:

- Elections that call into questions the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people create sharp divisions in communities. People who have managed to disagree but live in peaceful coexistence become enemies in a public battle. Hostile and extreme rhetoric becomes common in the political arena.
- Stereotypes and untruths about both sides become staples of the formal and informal campaigns and of everyday conversation.
- Some of the most damaging impact occurs within families in which members are divided in their opinions and can no longer live comfortably with those differences.
- When a particular group is the subject of political debate, group members often exhibit a variety of negative outcomes including anxiety, depression, alienation, fear, and anger.

- All of these consequences leave individuals and communities damaged. Considerable time is required for individuals and communities to return to healthy functioning.
- Referenda on the rights of any group run the risk of allowing a tyranny of the majority.

Not surprisingly, the study concluded:

- The net effect . . . is the dissemination of misinformation that revives old prejudices and reinforces divisions within communities.
- As the referendum polarize people, LGBT citizens become fearful and their children often encounter ridicule at school.

John D. Moore is the author of *Confusing Love With Obsession: When You Can't Stop Controlling Your Partner and the Relationship* (Universe, 2004) and professor of health sciences and psychology at American Public University. On March 8, 2004, Advocate.com featured an article by Dr. Moore that addressed the effects of stereotyped antigay political and religious rhetoric, especially on gay youth:

When President George W. Bush decided to publicly embrace a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, cloaking his remarks in the guise of religion, he psychologically violated millions upon millions of gay and lesbian youth around the nation as well as the many millions more who are their parents and relatives. In short, Mr. Bush has made it fashionable to declare "open season" on a segment of our society. Make no mistake—his intolerant message was quite clear: "You and your family are not part of the American family." . . .

Consider what one 20-year-old student wrote in an essay about this topic in a class I instruct on gender psychology: "I have beaten up faggots before, and I used to feel guilty—not anymore! Bush says fags don't count, so I guess it's cool to do it." . . .

Although Mr. Bush has not explicitly urged or threatened physical violence against gay Americans, televangelist Jimmy Swaggart did in a televised sermon broadcast on Omni 1, a Toronto multicultural station. The broadcast was also carried by various outlets in the United States. From a report by Jan Prout posted on 365Gay.com, September 20, 2004:

According to a transcript of the program, Swaggart said “I’m trying to find the correct name for it . . . this utter absolute, asinine, idiotic stupidity of men marrying men. . . . I’ve never seen a man in my life I wanted to marry. And I’m gonna be blunt and plain; if one ever looks at me like that, I’m gonna kill him and tell God he died.”

The remarks were met with applause from his congregation. . . . (italics mine)

That the discredited, “I have sinned” televangelist would make such a statement is not that surprising. What’s terrifying is that his “remarks were met with applause from his congregation” of evangelical “Christians.”

According to the National Center for Victims of Crime and the Federal Bureau of Investigations, violence against gays and lesbians increased 8 percent between 1999 and 2000. Of the 1,317 violent incidents attributed to the victim’s sexual orientation, 69 percent were against boys or men perceived to be gay (www.ncvc.org; www.fbi.gov). And, according to a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report, as many as 30 percent of completed youth suicides each year “are performed by gays and lesbians” (www.hhs.gov). The Christian Right’s attacks on GLSEN and GSA groups in public schools—places where all students should feel safe and supported—are also having an effect:

“We’re alarmed by a noticeable increase in gay youth facing discrimination or hostility in just the last month since the [2004] election. While we’ve just been through a very contentious national election that focused a great deal on the rights of gay couples, that can’t be allowed to threaten the well established rights of gay youth to be out, safe and respected in schools,” said Michael Adams, Director of Education and Public Affairs at Lambda Legal. “The rights of gay youth are very clear, and they’re not up for public debate. We see an urgent need to get this message out in communities where gay youth have experienced problems since the election, and that’s exactly what we’re doing.” (www.lambdalegal.org)

A 2005 GLSEN survey of schools nationwide showed that four out of five gay and lesbian students reported being verbally, sexually and/or physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation (www.glsen.org). The prevalence of violence against gay youth is documented daily, but most reports never make mainstream media news. From a 365Gay.com news story (January 21, 2005) about a gay teen in Cleburne, Texas:

Police say the 17 year old student had gone to a party being thrown by [classmates and] other teens. Soon after he arrived, according to the police report, "one of the three individuals asked [him] if he was gay or bisexual."

When he answered yes, he was struck in the face. When he fell to the floor the others then beat and kicked him [with steel-toe boots] until he was nearly unconscious. . . .

His injuries were so severe he needed reconstructive face surgery and may have permanent damage.

The lack of tolerance and support for gay and lesbian students seems to delight the Christian Right. An early 2005 study issued by Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) reported that 95 percent of counseling services in the nation's public schools have little or no gay, lesbian, or bisexual resources (www.pflag.org).

Focus on the Family's CitizenLink newsletter began its January 7, 2005 story about the PFLAG report this way:

A major support group for the relatives of homosexuals has released its analysis of the nation's schools, and *while many family advocates will find the results encouraging*, some say the study is simply a tool to gain leverage for pro-gay causes. (italics mine)

The use of the word "encouraging" is as chilling as Swaggart's threat to kill gays and the applause it drew from the congregation.

Studies show that suicide rates among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are three times higher than the national norm, with suicides among gay teens the highest. The Suicide Prevention Resource Center of Newton, Massachusetts, with funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (part of the Department of Health and Human Services), organized a conference to be held in Portland, Oregon, February 28, 2005. The name of the conference was "Suicide Prevention Among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Individuals." A few weeks before the event Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration project manager Brenda Bruun requested that the words "gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender" be replaced by "sexual orientation." Reaction came swiftly:

One of the three specialists who will lead the meeting says that "sexual orientation" is inadequate.

“Everyone has a sexual orientation,” Ron Bloodworth told the [Washington] Post. “But this was about gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders.” . . .

“Unless you use an accurate term, the people you are trying to reach don’t recognize themselves and don’t attend,” he told the paper, adding that the agency told him he should not use “gender identity” (365Gay.com, February 16, 2005).

But in keeping with the Bush administration’s evangelical politics, name changes were not all they wanted. They also insisted there be a session on “faith-based suicide prevention.” Reaction was again swift:

“It is unconscionable for politics to get into the way of life and death health care gay LGBT young people,” Human Rights Campaign spokesperson Steven Fisher told 365Gay.com.

—and as manipulative as ever:

“It is incredible, the venom from these people,” said [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration] spokesperson Mark Weber who added that the name change was “only a suggestion.”

But, when pressed by the [Washington] Post about how strong a suggestion it was, Weber replied: “Well, they do need to consider their funding source” (365Gay.com, February 17, 2005).

Focus on the Family’s “encouraging” *CitizenLink* story by Stuart Shepard about the lack of support for obviously “at risk” gay and lesbian teens in public schools also quoted other “Christian” reactions built on myths and stereotypes:

“PFLAG’s goal is not to provide accurate information for these students, but to indoctrinate them with one specific, pro-gay view of homosexuality,” said Scott Davis, youth director for Exodus International, a group that helps people leave homosexuality.

Exodus Ministries came to the forefront when they ran a full-page ad in *The Los Angeles Times* on July 23, 2004. Their advertisement for a “therapy” deemed by medical, psychiatric, psychological, and pediatric authorities to be harmful (ex-gay therapy was publicly decried in 1999 as unethical by both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association)

featured the smiling face of a boyish young man and a strangely contrived narrative that included the following:

I am Randy Thomas and I'm sure my story will prompt a few questions. Good, because the answers are worth the effort. Like a lot of homosexual men, I grew up with an absentee father. He left me desperate for the physical touch only a father can give. I also never heard nor knew his affirmation of me as a man. . . . I felt vulnerable and rejected, but still I was drawn to their attraction with me. I soon found that all the male attention I'd ached for so long came packaged with a gay identity. So that's what I became, even though I was still conflicted about who I really was . . . I began living gay on the outside, but was hurt and broken inside. . . .

Today I am an ex-gay. No, wait . . . I don't define myself anymore with a sexual identity. I'm just . . . Randy. Because I know that my homosexuality wasn't really a sex issue . . . but a heart issue. And what once was broken as a child has now been made whole to the point I have hope one day for a wife, and children of my own. . . . (*italics mine*)

The entire narrative was a mosaic of more myths and stereotypes than can be dealt with here. Suffice to say "Randy" began with the myth that "a lot" of gay men are the product of divorce—which would seem to place the blame for homosexuality on heterosexuals who violate the "sanctity" of marriage—and that gay people are "broken inside"—which calls up the mental illness myth—coupled with what seems to be a strangely incestuous inversion of the recruiting molester stereotype: "He left me desperate for the physical touch only a father can give." Perhaps these were meant to complement the puerile tone and style of the narrative, replete with its innocence-evoking illiterate use of "conflicted."

On July 28, 2004, *LA Times* writer Steve Lopez did a follow-up story about Exodus Ministries:

The Florida-based group was inspired nearly 30 years ago in Anaheim by charismatic Christian leaders who declared homosexuality a sin.

Just one problem:

[The] two men who helped get the movement started were counseling gays to go straight when, lo and behold, they fell in love with each other. . . .

The two men dumped their wives, abandoned Exodus, and wore each other's wedding bands.

Exodus Ministries asserts that “even if homosexuality were partially or completely genetic in origin, that does not change the moral question involved: God declares in the Bible that homosexual and lesbian activities are sin.”

“God” also declares in the Bible that anyone who “hath cursed” should be stoned to death (Leviticus 24:10). Leviticus 20:14 calls for sinners to be burned to death, and Leviticus 15:19 commands a menstruating woman be “put apart seven days, and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean.” Leviticus 24:11–16 calls for a community gathering in order to stone to death those who plant two different crops in the same field or wear garments made of two different kinds of threads.

When these obvious problems with literal application of “God’s” Old Testament laws are pointed out, the biblical references usually shift to the epistles of St. Paul. Exodus Ministries cited Romans 1:26–27 in its claim that genetics don’t matter. Ironically, what is bypassed in that dogmatic leap are the Gospels of Jesus. This is to be expected since nothing Jesus allegedly said could be used to support the campaign against homosexuals or same-sex marriage. Quite the contrary, the Gospels call upon the faithful to dedicate themselves to creating a more ethical and just world. They also call for proactive efforts to assure justice and equality for all “God’s children,” especially the disenfranchised. Furthermore, as Mark Jordan noted in *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (University of Chicago, 1997), it wasn’t until the 11th century that theologians began to condemn homosexuality as sodomy. Then as now, the motive was more political than theological.

Moreover, St. Paul’s epistles spoke of fulfilling and being faithful to the unique nature God had given each person, as Andrew Sullivan noted in *Virtually Normal: An Argument About Homosexuality* (Vintage Books, 1996):

For by Paul’s argument, the key issue is that individuals act according to their own nature as it is revealed to them (as Christ was revealed to the Romans). By this logic, the person who is by his own nature homosexual would be acting against his nature by engaging in heterosexual acts [and thereby committing a sin]. His destiny is homosexuality, just as the destiny of the Romans after Christ was monotheism. (29–30)

Therefore, “God-given” genetics do—or should—matter. “Gay at Birth?” was the title of an October 25, 2003, *New York Times* article by Nicholas D. Kristof:

A basic principle of our social covenant is that we do not discriminate against people on the basis of circumstances that they cannot choose, like race, sex and disability. If sexual orientation belongs on that list . . . then should we still prohibit gay marriage . . . ?

In the article, Mr. Kristof surveyed the “the accumulating evidence” that points to homosexuality as something one does not choose. One of the scientific documents he cited was “Born Gay? The Psychobiology of Human Sexual Orientation,” a study authored by Doctors. Qazi Rahman and Glenn D. Wilson of the Department of Psychology, Institute of Psychiatry, University of London, and published in the highly respected peer-reviewed scientific journal *Personality and Individual Differences* (34:8, June 2003, 1337–1382).⁵ In his article, Mr. Kristof further quoted Dr. Rahman: “There is now very strong evidence from almost two decades of ‘biobehavioral’ research that human sexual orientation is predominantly biologically determined.”

In late January 2005, a University of Illinois at Chicago researcher announced results of a study that examined the entire human genome for possible genetic origins of sexual orientation. The study was conducted in conjunction with the University of California at San Diego, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of California at Los Angeles, funded in part by the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Complete results of the study were published under the title “A Genomewide Scan of Male Sexual Orientation” in the March 2005 issue of the biomedical journal *Human Genetics*.

Prior to the study’s publication, UIC researcher Brian Mustanski confirmed they’d found stretches of DNA linked to sexual orientation on three different chromosomes in the nucleus of cells of the human male. “There is no one ‘gay’ gene,” said Mustanski, a psychologist in the UIC department of psychiatry and lead author of the study. “Sexual orientation is a complex trait, so it’s not surprising that we found several DNA regions involved in its expression. . . . Our best guess is that multiple genes, potentially interacting with environmental influences, explain differences in sexual orientation.” As Steph Smith further explained in his January 28, 2005, report on the study:

The genomes of 456 men from 146 families with two or more gay brothers were analyzed. . . .

Identical stretches of DNA on three chromosomes—chromosomes 7, 8 and 10—were found to be shared in about 60 percent of the gay brothers in the study, compared to about 50 percent expected by chance. The region on chromosome 10

correlated with sexual orientation only if it was inherited from the mother.

“Our study helps to establish that genes play an important role in determining whether a man is gay or heterosexual,” said Mustanski. “The next steps will be to see if these findings can be confirmed and to identify the particular genes within these newly discovered chromosomal sequences that are linked to sexual orientation.” (www.365Gay.com)

Exodus Ministries’ assertion that genetics and biology simply don’t matter blatantly contradicts the sociopolitical covenant that America does “not discriminate against people on the basis of circumstances that they cannot choose.” The ministries’ political belief would be appropriate only in a theocracy.

Stereotypes, Myths and the Law

Justice is the end of government. It is the end of society.
—James Madison, “The Federalist Papers,” 1788

When the California Supreme Court ruled that San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom had exceeded his power in February 2004 by granting marriage licenses to same-sex couples, the court did not take up the issue of marriage equality. They said challenges to the constitutionality of existing state law currently prohibiting same-sex marriage should work their way through the lower courts first. That process began in late December 2004 in San Francisco Superior Court, Judge Richard Kramer presiding.

Opening arguments were made by the state and groups representing the Christian Right. According to Dean E. Murphy’s December 23, 2004 *New York Times* article “Court in California Hears Gay Marriage Arguments” and other reports on the proceedings, the state “argued there was nothing unconstitutional or discriminatory about a law that defines marriage in a manner consistent with tradition and the desire of most Californians.” The California constitution calls for the equality of all citizens. It does appear discriminatory to deny gay citizens the right to a civil marriage based on “tradition,” which is itself often built upon old stereotypes and myths. As an example from the past, it *was* discriminatory—despite religious rhetoric to the contrary—to deny interracial couples the right to a civil marriage based on the myths and stereotypes underwriting the marriage “tradition” and “the desire of most” Americans. A year after the U. S. Supreme Court struck down laws against interracial marriage and ruled that marriage is “one of the basic civil rights of man” and the freedom to marry is “essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness” (*Loving v. Virginia*), a 1968 Gallup poll

showed 72 percent of Americans opposed the legalization of interracial marriage.

One function of stereotypes is to turn the people they target into “things”:

Judge Kramer did not allow television cameras in the courtroom, but that did not dampen interest. Cameras were set up in another courtroom, where lawyers made statements and many of the same-sex couples answered questions. At one point, the opposing sides got into a tiff, when a lawyer for the Alliance Defense Fund [co-founded by Dr. James Dobson] asked the couples to move away from the cameras.

“This is a prop,” the [Alliance Defense Fund] lawyer, Benjamin W. Bull said, pointing at the rows of [same-sex] couples.

“Excuse me,” countered one of their lawyers, Gloria Allred. “They are human beings, not props.” (*New York Times*, December 24, 2004)

That has been one of the primary McCarthy-like uses of the stereotypes and myths deployed by the Christian Right and their political brethren: to dehumanize gay people and turn them into objects of distrust and revulsion suitable for moral outrage. These immoral “things” could then be used in political arguments based *solely* on the epistemology of fundamentalist religion and its so-called “traditional” values to undermine the human, social, and economic reality of gay Americans and their families. From Mary Ellen Peterson’s 365Gay.com December 28, 2004, report:

Kramer has asked to see additional written arguments by January 14th. But, [he] has told the city it cannot include arguments countering the assertions made by conservative groups opposing same-sex marriage that gays can be cured and that children are better off with opposite-sex parents.

Among the documents submitted by the Alliance Defense Fund are statements by *Princeton University psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover that gays misled the American Psychiatric Association into removing homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973. Satinover regularly promotes so-called ‘reparative or aversion therapy’ for gays.*

Another document submitted by the group was from “ex-gay” leaders Alan Chambers and Randy Thomas of Exodus International which also promotes “converting” gays to heterosexuality. Yet another, by University of South Carolina professor George Rekers, claims studies show children do better with heterosexual than with gay or lesbian parents. (italics mine)

The alleged “facts” presented by Jeffrey Satinover, Exodus Ministries, and George Rekers are based squarely on stereotypes and myths. They are also contested by more than a few authorities, including the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics all of whom dismiss the medical/scientific efficacy of reparative and aversion therapies, as well as directly contradict Dr. Rekers’ claims. They also all agree that so-called “reparative” therapies actually do harm. The American Psychological Association Executive Director Dr. Raymond Fowler has stated that “Groups who try to change the sexual orientation of people through so-called conversion therapy are misguided and run the risk of causing a great deal of psychological harm to those they say they are trying to help” (www.apa.org). The American Psychiatric Association concurs: “gay men and lesbians who have accepted their sexual orientation positively are better adjusted than those who have not done so” (www.psych.org). And according to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Therapy directed at specifically changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation” (www.aap.org).

Jeffrey Satinover’s claim that “gays misled the American Psychiatric Association into removing homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973” is the subject of his 1996 book *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*. The title is at once very misleading and most apt. The book offers many biblical quotations and faith-based arguments but is more than a bit shy on evidence of just *how* “gays”—less than 2 percent of the total population—misled the collective minds of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association. Satinover’s book is little more than an argument for faith-based “reparative” and “aversion” therapies. The names say it all: reparation for sin followed by sin-based behavior modification. Neither builds self-esteem, both destroy self-respect.

As for the factual, objective nature of *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*, one need only consider the mission of its publisher, Baker Books. From www.bakerbooks.com “about us”:

The primary focus of the Baker trade division is the church.
We publish for pastors and church leaders, concentrating on

topics such as preaching, worship, pastoral ministries, counseling, and leadership. We also publish titles for discerning lay Christians who want to stimulate their thinking. Topics include the intersection of Christianity and culture, discipleship, spirituality, encouragement, relationships, marriage, and parenting. In addition, Baker trade publishes books that enable parents to pass their faith to their children. We have a vision for building up the body of Christ at every level with books that are relevant, intelligent, and engaging.

As for Dr. Rekers' claims, of course the biological nuclear family is an ideal, but about half of those families end in divorce and produce single-parent families which, by definition, are "non-traditional families." That does not, of course, mean they can't be loving and nurturing families. The same must be said for families with same-sex parents. In fact, it was said by the American Medical Association when it voted to endorse the legalization of adoptions by same-sex couples. The resolution stated, in part: "having two fully sanctioned and legally defined parents promotes a safe and nurturing environment for children" (www.ama.org). Dr. David Fassler of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry reaffirmed that "All the scientific evidence points to no differences among children raised in heterosexual or homosexual families." Yale University child psychologist Dr. Kyle Pruett also agreed: "There is to date no credible research that says children raised by gay and lesbian couples are at risk." The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Anthropological Association, American Bar Association, American Psychiatric Association, National Association of Social Workers, and North American Council on Adoptable Children also all agree: a parent's sexual orientation is irrelevant to his or her ability to successfully raise a child.⁶

In January 2005, Pulaski County (Arkansas) Circuit Court Judge Timothy Fox was hearing a case involving gay citizens serving as foster parents. He disallowed "expert" testimony by Dr. Rekers, who is also a member of the advisory board of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuals. Rekers had intended to present the usual stereotypes—"rates of pedophilia among homosexuals" and "HIV/AIDS transmission rates"—disguised as legitimate and relevant evidence. In his ruling, Judge Fox said Dr. Rekers' testimony was "extremely suspect" and that Rekers "was there primarily to promote his own personal ideology." Yet, in a case challenging gay marriage, Superior Court Judge Kramer accepted Dr. Rekers' testimony and refused fact-based rebuttals.

When the proceedings ended in Judge Kramer's court, the Christian Right's media outlets chirped with glee and offered prognostications based on the testimony their advocates had read into the court record. They fully expected a ruling in their favor, but that was not the case. Judge Kramer ruled that the

historical definition of marriage cannot justify denying homosexuals the right to marry: “The state’s protracted denial of equal protection cannot be justified simply because such constitutional violation has become traditional.”

Immediately the Christian Right sprang into action with another of their favorite stereotypes and myths—“activist judge!”—and began the usual barrage of name-calling. The Christian news service AgapePress’s March 15, 2005, story about Judge Kramer’s ruling made the point: “Groups Say Calif. Judge ‘Arrogant,’ ‘Irrational’ in Marriage Ruling: Decision Labels Prop. 22 Unconstitutional, Trashes Peoples’ Vote.” The piece quickly documented that “using words like ‘irrational’ and ‘arrogant’ to describe the judge—and ‘nonsensical’ and ‘crazy’ to describe the ruling—the [‘pro-family’] groups see the whole situation as another example of judicial activism.” The “activist judge” stereotype and myth have become a mainstay of the Christian Right in their war against equal civil rights for gays and an independent judiciary for America.

Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs

If you talk about race, it does not make you a racist. If you see distinctions between the genders, it does not make you a sexist. If you think critically about a denomination, it does not make you anti-religion. If you accept but don’t celebrate homosexuality, it does not make you a homophobe.

—Charleton Heston

Thomas Sowell is a noted African American author, conservative columnist, Rose and Milton Friedman Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institute. I mention Mr. Sowell’s race because, as George Chauncy pointed out in *Why Marriage*, historically:

Many people regarded gay life as simply one more sign of the growing complexity and freedom from restrictive tradition of a burgeoning metropolitan culture. Gay and straight men casually interacted in the crowded streets, saloons, and speakeasies of the early twentieth-century city, and gay life was especially visible and accepted in working-class immigrant and African-American neighborhoods. (15)

and because some clergy and other activists in the African-American community have been particularly vocal in their use of stereotypes and myths in campaigns against equal civil rights for gay Americans. In a December 31, 2004 article entitled “Gay Marriage ‘Rights,’” Mr. Sowell used the molesting recruiter and AIDS stereotypes when he argued that “What the [gay] activists really want is the stamp of *acceptance* on homosexuality, as a means of *spreading that*

lifestyle, which has become a *death style in the era of AIDS*" (www.townhall.com, italics mine).

How could one not "accept" the existence of homosexuality and homosexuals? They appear in all cultures throughout all recorded human history and are disproportionately represented among the most celebrated figures in all societies. How could one not "accept" that homosexuals are American citizens and, therefore, deserve equal civil rights? As the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in its 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* decision striking down sodomy laws used against consenting adult homosexuals in the privacy of their homes, "moral disapproval of a group does not justify discrimination."

"Spreading that lifestyle" was clearly meant to call up the recruiting molester stereotype in conjunction with the "just a lifestyle" myth. Sowell's final statement—"a death style in the era of AIDS"—conjoins previously used stereotypes and myths with the scare tactic that homosexuality *inevitably* leads to HIV infection and the stereotyped myth that all homosexuals are little more than HIV incubators waiting to strike. All this in an effort to deny two unrelated adult American citizens who have formed a loving union the civil right to a civil marriage. It just doesn't make sense.

If the KKK opposes gay marriage, I would ride with them.
—African-American Baptist minister Gregory Daniels

Some members of the black clergy have been particularly outspoken in their opposition to equal civil rights for gay Americans. Building on the myths and stereotypes already in use, in the spring and summer of 2004 a group of black clergy joined with the Traditional Values Coalition to propagate a new one: that gay citizens' struggle for the civil right to enter into the civil union called "civil marriage" is not a "civil rights" issue.

This argument was immediately rejected by those most prominent in the civil rights movement. The Reverend Cecil Williams, longtime leader of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, said the Christian Right is mobilizing conservative black clergy and "attempting to divert attention from the real issue. . . . They need to open up to other perspectives. . . . I've said this [the gay rights movement] is a part of the civil rights movement. The issue is to bring out freedom in people's lives" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, May 15, 2004). The widow of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. agreed. In a speech at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey in March 2004, Coretta Scott King affirmed her belief that "gay marriage" is a civil rights issue. She also acknowledged "Gay and lesbian people have families, and their families should have legal protection, whether by marriage or civil unions. A constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages is a form of gay-bashing, and it would do nothing at all to protect traditional marriages."

The argument continues to be rejected by civil rights leaders. On April 2, 2005, NAACP chair Julian Bond accepted Virginia's Equality

Commonwealth Award. In his address to the gathering in Richmond, Mr. Bond reaffirmed that “gay rights” are indeed “civil rights.” From his speech:

African Americans . . . were the only Americans who were enslaved for two centuries, but we were far from the only Americans suffering discrimination then and now. . . . Sexual disposition parallels race. I was born this way. I have no choice. I wouldn't change it if I could. Sexuality is unchangeable. . . .

Many gays, many lesbians, worked side by side with me in the civil rights movement. Am I supposed to tell them now thanks for risking their lives and their limbs to help me win my rights but that they are excluded because of the circumstances of their birth? Not a chance. (www.naacp.org)

Nevertheless, following their September 2004 “Summit to Protect Marriage”—co-sponsored by the Louis Sheldon's Traditional Values Coalition—the African-American clerics held a press conference and demanded to meet with the Congressional Black Caucus. They were denied, but their inflammatory, stereotyped rhetoric caused consternation within the Caucus, two members of which did eventually confront the group. One of them was Congresswoman Carolyn Kilpatrick from Michigan. She was blunt: “I am opposed to a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage clearly because I do not support opening up the Constitution for such an amendment at this time or for any other thing at this time.”

Later in the month the same group of African-American “bishops, pastors, ministers, evangelists and leaders” sent a letter to the Black Caucus. A photo of the group and the text of their letter are currently available and downloadable from TVC's web site. In their letter, the black clerics seemed to blame homosexuals for all the ills in the African American community. From the breakdown of black families to the high rate of HIV infection, stereotyped homosexuals seemed to be responsible. It's difficult to understand why some in a minority community that has had to fight so hard and so long for equal civil rights are so willing to use stereotypes and myths, selective biblical readings and ad hoc religious dogma—all of which were used against them in the early days of their own civil rights struggle—to advocate denying another minority equal civil rights.

Although the breakdown of the black family and the “disproportionate number of HIV-AIDS cases” in the African-American community cannot be disputed—a report from the Twelfth Annual Retrovirus Conference held in Boston, March 2005, documented HIV infection has doubled among blacks in the United States over a decade while holding steady among whites—the

insinuation that they are solely or largely because of homosexuals can and must be. The clerics' connection with the Traditional Values Coalition would provide a source for many of the myths and stereotypes they used in their letter, but perhaps they were also listening to the wrong "experts" within their own community.

The *Dallas Morning News* reported in August 2004 that the AIDS service organization Renaissance III which was supposedly dedicated to preventing HIV infections among at-risk groups, including gay men and African Americans, was ordered to pay back \$112,867 to the federal government because of questionable expenses, including exorbitant staff bonuses. Renaissance III had also been ordered in February 2004 to repay the Texas Department of Health nearly \$77,000 in state grants.

Renaissance III was run by its controversial African-American cofounder and CEO Don Sneed. On December 8, 2004, Mr. Sneed announced that he had been dismissed from the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS. He did so in a press release and letter that included a vicious attack on gay men and women. In his letter to Brent Minor, chairman of PACHA's Treatment and Care Committee, Sneed wrote, "As a black grassroots Republican activist, my hands are becoming quite full as we continue to beat back the scourge of 'marriage for gays,' which would have a most detrimental effect on the black family should it come to pass" (www.dallasexaminer.com).

"Scourge of 'marriage for gays'?" Are monogamy and civil equality scourges? As has been repeatedly documented in Europe and Canada, as well as in the United States since May 17, 2004, when marriage equality became a reality in the state where the American Revolution began, same-sex marriage has had *no effect* on the "destabilization of traditional marriage" or families of any race or ethnicity, despite the McCarthyism and rhetoric of the Christian Right.⁷ Any "destabilization" is the result of forces that existed well before gay rights and marriage equality became faith-based political issues. Yet Sneed claimed marriage equality "would have a most detrimental effect on the black family." He did not explain why or how that would be so. He simply relied on McCarthyism and the stereotypes that have become so pervasive. But the facts contradict both Sneed and the stereotypes.

A February 2005 report prepared by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and based on Census 2000 showed that in Los Angeles and San Francisco black gay and lesbian families have a high rate of parenting, almost equal to opposite-sex African-American households (59 percent vs. 68 percent). As Strategic Director of the National Black Justice Coalition H. Alexander Robinson said, "This study clearly identifies a large population of Black same-sex couples in the U. S., more than half of whom are raising children" (www.nbjcoalition.org).

The study indicates that African-American gay couples earn significantly less than White gay or lesbian couples. . . .

The study also shows that African-American same-sex couples make far less than either their White same-sex counterparts or heterosexual couples of either race.

In San Francisco, Black same-sex couples [earn] more than \$6,000 less per year than Black married opposite-sex couples, and nearly \$30,000 less than White same-sex couples.

In Los Angeles, Black same-sex couples earn more than \$17,000 less per year than White same-sex couples.

“This study demonstrates the strength and struggle of Black same-sex families,” said Matt Foreman, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director (365Gay.com, February 17, 2005).

Marriage equality may not erase the race-based disparity in earnings, but it would enable all same-sex households to access the 1,138 federal tax and other financial benefits legal marriage confers, and it would certainly not have any “detrimental effect on the black family,” as Mr. Sneed claimed. Moreover, a February 11, 2005, article by Lou Chibbaro, Jr. posted on the *WashingBlade.com* web site noted that:

One year ago, the National Black Justice Coalition emerged on the gay rights scene to show how families headed by same-sex African-American couples are hurt by a legal system that prohibits gay people from marrying.

The article concluded with this truth:

Robinson [spokesman for the National Black Justice Coalition] said the coalition would continue efforts to counter black churches that support a federal and state constitutional amendments to ban same-sex marriage.

“The reality is Lou Sheldon and his Traditional Values Coalition are still distributing a video to black churches claiming that gay rights and same-sex marriage would force churches to marry gays,” Robinson said. “What we’re seeing is mostly white Evangelicals running an underground

campaign targeting black churches to oppose gay rights," he said.

A member of the National Association of Black Journalists and board member of the National Black Justice Coalition, Jasmyne Cannick said it best in her ProudParenting.com article "Purchased Pulpits and Spiritual Exploitation" (February 24, 2005):

Recently, a group of Black pastors under the name of the Hi Impact Coalition, held a press conference and summit in Los Angeles to announce the kick off for their "Black Contract with America on Moral Values." Led by Bishop Harry Jackson of Washington and white Christian evangelical Reverend Lou Sheldon and his Traditional Values Coalition, the press conference and summit gave new meaning to the phrase "Sleeping with the enemy."

According to the newly formed coalition, topping the list of issues that Black Americans need to focus on is the protection of marriage. Never mind the war, access to healthcare, HIV/AIDS, education, housing and social security, the number one problem facing Black America is same-sex marriage.

Standing before the press in their Sunday best and eager to get their fifteen minutes of fame and achievable share of President Bush's Faith Based Initiative, these Black pastors seemingly allowed their pulpits to be purchased by the GOP and Lou Sheldon, who is to gay people what Strom Thurmond was to Blacks.

Again likening Louis Sheldon to Strom Thurmond in her Advocate.com article "Pulpit Bullies" (March 15, 2005), Ms. Cannick had this to say about the "Black Contract with America on Moral Values" press conference:

As I expected, standing before us was a group of black pastors inspired, misguided, and led by one wealthy old crone, Reverend Lou Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition. Sheldon, who's white, dominated the press conference with his antigay agenda and showed no support for the other causes the black pastors deemed important in the plight of African-Americans, such as better access to health care and education.

Similar observations were made by Donna Payne of the Human Rights Campaign in her OpEd “Leading Us in the Direction of Equality” celebrating Black History month (www.hrc.org, February 24, 2005):

Thankfully, even today black religious leaders have given the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community hope as we work toward equal protections. . . .

This is especially true at a time when groups like the Traditional Values Coalition are attempting to infiltrate black churches. Early this month, the Traditional Values Coalition’s Rev. Louis Sheldon and 70 black pastors who backed President Bush’s re-election bid held a summit in Los Angeles. There, they laid out a plan for African-Americans to follow, called “Black Contract with America on Moral Values.” . . .

First on the list of priorities is a focus on prohibiting marriage for same-sex couples. . . . In pushing these goals. . . the pastors will receive money funneled through faith-based initiative programs funded by the federal government. Talk about justice.

Banning marriage equality has nothing to do with ensuring that your family has health insurance, or that a single mother has a job. It can’t put clothes on your kids’ backs when their Dad can’t find employment because he has a record. . . . They have forgotten about the main Christian philosophy of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Ms. Payne concluded by thanking “those living today, walking that path of justice” toward equality for *all* Americans:

Thank you Coretta Scott King. Thank you Julian Bond. Thank you Rev. Michael Dyson. Thank you Dr. Dorothy Height. Thank you Mandy Carter. Thank you Cornel West. Thank you Rev. James Forbes. Thank you Phil Wilson. Thank you Rev. Joseph Lowery. Thank you Barbara Smith. Thank you Bishop Yvette Flunder. Thank you Wade Henderson. Thank you to the many African-American GLBT people and allies who work everyday to keep the world moving forward.

Working to keep stereotypes and myths alive and the world moving backwards, Mr. Sneed had claimed in his letter that too much federal AIDS money went to groups helping to prevent HIV infections among gay men and to treat those who had contracted the virus. He wrote:

Family-oriented, God-loving black conservative grassroots Republicans are presently organizing to end the stranglehold that the 'Homosexual Power Elite,' via AIDS Action, HRC, and other homosexual organizations, presently maintain on the domestic AIDS relief budget," he wrote. "As I have expressed, on the record, that in my opinion, experience, and knowledge, this stranglehold has led to unnecessary deaths and suffering of black Americans from the AIDS virus.

Mr. Sneed failed to support, explain, or document his assertions, and for good reason. Simple logic: if there is not a *huge* closeted homosexual population within the black community (which is unlikely), clearly the virus is being contracted through heterosexual sex and other means for which homosexuals cannot be blamed. Researchers and AIDS prevention activists at the Twelfth Annual Retrovirus Conference (Boston, 2005) attributed the high rate among blacks to such factors as drug addiction, poverty and poor access to health care.

The African-American clerics affiliated with the Traditional Values Coalition ended their letter with a truly mixed message, the natural consequence when stereotypes and myths confront reality:

As spiritual and community leaders of this nation, we stand for the biblical and community institutions that have made our nation great.

"Biblical institutions" include slavery, genocide, polygamy, misogyny, murder, torture, mutilation, and a host of other pathologies and crimes against humanity. But the "institution" that did make this country great is indeed "community": a coalition of diverse, equal citizens who recognize stereotypes and myths for what they are and abandon those who use them for their own political purposes, and then work together in good conscience for the common good, despite differences, be they religious, ethnic, or cultural.

Penn State Abington College

Mel Seesholtz

Notes

¹ The "homosexual agenda" was exposed by Representative Barney Frank (Democrat-Massachusetts) in his address to the 2004 Democratic National Convention:

Specifically, we want all people in the United States to enjoy the same legal rights as everyone else, unless they have forfeited them by violating the rights of others. We believe this should include some things that are, apparently, very controversial.

They include the right to serve, fight, and even die on behalf of our country in the military; the right to earn a living by working hard and being judged wholly on the quality of our work; the right for teenagers to attend high school without being shoved, punched, or otherwise attacked; and, yes, the right to express not only love for another person but a willingness to be legally as well as morally responsible for his or her well-being.

² The entire article is available at http://daily.stanford.edu/tempo?page=content&id=16959&repository=0001_article.

³ On January 27, 2005, Focus of the Family's web site offered its own "pledge" . . . to slavery. The "Teens" section of the web site featured an article by Susie Shellenberger that had been resurrected from FOF's Breakaway magazine (which is aimed at male teens) and other FOF venues. On the family.org web site, the piece was titled "Bought, Branded, Bonded." The promo read: "Slavery is a bad thing, unless you're enslaved to Jesus. But what does it mean to be a slave to Jesus?"

What it means is that since Yeshua of Nazareth long ago departed this mortal plane, what Susie advocates is becoming a slave to the dogma of the perverted form of "Christianity" espoused by politically motivated "religious leaders" like Dobson and Sheldon.

Think about it. "Jesus" is definitely *not* a name that comes to mind with "slavery," even metaphorically. A "slave to Jesus" seems the quintessential oxymoron and a distortion of what his philosophy taught before "religious leaders" distorted it to create stereotypes and myths that could be used as weapons of mass destruction against anyone who challenged them. The Crusades. The Holy Inquisition. The genocide perpetrated by "Christians" against the peoples of the New World. The Salem witch hunts. The horrors of slavery. How many millions of human beings have suffered and died as a result of what politically-motivated so-called "Christian" leaders claimed was "God's Will"?

⁴ "About FRC" from their web site, www.frc.org: "Believing that God is the author of life, liberty, and the family, FRC promotes the Judeo-Christian worldview as the basis for a just, free, and stable society."

⁵ The abstract reads as follows:

Sexual orientation is fundamental to evolution and shifts from the species-typical pattern of heterosexuality may represent biological variations. The growth of scientific knowledge concerning the biology of sexual orientation during the past decade has been considerable. Sexual orientation is characterised by a bipolar distribution and is related to fraternal birth order in males. In females, its distribution is more variable; females being less prone towards exclusive homosexuality. In both sexes homosexuality is strongly

associated with childhood gender nonconformity. Genetic evidence suggests a heritable component and putative gene loci on the X chromosome. Homosexuality may have evolved to promote same sex affiliation through a conserved neurodevelopmental mechanism. Recent findings suggest this mechanism involves atypical neurohormonal differentiation of the brain. Key areas for future research include the neurobiological basis of preferred sexual targets and correlates of female homosexuality.

⁶ Their policy statements are available at www.hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Parenting&CONTENTID=14082&TEMPLATE=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm.

⁷ See "Out of Focus on the Family: A Response to Arguments Against Same-Sex Marriage," *Popular Culture Review*, 16:1 (February 2005), 45–75.

Struggling to Remember: War, Trauma, and the Adventures of Thursday Next

Those not already familiar with the witty, genre-bending works of novelist Jasper Fforde soon will be. A refugee from the film industry, in which his career varied over thirteen years, Fforde had been writing purely for his own amusement until 2001, when Hodder & Stoughton took a chance on his off-rejected novel, *The Eyre Affair*. The publication, according to Hodder Publicity (2002), started a “book phenomenon” garnering dozens of vociferous reviews. *The Eyre Affair* entered the *New York Times* Bestseller List during its first week of U. S. publication. Fforde’s second novel, *Lost in a Good Book*, followed a scant year later, setting the tone for his prolific and astonishingly inventive series. *The Well of Lost Plots* and *Something Rotten* followed in subsequent summers. Fforde’s unique and exciting contributions to popular fiction have garnered a large, quasi fanatic fan base.

The heroine of Fforde’s series is the literary detective Thursday Next. To encapsulate Thursday’s world, which is set in a parallel universe circa 1985 in Swindon, England: books are coveted as precious commodities and criminals steal manuscripts, which are more lucrative on the black market; Byronic verse is forged and pawned off on uneducated collectors; villains plot to kill “dull” literary characters, thereby permanently changing the original manuscript and all copies ever printed from it; and thousands of citizens bear the names of famous characters, creating the need for identification numbers, such as John Milton 436. In this universe, book characters take the stage to repeat their lines in turn, and leave to pursue their own interests when the narrative turns from them. Appealing to literati who live in their books, as Thursday in fact does in the second installment, Fforde weaves an intricate universe with witty dialogue, frequent puns intelligible only to the over-read and high action thrills that draw the reader into her life and death struggles with her archenemy Acheron Hades and his family, in later installments.

Above all, Fforde’s writing is more than just an entertaining blend of science fiction and detective/action fiction; it is full of contemporary concerns and realities that society is not always willing or eager to acknowledge and plays upon the mutability of time and memory by creating a world in which time and events can be *revised*. Like great authors throughout history, he draws on the great works that have come before, adding, like Eliot, his own interpretation and

integration of the canon. Incorporating dystopian themes, genetic cloning, religious fanaticism, class subversion and controlled reproduction, as well as issues of combat trauma, Fforde's series is worthy of academic attention and praise. Dexterously inviting readers to ponder the ironies of history and the craft of writing itself, the Thursday Next series has something to offer each and every reader regardless of age, sophistication, or genre preference. He has mounted a blitzkrieg in contemporary fiction with few rivals able to match his skill, knowledge, and humor.

Fforde's series oscillates between lighthearted comedy and sober allusions to modern warfare; among the latter, the vital importance of memory, war trauma, and the danger of altered, suppressed, or revised memories dominates. The Crimean War and the immortalized Charge of the Light Brigade¹ provide the pivotal point of conflict for Thursday; in Fforde's fictionalized Crimean War, during the fateful charge Thursday acts the hero by going back to save lives, yet is prevented from returning for her brother Anton, who perishes in the battle. The guilt Thursday harbors over these events haunt her adjustment to the home front, paralleling common symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) first documented and researched during the Great War² and appearing in British novels of the 1920s.³ Thursday Next systematically exhibits each stage of PTSD⁴ and struggles to gain control of the memories of her painful past during the first several books in this series. In the context of modern warfare, in which as a society we haven't finished resolving issues of returning soldiers and emotional trauma, Fforde's critique is both relevant and vital to a contemporary understanding of experience and public and private memory.

Fforde first introduces us to the Crimean War through a newscast; the war is entering its 131st year, and pressure groups are lobbying again for peace negotiations. For Thursday Next, the news cast is merely show, and she thinks back to her own experience in the Crimea. She reflects, "I had been out there doing my patriotic duty in '73 and had seen the truth of warfare beyond the pomp and glory for myself. The heat, the cold, the fear, the death" (*EA* 7). As is characteristic of soldiers particularly in the Great War of our world, Next is disillusioned with the nationalistic rhetoric that characterizes conflict having seen firsthand the horrid reality and senselessness of warfare. Every time she is confronted with images from the war, "the smell of cordite and the crack of exploding shells filled [her] head" (8). Next knows that older veterans of the war feel the same way by the general unwillingness to talk about or reflect on their experiences. Neither, in fact, do the soldiers still on active duty wish to discuss the war. Next tells us that "Crimean personnel on leave usually [leave] their uniforms in the wardrobe" (8). The combination of disillusionment in and self-distancing from a war is not new; Remarque's narrator, Paul Baumer, experiences a similar feeling of separation while on leave from the front in *All*

Quiet on the Western Front. Readjusting to society, particularly one enraptured with patriotism and optimism, has had its challenges for Next, but she has adjusted more or less normally and is climbing the SpecOps career ladder.⁵

The reader's next glance at Thursday's war experience is through a photograph, which represents an event and a personal memory documented with technology. Thursday reflects on this photo of a group of friends in the Light Brigade, which in turn trains her thoughts to the single reunion she attended and the natural reflex she experienced of looking for faces she knows weren't there.⁶ In fact, Thursday is flooded with visual images, both present and past, which draw her back to the traumatic time she spent in the Crimea. The experience is not easily forgettable and irrevocably alters the way in which Next chooses to live her life both before coming to terms with her experience as losses, and after. In our world, for example, Tennyson attempted to describe the horrific experience of the Charge when he wrote, "They that had fought so well / Came thro' the jaws of Death / Back from the mouth of Hell" (lines 45-47). Poems like this glorify, in part, war and valor, and it is no coincidence that Fforde chooses to make this fatal battle an enduring one in Thursday's world.⁷ The play on Tennyson's poem is of primary import to one of Fforde's main themes: the mutability of time and memory.⁸ The unpleasantness of war and loss haunt Thursday's return to the home front, and her struggles to control these memories are framed by a society that seeks to use her alternately as a hero and an anti-war exemplar.

Unfortunately for Next, the war is very much alive on the home front. She is repeatedly approached about speaking for the cause as a returning hero, against the cause as a protester, and singled out by anti-war demonstrators who recognize her. Next has no desire to participate in any aspect of these demonstrations. She tells a student who is trying to recruit her to speak at a rally, "Listen, guys, I'd love to help you, but I can't. I've spent twelve years trying to forget. Speak to some other vet. There are thousands of us" (*EA* 83). The student replies, "Not like you Miss Next. *You* survived the charge. You went back to get your fallen comrades out. One of the fifty-one. It's your *duty* to speak on behalf of those that didn't make it." Next angrily tells the student, "My duty is to myself. I survived the charge and lived with it every single day since. Every night I ask myself: Why me? Why did I live and the others, my brother even, die? There is no answer to that question and that's only where the pain *starts*" (83). This instance is only one of several that Next must constantly dodge after returning home, reflecting a common difficulty for returning soldiers of any war: curious civilians, war supporters who need visual reinforcement and validation, and anti-war demonstrators who expect veterans to protest alongside them; all of these things constitute painful reminders of a time and experience most soldiers would prefer to leave behind. We need only think about Jessica Lynch's experience in Iraq, the media glorification of her ordeal and the propagandist

nature military reports took to reflect on society's need for heroes in conflict.⁹ Soldiers' success and survival stories make sense of war for the voyeuristic public and justify military actions in the moral lens of society.

Another of Thursday's conscious rejections of memory is her brother's participation in the charge and the blame that had been laid on him in the aftermath, something she is unable to come to terms with. In fact, she ended her engagement to Landen, her brother's friend, when he testified in the hearings which followed that Anton had, in fact, misled the charge.¹⁰ Seeing Landen again at home rekindled her anger. Although Anton had been blamed for the results of the charge, Thursday saw the investigation as a chance for "the military leaders manag[ing] to squirm out of their responsibilities once again and [her] brother's name had entered the national memory and the history books as that of the man who lost the Light Armored Brigade" (187). The incompetence of the commanders in Thursday's world certainly mirrors the real confusion and investigation that followed the disastrous battle of Balaklava during the Crimean War in our world, highlighting the frivolousness of searching for blame in the wake of such loss. Fforde's parody mocks the way the infamous charge was handled by blaming the commanders who failed to show clear leadership rather than the poor man who happened to be following orders and leading the charge in the field.

The unexpected meeting with Landen ends unpleasantly, and Thursday goes to visit her brother's memorial for the first time since she left for London. Anton's body has not been recovered:

None of the bodies came home. It was a policy decision. But many had private memorials . . . [his was an] unsophisticated grey limestone tablet . . . [that read] Simple and neat. His name, rank, and the date of the charge. There was another stone not unlike this one sixteen hundred miles away marking his grave on the peninsula. Others hadn't fared so well. Fourteen of [her] colleagues on the charge that day were still "unaccounted for." It was military jargon for "not enough bits to identify." (195)

As is characteristic of foreign wars, bodies are often unrecoverable. Although Rupert Brooke immortalized a soldier's being laid to rest in a foreign country as claiming soil "That is forever England,"¹¹ in reality the heartache is compounded for families who are, like Thursday, unable to come to terms with the loss or grieve in a socially traditional manner.

Thursday is also traumatized by recurring nightmares of the battle, in which she sees her brother killed again and again.¹² In her dreams Thursday hears: "the *crump-crump-crump* of the guns and the metallic scream that an

armored personnel carrier makes when hit. [She] could even taste the dust, the cordite and the amatol in the air, the muffled cries of [her] comrades, the directionless sound of the gunfire" (267). She relives the charge over and over in her dreams in slow motion, seeing and hearing the battle piece by piece, almost as if the soldiers are actors performing dramatic dialogues; she remembers feeling "something large pluck at my vehicle and the roof opened up, revealing a shaft of sunlight in the dust that was curiously beautiful. The same unseen hand picked up the carrier and threw it in the air" (267). She sees the bloodied face of her brother as he helps the wounded and hears him tell her to come back for him. The phone, ringing both on the battlefield and in her room, pulls her out of her guilt ridden rest before she watches him die again, as she did in the Crimea. Thursday's memories and dreams are frequently cut short thus; her subconscious cannot bear to face her brother's death again, so it suppresses the whole charge as well as it can, and Thursday avoids reflecting on or talking about the war.

The memories of battle, fear, and loss are always with Next. In *The Eyre Affair*, during her final battle with Acheron Hades, she is again flooded with memories of the Crimea.¹³ As her nemesis is gloating over the genius of his plan, he salutes Thursday as his greatest adversary, complimenting on her consistent refusal to negotiate. Barely listening, Thursday again thinks of the last time she saw her brother:

He had called for me to come back for him, but I never did. My APC was hit by an artillery shell as I returned. I had to be forcibly restrained from taking another vehicle and returning to the battlefield. I never saw him again. I had never forgiven myself for leaving him. (342)

As Thursday listens to Hades ramble on and on, she calmly comes to terms with her own impending death. She thinks to herself:

At the height of any battle some say that there is a quietness where one can think calmly and easily, the trauma of the surroundings screened off by the heavy curtain of shock. I was about to die, and only one seemingly banal question came to mind: Why on earth did Bertha's scissors have such a detrimental effect on Hades? (342)

This "moment of calm" exemplifies the type of poetic disjunction Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg echo in their trench poems.¹⁴ Despite the noise, smells, and adrenaline that permeates a battlefield, the mind continues to process often trivial details. It is this very calm that allows Thursday to center in on the weapon that enables her to kill Acheron. Unfortunately her ability to function in

a crisis, while valuable in her exciting work as at LiteraTec, does not aid her in dealing with her guilt over her brother's death.

In *Lost in a Good Book*, memory takes on a new role for Thursday. The importance of preserving memories rather than suppressing them dominates her struggle to remember her husband when he is snatched away. She has forgiven Landen for betraying her brother and they are happily married for a few months when Goliath Corporation (the "Big Brother" of the series) arranges to have Lavoisier from the ChronoGuard eradicate Landen as punishment for Thursday's trapping Jack Schitt in "The Raven." To do this, the ChronoGuard bends the folds of time and prevents Landen's father from saving him from drowning at the age of two. The ChronoGuard does this frequently; in fact, Thursday's mother attends Eradicated Anonymous meetings and urges Thursday to do the same. Talking about their missing loved ones is the only way to keep them alive. Her father tells her they [the ChronoGuard] have a saying about reactualizing eradicatees: "No one is truly dead until they are forgotten" (*LGB* 241). Since Landen died at age two, no one in Thursday's present remembers him; all memory of him, their marriage, his service in the Crimea, and all evidence of his existence are erased. In fact, Landen is now only alive in Thursday's memory. She is able to talk with him when she needs advice, although this usually occurs while she is sleeping. Landen explains that he is living in her memories, and that while there are "some really *outstanding* parts . . . [there are] some pretty dreadful ones too" (147). When they meet, it is in a place that exists in some corner of Thursday's memory. Her mind fills in the details of events, like tea with Landen, using an amalgam of whom and what she expects to see. Landen calls this "mnemonic wallpaper." The need to preserve Landen until she can rescue him forces Thursday to value her memories, the good and the bad, including events in the Crimea where she met and fell in love with Landen. The necessity of retaining and even retreating into these memories to see her husband help Thursday begin to cherish and protect all of her memories, good and bad.

Keeping Landen alive in her memory is not the sole challenge for Thursday; Aornis Hades, her nemesis' sister, is out to seek revenge for Acheron's death. Aornis is a mnemeno-morph: instantly forgettable and able to erase a person's memory of her so quickly that she is rendered invisible. As Thursday is trying to save the world from death by strawberry-flavored Dream Topping, she calls for Aornis, knowing she is orchestrating the plague of coincidences that are about to end the world. Aornis answers Thursday from her memory: "It was as though a barrier had been lifted in my mind . . . I cast my mind back and read the newly recovered memories as my palms grew sweaty. The answers had been there all along" (377). Aornis allows Thursday to begin remembering their chats six minutes before the world is to end, and gives her an opportunity to once again play the hero and save lives. Aornis tells her:

You'll remember this meeting last. So here's my offer. Take your pistol and turn it upon yourself—and I'll spare the planet . . . I know you'll do it. *Despite* the baby. *Despite everything*. You're a good person, Next. A *fine* human being. It will be your downfall. I'm counting on it. (381)

Thursday of course is prepared to make the sacrifice, saved only by her renegade ChronoGuard father's timely entrance and usurpation of the grand gesture.

Realizing that Aornis is a formidable opponent and that she will need time to have her baby and recuperate without being pursued by her foe, Thursday's dad offers her a solution: slip into a sideways world, one in which Landen doesn't drown at age two and her brother doesn't die in the Crimea. The price, however, is too high. Her father tells her that if she wants to go sideways to see Landen, she'll have to have a new past and a new present. To be able to see him, she cannot have any recollection of him—nor him of her. Thursday instead chooses to find another alternative, one which allows her to keep her memories of Landen and their love alive. She gets lost in a good book. Yet even hiding out in an unpublished novel does not keep Thursday safe from Aornis, who still exists in her memory. In *The Well of Lost Plots*, the final battle for Thursday's life and her loved ones takes place in her own mind. With Granny Next's help, Thursday is able to confront her worst fears and overcome them, defeating Aornis and moving on with her life.

In the beginning of the third book, Thursday is still keeping Landen alive in her memory:

[At] night, I went to the Crimea again. Not, you might think, the most obvious port of call in my sleep. The peninsula had been a constant source of anguish in my waking hours: a time of stress, of pain, and violent death. But the Crimea was where I'd met Landen, and where we'd fallen in love. The memories were more dear to me now because they had never happened, and for this reason the Crimea's sometimes painful recollections came back to me. (*WLP* 35)

During this memory/dream, Thursday remembers the events before they unfold. Thursday relives the battle that haunts her and becomes confused as events play out differently than she expects them to. As she is driving a carrier through heavy fire, a soldier shouts at her to keep driving as he reloads his clip and returns fire:

“That wasn't how it happened—!” I muttered aloud, the soldier having gone way over his allotted time and word count

. . . A feeling of dread began to gnaw slowly inside me—the fuel gauge was still intact . . . The soldier had survived and the officer was dead. (40)

Thursday wakes up suddenly, sweating and breathing hard. “The strength of the memories had lessened with the years . . . It all felt so horribly real. But there was something just there outside my grasp, something I should know but didn’t . . .” (40). What Thursday doesn’t remember is Landen, the officer who died when she thought the soldier should have. Granny Next, sitting in Thursday’s dark room, repeats Landen’s name, and tells her that “he didn’t die in the Crimea. The soldier did” (40). Thursday is emphatic about remembering Landen dying, and Granny is insistent that she is remembering wrong. Granny fills in her memories of Landen and their wedding, reminding Thursday that Landen has been eradicated by Lavoisier and Goliath. Aornis, the memory-changer, is still at work in Thursday’s memory, trying to erase or revise her memories of the Crimea and her life with Landen.

Aornis’ main danger to Thursday and society at large is her ability to affect historical revision. Thursday’s struggle to preserve her memories of the Crimea is in fact a struggle to maintain an accurate account of past events. This revision process parallels Tennyson’s redrafting and revising of his poem, “The Charge of the Light Brigade.” With each revision Tennyson made, the events and focus shift slightly. The struggle to preserve the integrity of the original is at stake in both Thursday’s memories and Tennyson’s art. The battleground is thus set in Thursday’s mind; Aornis has planted a mind worm (the mental equivalent of a computer virus that erases data) in her memory, and Granny tells Thursday that once she is able to remember Landen’s last name, and details of their life, she will have defeated Aornis and be free of danger. This process of confrontation and acceptance is exactly the type of psychotherapy put into practice during the First World War to deal with shell-shocked soldiers.¹⁵ Remembering details serves as a type of difficult but liberating action; blocking the horror of war and loss only exacerbates the repressed pain.

Aornis stalks Thursday in her dreams, taking her back through selected painful memories: her battle with Acheron on the roof of Thornfield Hall and her father’s unsuccessful attempt to rescue the two-year-old Landen from the Thames. While these are painful, they pale in comparison to Aornis’s destination. Grinning, Aornis tells Thursday, “We can go back to the Crimea and unlock memories that have been too terrifying even for you. The suppressed memories, the ones you block out to let you carry on the day” (147). Thursday begs her: “No Aornis, not the charge—!” to no avail. The next thing Thursday knows: “. . . there we were, in the last place I wanted to be, driving my APC into the massed field artillery of the Russian army that August afternoon in 1973” (147). She sees other armored vehicles kicking up dust to her left and

right, remembers her surprise at a light tank exploding, and realizes the closeness of the falling shells from a near miss. As Thursday reverses direction and looks to her commander for orders, Granny Next sneaks in and helps Thursday escape by going into another memory, that of a Croquet Federation Final SuperHoop game. Granny tells Thursday that Aornis wants to try to break her down and the memories will get worse before they get better. The only way Thursday will be able to fight Aornis is by going back to the worst memory of all—the truth about what happened in the charge. Thursday thinks to herself that even though this is a dream, “the fear felt as real as it had on the day,” (148) and tears of frustration plague her in her conscious state. Granny tells her, “You have to go back to the Crimea, Thursday. Face up to the worst and grow stronger from it” (238).

When Thursday goes back into her memories, Aornis is waiting and patiently watches Thursday relive the charge. In this episode, Thursday remembers how much she loved her brother and how her anger at losing him had driven her for longer than she cared to remember. Watching the final moments of her brother’s life causes anguish and frustration; the flash of red mist in which Anton vanishes is followed by a memory of Thursday washing bone fragments out of her hair in the shower. Aornis pulls Thursday from the shower back to the battlefield, “heading towards the wrecked armor amidst the smoke and dust.” Clapping gleefully, Aornis says, “We should be able to manage at least eight of these before dawn . . .” (242). In these repetitive scenes, Anton is replaced by another officer, one she remembers meeting earlier and becoming involved with, Landen. When she wakes up, Thursday’s memory of the charge has morphed; in her memory, Landen, whose name she cannot recall, is killed and Anton survives the charge.

Eventually Thursday wins the battle by recalling a childhood memory, a monster that terrified her beyond anything she had ever known. Her worst nightmare becomes Aornis’s, who is quickly and loudly devoured by an undefined monster. Thursday has finally watched her memories play out as the events actually happened, and remembers seeing Anton disappear and her failure to go back to rescue him. By reclaiming the pain and loss that the charge represents, she is able to let go of the fear, the nightmares, and the dread associated with the Crimea and reclaim her life. Landen rematerializes as Thursday makes her escape from Aornis and her memories of him return in full force. While Landen has yet to be reactualized by Goliath, Thursday gains control of her memory and her past, which provides the first solid stepping stone into the future.

Fforde’s familiarity with shellshock, memory loss, and modern war allow him to create a complex battle for Thursday, one that she must fight with herself and conquer in order to let the pain of the past go and rebuild her life. He makes tremendous use of the complexities in recording, revising, and

immortalizing history by paralleling his heroine's emotional trauma with her struggle to readjust to life. This seems particularly relevant in today's world, as we read about soldiers returning to families and experiencing a detachment and lack of emotion that their wives are unable to understand.¹⁶ Parents of deceased soldiers are suing internet email providers for access to their children's accounts, digital files and blogs, struggling to gain access to what will be their final memories and accounts of their lost loved ones' lives.¹⁷ VA hospitals in America are losing funding en masse.¹⁸ We tend to think of war and war trauma as something in the past and only experienced by those who fight in foreign lands; in reality, the complexities of emotional trauma and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder are as relevant today as they were ninety years ago. Fforde's series revitalizes long forgotten issues in the novel as a genre and reminds us of their relevance to our current times.

Equally important, though, are the ways in which Fforde plays with memory, time, and the potential in the act of revision. Fforde embellishes on the idea of reader interaction with the text in a fun and wholly fanciful way; in his world, one can "go visit" the characters in a narrative, converse with them, and even give them advice on how to play their parts. While not just anyone is allowed into books, as altering a manuscript does have potentially damaging effects for all printed copies worldwide, Next herself becomes an instrument of change in a frightfully creative way. Of her early forages into the original *Jane Eyre* manuscript, Edward Rochester tells Thursday: "Your intervention improved the narrative" (*EA* 190). These initial and almost accidental alterations pale in comparison to the dramatic showdown, in which the Jane and Edward story is irrevocably amended. Thursday's unavoidable err reshapes the narrative in an exciting and debatably *better* way than Bronte herself intended, making Thursday heir apparent to Miss Havisham's prestigious career with Jurisdiction—but *that* is another tale.

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Notes

¹ I am referring to the immortalization of the charge by Tennyson in his poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1870).

² There are other elements or parallels to the plight of the returning Great War soldier which are not addressed here including amputations (Landen), disabilities and post-service neglect and poverty.

³ The Thursday Next series revisits the novels of the 1920s—for example, the *Parade's End* series by Ford Madox Ford, *The Return of the Soldier* by Rebecca West, and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, as well as many others—which explored the fragile emotional states in which soldiers returned after the Great War, and explores the important ways in which memory functions in everyday life.

⁴ Shellshock, as a mode of bodily expression, converts fear and mental trauma into palpable manifestations. Shell shock, an amalgam of physical and psychological elements, contributed to the production of symptoms such as mutism, stammering, twitching, paralysis, nightmares, and hallucinations (Furst 169).

⁵ Paul Baumer welcomes death at the end of his narrative because there is nothing to go back to, no way to adjust to a society which exalts bravery, heroism, and military victory over life itself.

⁶ Fforde also incorporates the emasculating amputations that plagued survivors of the Great War into his narrative through Landen, who loses a leg but returns alive. Fforde does not seem to place the same emphasis of loss of wholeness and masculinity on Landen's war wound that many contemporary writers focused on, but his wooden leg does serve as a constant, insuppressible reminder of Landen's participation in the war and the loss and pain that it engendered.

⁷ Regina Roybal argues that Tennyson and Russell (a news correspondent who covered the Crimean War), to a certain extent, use the occasion of the charge to place honor upon men who had seemed to deserve scorn, to glorify a class of men who previously had not seemed to deserve their station in life. Tennyson's poem is an attempt to restore the heroic image of the cavalry and of the aristocracy. Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade": A Historical Perspective. May 2001. Unpublished essay.

⁸ Natalie Houston explains this trend in revising literature best in her article "Reading the Victorian Souvenir." She states, "[In] the Crimean War, which can be understood as the first truly modern British war . . . In response to the swell of public opinion, British poets and artists produced a great number of patriotic works dealing with the Crimea. Most of these are today forgotten, except perhaps for Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade.' As public support for the war dwindled towards its conclusion and thereafter, Tennyson's, and other artists', enthusiasm for the war despite its horrors soon came to be seen as an embarrassment" (354). Tennyson revised the poem several times as new newspaper reports and firsthand accounts became available and as public sentiment shifted.

⁹ See "Jessica Lynch: Media Myth-Making in the Iraq War" on Journalism.org, for an interesting day by day reconstructive study of how the story of Lynch's capture and rescue evolved and mutated in the news media during the weeks following the break of the story. Available at <<http://www.journalism.org/resources/research/reports/war/postwar/lynch.asp>>. 2/4/2005.

¹⁰ Interestingly, Anton is one letter off from being an anagram to Nolan. Given Fforde's savvy word play, it seems fairly plausible that Anton's fate is based on that of Captain Nolan, both in being fingered with blame and dying in the fateful charge.

¹¹ Rupert Brooke, "The Soldier." 1915. Available at <http://www.themediadrone.com/content/poetry/brooke_soldier,%20the.htm>.

¹² In the First World War, W. H. R. Rivers, a neurosurgeon and anthropologist, studied shell-shocked soldiers at Craiglockhart Hospital in Edinburgh. His papers and journals from these years reflect on the nature of the nightmares as suppressed memories; only by confronting and talking about these memories were soldiers able to dispel them and begin to recuperate.

¹³ Hades is planning to make a fortune selling plasma rifles in the Crimea.

¹⁴ I am thinking specifically here of Isaac Rosenberg's "Break of Day in the Trenches" (1916) in which, during bombardment, he meditates on the cosmopolitan sympathies of a rat scurrying through the trenches.

Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
 Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
 Now you have touched this English hand
 You will do the same to a German
 Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
 To cross the sleeping green between.
 It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
 Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
 Less chanced than you for life,
 Bonds to the whims of murder.

Available at <<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/Irosenberg.htm>>.

There are countless other examples in trench poetry from WWI.

¹⁵ In an article entitled "The Repression of the War Experience," which appeared in *The Lancet* in February 1918, Rivers articulates his departure from traditional treatment. Citing several cases, Rivers explains that soldiers are traditionally advised by everyone, doctors and civilians, to "banish all unpleasant and disturbing thoughts from [their] mind[s]." The success of soldiers who managed to restrain their memories and anxieties during the day was counterbalanced by the nightmares that assailed them, usually of the very memories they sought to repress. Rivers instead encouraged shell-shocked soldiers to articulate their memories and traumatic experiences in order to face and exorcise them. He also used hypnosis as a way to get patients to reenact their experiences. Confronting the memories, Rivers believed, was the only way to heal.

¹⁶ For the full-text article, see "Families endure private war" by Mike Dorning, in *The Chicago Tribune*, 11/29/2004.

¹⁷ For more discussion on current disputes and cases, see "After Death, a Struggle for Their Digital Memories" by Ariana Eunjung Cha, in *The Washington Post*, 2/3/2005.

¹⁸ For the full story of the VA's struggle to keep their trauma center open, see "An Afterwar in Waco" by T. Trent Gegax in *Newsweek*, January 31, 2005. The story is available online at <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6856955/site/newsweek/>>. To help the Waco VA in their struggle to stay open, visit their online petition at <<http://www.petitiononline.com/hsovah03/petition.html>>.

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Learning From Las Vegas: Hollywood Narrates the Simulacrum

In their influential definitions of postmodernism, Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard both rely upon the notion of the simulacrum. It is in Jameson's words, borrowing on Platonian paradox: "the identical copy for which no original has ever existed" (*Postmodernism* 18). And Baudrillard, using Borges, explains, "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyper-real" (2). With the simulacrum, Jameson and Baudrillard extend Guy Debord's critique of "the society of the spectacle," the common argument being that in a society where exchange value supersedes use value the "original" or "reality" disappears and all that remains is the copy; or, as Jameson quoting Debord puts it, "the image has become the final form of commodity reification" (*Reader* 74). Accordingly, for these critics, postmodernism is characterized by a debilitating loss of reality and history which have become mediated (in the fullest sense of the term) by the processes of simulation and their simulacra. In this world of mesmerizing appearances and pseudo-events, not only does revolutionary change seem impossible, the very notion of critical distance itself is threatened.

If any proof is needed, recent events dramatically validate much of what these critics have to say about the ideological utility of the simulacrum to the existing order: from the election of a Hollywood action hero as governor of California to what Michael Moore has called a "fictitious war" by a "fictitious president." Having so ably diagnosed the problem, however, the question arises how or if one can resist the society of the spectacle. Given the role of the visual media in their accounts of late capitalism all three critics are disinclined to see popular cinema, Hollywood in particular, as anything less than an active agent of the simulacrum. And yet, in the 1990s, a series of Hollywood films, using Las Vegas as their setting and prevailing metaphor, critique the simulacrum. My discussion of *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), *Honeymoon in Vegas* (1992), *Casino* (1995), *Bugsy* (1992), and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998) argues that in their attempts to *narrate* the simulacrum of late capitalism, they manage to analyze this phenomenon rather than just passively reflect it.

Before discussing the films, however, we need to consider the new "virtual reality" to which they respond. According to the films, the cutting edge of this virtual reality is Las Vegas and video/TV; both the place and the processes create an entertainment form whose center is nowhere and whose circumference is everywhere. Ironically, the rise of Las Vegas and video encourages the return of two earlier technological antagonists: the Kinetoscope parlor and the movie house projector. Through video and VCRs the industry

returns to the concept of disseminating visual pleasure through individual points of mechanical consumption. Through Las Vegas there is a return to the concept of the pleasure palace—S. L. Rothapfel's Roxy or Sid Grauman's Chinese Theatre—where spectacle is offered up for consumption in lavish locations that could be called “theme-park casinos” as they accommodate thousands of consumers at a time: places like the Luxor, the Mirage, Treasure Island, and, what is purported to be the world's largest hotel, the MGM Grand, which boasts “a theme park that take[s] days to visit” (Clines 1).¹

The name of the biggest theme-park casino, the MGM Grand, should alert one to the ability of Las Vegas to assimilate Hollywood's commodities and technology. The new casinos, the *New York Times* reports, are “opening with a new kind of Hollywood star power, a tie-in emphasis on special-effects theme-park entertainment” (Clines 1). Furthermore, the design of these casinos directly utilizes the services of such Hollywood specialists as Douglas Trumbull, “the special-effects master who fantasized time travel for such movies as *Bladerunner* and *Back to the Future*” (Clines 1). A consumer of theme-park entertainment must be able to reference Hollywood (or film) at the same time that it goes beyond it in order to understand such spectacular displays. As one visitor to the Luxor pyramid exclaimed, “I mean, it's like being inside, not just at the movies” (Clines 1). What the spectator's enthusiasm lacks in critical distance is made up for by its succinct distinction between the *representation* of reality provided by film and the *simulation* of reality provided by casino theme parks. The difference between being “at” a movie versus being “inside” a movie is a crucial difference.²

Another factor that bears upon the virtual entertainment of Las Vegas and its relationship with Hollywood is the age of its audience. Las Vegas, like Hollywood, is competing for the youth dollar as it strives to rejuvenate itself, and signs of its cultural “hipness” abound (Karlen).³ In a *New York Times* article, one of the hip, under-40 crowd, a Hollywood television writer, explains the attraction Las Vegas holds for him and his friends:

“I'll bet a dollar, then get bored. But for me, and a lot of writers I know, the point is trying to temporarily re-create that kind of rat-pack feeling where you walk into a casino wearing a shiny suit while your mental soundtrack is playing Frank Sinatra singing ‘Summer Wind.’ It's nostalgia for things we were too young to be aware of at the time.” (Karlen 5)

The television writer's Las Vegas fantasy, like that of the visitor to the Luxor Pyramid, expresses his loss of reality in terms of simulation—he is not merely “at” a Frank Sinatra film or performance, he is “inside” it. Furthermore, his submersion within a Las Vegas that never was in turn creates a depthless sense

of history similar to Jameson's postmodern nostalgia—a replay of the present as past that evades its own present and turns the past into a series of meaningless glossy fragments—what the television writer refers to as a “nostalgia for things we were too young to be aware of at the time.” What better expression of the simulacrum do we need?

While this picture of Las Vegas and its reception confirm much of what Jameson and Baudrillard have to say about postmodernism, it can also serve as a backdrop to Hollywood's recent and more critical efforts to narrate the simulacrum. The television writer's nostalgic view of Las Vegas and rat-pack machismo is diametrically opposed by the picture of Las Vegas one finds in Mike Figgis's *Leaving Las Vegas*. The film's protagonist Ben (Nicholas Cage), a Hollywood screenwriter on a suicidal binge in Las Vegas, acts out a grim parody of the rat-pack fantasy of wine, women, and song.⁴ As Ben heads down the I-15 (the freeway connecting Los Angeles and Las Vegas) his trip is represented through a series of film frames played at high speed, suggesting the lack of any real distance or difference between Hollywood and Las Vegas. The major difference between the two cities, as Ben later points out, is that the liquor stores in Las Vegas are open 24 hours a day. The close connection between Hollywood and Las Vegas suggests that we are watching not only the death of an individual in Las Vegas, but the death of that larger community Ben represents, Hollywood.

Ben and Hollywood are also closely connected through their shared notion of woman as spectacle.⁵ The closest thing to an explanation Ben gives for his drinking is a comment he makes to a prostitute, who deftly and symbolically strips his wedding band from his finger while sucking it, “Did I start drinking because my wife left me or did my wife leave me because I started drinking?” The rhetorical question connects his excessive drinking with “woman problems”—a staple for the motivation of all sorts of bizarre behavior on the part of Hollywood's heroes ever since Humphrey Bogart, at the very least. The only sight we get of Ben's wife comes in a snapshot of her, seen when he cleans out his home and, in a sacrificial bonfire, purges himself (or so he thinks) of his past. The snapshot of the wife with her arms around, presumably, Ben's son stresses that the picture of domestic bliss and the maternal figure it is based on are just that, a picture.

Early on, the movie stresses Ben's preoccupation with pornography and his embarrassingly awkward come-ons with women. It would be a severe misreading of the film to see his relationship with Sera (Elisabeth Shue), the Las Vegas prostitute who befriends him, as some transcendence of his early failures with women whether they are as wife, mother, or prostitute. Certainly, Sera's periodic asides to some therapist, unknown and unseen by the audience, evoke the notion of true love, which is part of her characterization as a hooker with a heart of gold. But this cliché must be viewed ironically in light of Ben's

destructive immaturity, sexual impotency, infidelity, and deification of Sera into his "Angel." All of this, including Sera, is part and parcel of the masculine death drive that begins in the Hollywood of Los Angeles and ends in virtual reality of Las Vegas.

The critique of Ben's dead-end masculinity, as well as the associated critique of woman as spectacular simulacrum and Hollywood's relationship to it, is extended through the character of Yuri (Julian Sands), Sera's Russian pimp. At first Yuri's role as the bad pimp who extorts and beats his woman seems to contrast with Ben's role as the boyishly lovable John who just can't get it together to save the woman he loves. Beneath the clichéd roles that suggest a reassuring difference, however, there are disturbing similarities. Yuri, like Ben, has left Los Angeles and come to Las Vegas to die. Because of their destructive self-absorption, whether it is the man who sells her or the man who buys her, neither can protect her, let alone love her. Despite the overt hypocrisy and cruelty of Yuri, the viewer has to wonder if Ben is any better especially because of the narrative sequencing. In an apparent effort to end the relationship because Sera has started to put "demands" on him, Ben sleeps with another woman in Sera's apartment. This precedes, and seems to indirectly cause, her brutal rape by three of those younger visitors whose business Las Vegas hotels so eagerly seek.

It is also at this point that the movie's critique of the simulacrum becomes more explicit. The youths, before beating and raping Sera, are busy trying to film her with a hand-held video camera because, they say, it is the first time for one of them. Outside of the video frame when Sera talks back—basically telling them they should go screw themselves—she exposes the lie behind this spectacle of homosocial bonding. Ben and Yuri's attitude towards Sera, the fantasy object, reflects an older and, in some ways, safer form of reification that is ultimately represented by Hollywood and film. The youths, on the other hand, represent the emerging reality of Las Vegas and video. There is a qualitative difference between the two, but central to both is their inhumanity; and, the more benign form of Ben and Yuri's inhumanity cannot protect Sera from the inhumanity of the new video-wielding rat pack. Furthermore, if we think of Yuri as the purveyor and Ben as the consumer of Sera—the dream girl made real, or, that perfect copy of an original that never existed—then it is a small step from the fantasies Yuri pimps to those that Ben and other Hollywood writers sell.

Unlike the dramatic tragedy of *Leaving Las Vegas*, which buries Ben's Oedipal complex under heavy layers of uncertainty, the romantic comedy *Honeymoon in Vegas* presents it openly, almost cheerfully, at the film's beginning as the motive for the complicating action that follows. The hero, Jack Springer (Nicholas Cage), is tenderly visiting his mother in a hospital bed. She asks him never to marry since he'll never find a girl to love him as she does.

When he begins to protest, the mother dies. The deathbed scene is played with such a fine parody of melodrama that all the demons represented—parental tyranny, incest, death itself—lose their power to frighten. Throughout the film, Jack's Oedipal trauma will be referred to and even joked about. Jack tells his girlfriend, Betsy (Sarah Jessica Parker), of dreams he is having about his mother, and in a familiar fashion she teases him about their sexual nature. Significantly, at the end of the film, when Jack has finally surmounted his Oedipal fear of commitment and married Betsy, he is still pursued by dreams about his naked mother—although now, in the dream, she gives her consent to Jack's marriage. *Honeymoon in Vegas* suggests a postmodern appreciation of parody and play that makes *Leaving Las Vegas* look like a throwback to a dour modernist orthodoxy.

More debilitating than Jack's Oedipal anxieties, however, is his not unrelated voyeurism that reduces Betsy to the status of "whore." When Jack takes Betsy out on one of his private investigations in order to have her confirm his pessimistic view of relationships, she does not see the same thing he does. Unlike Jack, she does not see a weak and fallible human nature; instead, she sees and condemns the power of older men to control and carry on affairs with younger financially dependent women. From his voyeuristic corner of the Oedipal triangle, Jack cannot see this threat that Betsy is warning him about. Because of his voyeurism and its resulting pessimism, it is all too easy for Jack, with the help of one of those older men, Tommy Corcoran (James Caan), to inadvertently turn Betsy into a "whore," as she herself proclaims when Jack tells her how he gambled her away in a card game with Corcoran.

Corcoran, on the other hand, suffers from the visual tyranny of simulacra. He can only see Betsy as a copy of his deceased wife, who in turn is another copy. The black-and-white flashbacks of Corcoran's wife show a woman who not only bears an uncanny resemblance to Betsy but also to the platinum blonde starlets of Hollywood's glamorous 1930s and 40s. And it is her pursuit of the Hollywood beauty image that literally kills her—Corcoran relates how through incessant sunbathing his wife contracted a fatal melanoma.

The new mode of seeing and representation that undoes both Jack's pessimistic voyeurism and Corcoran's wishful fetishism is, surprisingly, television. While Corcoran pursues Betsy in Hawaii, Jack returns to New York, where he spends his time listlessly channel surfing. However, a news broadcast about an erupting volcano in Hawaii, with Corcoran and Betsy among the onlookers, catches Jack's attention and forces him to act. The televised image of an erupting volcano which reduces an event of natural wonder to the commodified spectacle of the "news" is a deft representation of the simulacrum. The volcano references an earlier world where the unquestioned priority of nature gave it the power of superstition, mystical fertility, and unknowable depth. No doubt, in the spectacular world of television, where images of

erupting volcanoes must compete with merchandise on the home shopping channel, nature is degraded or even lost. Through Jack's example, however, the film holds out the hope that television's new visual juxtapositions will cast unexpected light and provoke unexpected responses.

Jack's most unexpected response comes through an unlikely *deus ex machina*—an airplane filled with members of the Utah chapter of the Flying Elvises on their way to Las Vegas.

By the time they reach their destination, Jack, now dressed in the standard uniform of the Elvis impersonators—the King's white, high-collared jumpsuit—joins them as they skydive into an audience eagerly awaiting these new gods of carnivalesque simulation. Jack's "leap of faith" works on two levels at the same time as it unites those two levels: most obviously, it represents the necessary leap of faith that Jack needs to make in order to marry Betsy; but it also represents Jack's faith in the humanity of our models or simulacra, no matter how degraded the original (Elvis) or how ludicrous the copies (Elvis impersonators).

A complaint sometimes heard about *Casino* is that the trio of Martin Scorsese, Robert DeNiro, and Joe Pesci are covering ground they already went over in *Goodfellas*. But this misses the importance of Las Vegas as the setting for the mobsters' self-destructive violence. The world of Las Vegas and its casinos provides Scorsese with issues that are absent from the New York setting of *Goodfellas*. Most notably, there is the presence of the simulacrum in *Casino*, and, as in *Leaving Las Vegas*, it is linked to a pathological masculinity transfixed by the spectacle of femininity. This connection is made when the movie's central narrator, Sam "Ace" Rothstein (Robert DeNiro), who is running the casino for the mob bosses back in Kansas City, explains the casino's network of visual surveillance. The symphony of ocular paranoia is overseen by a rotating video camera Sam calls "the eye in the sky watching all of us." Through this video camera he catches his first sight of the spectacular Ginger (Sharon Stone), and the movie's love plot commences.

The love object as creation of an inhuman eye goes a step further than *Leaving Las Vegas* where Sera could step out of the video camera's picture frame even though she could not escape its violence. In *Casino*, one has to wonder if the visual network leaves room for escape. As in real life, the film's visual relationships are so pervasive and complex that they are easy to overlook. Radiating outward from the casino's panopticon you have the mob bosses sending out their soldiers to "keep an eye on" their money or the people handling it. In fact, this is the basis of Sam's friendship with the homicidal Nicky Santoro (Joe Pesci). Nicky is given the responsibility of watching Sam, the "golden Jew" as Nicky calls him, creating an odd couple mix of mobster "brain" and "muscle." Just as Sam's work for the mob involves a tight network of visual checks, Nicky's strong-arm and robbery operations involve a small

army of informants on the lookout for new targets. Even before Nicky starts having an affair with Sam's wife Ginger, the two old friends have started watching out for each other in an entirely different sense. This has a particular irony for Sam who was relying on Nicky to watch Ginger who quickly unravels under the demands of the perfect hostess, housewife, and mother image Sam requires of her. Furthermore, rumors of Nicky's adultery with Ginger cause the older mobsters to watch Nicky with increased intensity, who in turn tries to watch them through the henchman who is supposed to be watching him.

Finally, all of this activity and its visual tyranny are being watched by the press and the FBI. The mobsters' efforts to avoid the FBI's ubiquitous bugging devices and cameras create scenes of buffoonish and surreal comedy. At one point, the eye of The Law (recalling the casino's "eye in the sky") comes down to earth when the FBI's surveillance airplane makes a forced landing on a fairway where Nicky and his cohorts are playing golf. However, more threatening to the mob than the FBI is the exposure of the press. It is Sam's inability to evade an unassuming newspaperwoman's simple but persistent questioning that comes closest to jeopardizing his performance as a front man for the mob. While Scorsese shows the press is open to manipulation, it seems to offer some hope that this intense scrutiny that sees so much at the same time that it looks the other way can offer something like a breakthrough.

The visual tyranny seems to be the culmination of an earlier vision which is only implicit in the film: Bugsy Siegel's narcissistic dream of taking Hollywood to the deserts of Las Vegas and creating a "paradise"—as Sam calls it upon his arrival in the 70s. But what is left of Sam and the mob after the new entertainment industry takes over, like what is left of Hollywood after television and video, is only a sad shadow of their former selves. Sam is still making money for the mob, but now he does it in an antiseptic room surrounded by television screens flickering with images bounced off of a satellite—some "eye above the sky." Unlike Nicky, he has survived—brains win out over brawn. But this is clearly Pyrrhic, for the mob's tragi-comic struggles have only cleared the way for its takeover by the corporation—that junk-bond financed reconstruction of Las Vegas which replaces the mob's primitive and inefficient accumulation of capital with a cold and anonymous drive for profits that can knock down buildings as though they were made of straw.⁶ The film's ending suggests the corporation's legal rip off of the consumer with their totalitarian dreams of Disneyfied fun is more frightening than the mob's violence and sale of sin.

One wonders how much *Casino's* depiction of the demise of gangster Vegas (with its connection to an older Hollywood) is motivated by Barry Levinson's *Bugsy* which came out only three years earlier. Scorsese seems to finish what Levinson began—*Casino* tells us about the end of the dream while *Bugsy* tells us about the birth of the dream. Levinson deserves credit for drawing our attention to the Hollywood-Las Vegas complex and its narrative

possibilities, in particular, the notion that Siegel's gangsterism and Las Vegas vision are not so much at odds with Hollywood but, rather, a further extension of it (Benenson, James, Maslin). And the film's awareness of Siegel's Jewish ethnicity that links him to the studio heads of the 30s and 40s (Vineburg) is another important part of the Hollywood-Las Vegas complex it reveals. However, Levinson's attachment to the early beginnings of the Hollywood-Las Vegas story seems part of a romantic optimism, or perhaps even nostalgia, about its subject that films like *Casino* and *Leaving Las Vegas* reject.

Like *Casino*, *Bugsy* identifies itself and its love story as being based on "real life." In this case, it is the real life pursuit of the Hollywood starlet Virginia Hill (Annette Bening) by the famous gangster Ben "Bugsy" Siegel (Warren Beatty). The effect of simulation is apparent from the moment Ben first lays eyes on Virginia at a movie set. Ben approaches her with the cliché gesture of lighting her cigarette which she turns into some smart-talking repartee worthy of any Hollywood movie with a suave mobster and his moll who gives as good as she gets. It is, not too surprisingly, the woman Virginia who points out the fabricated nature of this scene by telling Ben that talk in Hollywood comes cheap, it's called dialogue.

While this scene exposes Hollywood's seductive fictions, the film ultimately relies upon Hollywood celebrity and its mystique. For one thing, it uses the real life love affair between Beatty and Bening to enhance (supposedly) the historical love affair between Siegel and Hill. Reviewers were quick to suggest the appropriateness of Beatty playing Siegel, a well-known ladies man, as well as the movie's use of the well-publicized relationship between Beatty and Bening as part of its effort to recreate the glamorous "feel" of 1930s and 40s Hollywood (James 22). But the charm of Beatty, Bening, and their relationship (with the unavoidable speculation: is she the one?) undercuts the film's ability to explore the darker side of Bugsy and his strange desire to take Hollywood to Las Vegas. Its glamorous and polished look stand in marked contrast with the garish and gloomy appearance of *Leaving Las Vegas* and *Casino*. *Bugsy*'s use of history and its glossy appearance recalls Jameson's notion of the nostalgia film or, as he also refers to it, "the cult of the glossy image" (Signatures 85), which designates film's submersion into a pastiche whose reverential copying of the past replaces historical awareness with a shallow and ephemeral sense of style.

In order to appreciate *Bugsy*'s commitment to style, it is worth comparing Hill's character with that of Ginger in *Casino*. The two have significant parallels, yet the different places where they are left take the two films in different directions. In both movies, the women tie the love plot into the business of the gangster plot because their lovers take the unusual step of entrusting them with money crucial to their business and their lives. In *Bugsy*, Hill's response to this extraordinary trust—after a slight fall that only returns her to Siegel, chastened, wiser, and more devoted—confirms their love as true, the

audience's belief in true love, and the romantic view of Siegel as some sort of man ahead of his time. In *Casino*, on the other hand, the gesture of extraordinary trust sets in motion a corrosive exposure of Sam and Ginger and their illusions as the two struggle for the keys to the safety deposit box. During the struggle Sam grows meaner, more manipulative and petty, while Ginger's desperation makes her alternately vicious and pathetic. However, as Sam himself points out, Ginger, despite all her threats, never turns him over to the FBI. So, in the end, she stands by her man, but with ironies that are absent or reassuringly resolved in the love plot of *Bugsy*.

Also, the last images we get of the two female leads are important signals in films that put such emphasis on the power of feminine appearance or spectacle. For three hours we watch the gradual disintegration of Ginger from a confident, eye-catching hustler into an emotionally and physically bruised drug abuser. Nonetheless, the final glimpse of her comes as a painful shock when she overdoses in a seedy motel. It is as though Scorsese sets up the spectacular female only to slowly unmask her, revealing the face of death underneath. In contrast, the last we see of Hill takes place in the monument named after her, the Flamingo. When she hears the news of Siegel's death, Hill walks out into a strong desert wind blowing back her glamorous dress and turning her into a tragically beautiful Greek statue. The scene cuts to black, against which a postscript tells us she commits suicide in Austria. Under the cover of romantic darkness her beauty is preserved and the historical record of her time after Siegel's death—what Janet Maslin refers to as Hill's "long, shady career"—disappears (12).⁷

All of the films discussed thus far are postmodern in the sense that they are within the prevailing discourse of postmodernism understood as what Jameson calls the "cultural dominant of the logic of late capitalism" (*Reader* 85). Furthermore, their setting in Las Vegas—for many the quintessential expression of postmodern culture—evokes questions about postmodernism thematically if not formally. But Terry Gilliam's adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's counter-culture classic *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* embraces postmodernism stylistically as well—making use of such postmodern devices as self-reflection, disorientation, parody, and a fragmentary, open-ended narrative structure.

By Hollywood standards, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, like *Leaving Las Vegas*, is a difficult film to watch, and Gilliam deserves credit for resisting the inevitable pressure to play it safe or, at least, safer. Raoul Duke (Johnny Depp) and Dr. Gonzo (Benicio Del Toro) careen through the city and its hotels in a constant state of drug-induced hallucinations that expose the nightmarish reality of the American dream in all of its kitschy Technicolor horror, a modern-day Roman circus alternately stimulating and subduing the masses in order to "safely" channel their libidinal urges.

In keeping with this view, Gilliam uses television and television sets as a leitmotif adapting and extending Thompson's critique of the culture industry. The "schiz-flows," as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari term them, that simulacra, like TV and Las Vegas, are meant to reify into "reality" can be exposed by Duke's drug-inspired schizophrenia that then works to upset the simulacrum's efforts at control and deterrence. As, for example, when under the influence of a drug called "adrenachrome," Duke watches a television sequence that begins with a science fiction movie with an image of a giant spider followed by a speech by President Nixon addressing his audience as "the great silent majority." Such incoherent contrasts are the lifeblood of the televisual flow that disappears before our eyes as "programming." This programmed hallucination is short circuited when Duke's drug-fueled hallucination blacks out the TV screen encircling Nixon's head that then emerges from the TV set as holograms repeating the word "sacrifice." Duke's hallucination deprograms Nixon's televised image that works to keep the majority of its viewers silent, in a state of preprogrammed non-response.

While the medium of drugs can upset the simulacrum, its hallucinations are prone to the same isolation, paranoia, and schizoid violence that characterize the simulacrum. Ultimately, Gilliam is unable to coherently resolve this ambivalence, illustrated by two soliloquies Duke gives, one at the middle and one at the end of the film. In the first soliloquy, we are in a fully nostalgic mode. Duke reminisces about the "great San Francisco acid wave" of the sixties which he describes as "a very special time and place" that is essentially impossible to explain. Accompanying his narrative, the soundtrack plays the Youngbloods' Flower Power anthem "Get Together" along with a montage of civil rights and anti-war protests and followed by an open-air concert where Hell's Angels dance alongside vibrant and semi-naked youngsters sporting peace signs. Gilliam's depiction of people coming together to form a community who shared, in Duke's words, "[a] sense of the inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil" is even further removed from historical comprehension than Thompson's. In a passage from the novel that is left out of Duke's soliloquy in the movie, Thompson writes:

History is hard to know, because of all the hired bullshit, but even without being sure of "history" it seems entirely reasonable to think that every now and then the energy of a whole generation comes to a head in a long fine flash, for reasons that nobody really understands at the time—and which never explain, in retrospect, what actually happened. (67)

Thompson's passage asserts that the kind of energy that characterized the sixties can occur "every now and then" whereas the movie denies even this possibility.

More importantly, Thompson's passage reminds the reader that Duke's reminiscence is part of an ongoing collective project in the present known as "history." In the film version, any sense of Duke's reminiscence as part of a collective project disappears. For Thompson, the fact that "history is hard to know" is part of what makes history, understood as a collective and open-ended project, necessary. For Gilliam, the fact that history is "hard to know," just makes it unknowable, except to individuals who happened to experience it. However, even they can only reference the past through simulacra, a feeling conveyed by the "classic rock" soundtrack and television footage that Gilliam uses for the scene. In fact, the introduction to Duke's flashback—with Duke sitting on the couch staring at a TV screen filled with static, followed by a reverse angle shot showing Duke himself in a blizzard of static—suggests the medium has thoroughly absorbed the individual and his or her memories.

The soliloquy at the end of the film, absent from the novel's ending, recalls the sixties to pronounce them, once again, dead. "We're all wired into a survival trip now. No more of the speed that fueled the sixties," Duke proclaims from his typewriter in his hotel room as a stack of TV sets in the background flicker with images. However, more than dead, the film's ending goes on to say the sixties were fraudulent. The "great San Francisco acid wave" and the alternative community it formed turns out to be, in the movie's conclusion, nothing but "pathetically eager acid freaks who thought they could buy peace and understanding at three bucks a hit." This is a baffling contradiction of the film's earlier, albeit nostalgic, attempt to valorize the sixties. It seems as though Gilliam is caught between two contradictory ways of dealing with the sixties' drug culture and its utopian impulse—nostalgia and pessimistic denial—both of which resist historical comprehension and are at home within the logic of the simulacrum.

Whatever the virtues or flaws of these films individually, as a group they help us to analyze the simulacrum. The fact that these visual texts come from the commercial heart of the culture industry shouldn't immediately disqualify their critical insights. What they achieve is easier to appreciate if we remember Debord's observation: "To analyze the simulacrum means talking its language to some degree—to the degree, in fact, that we are obliged to engage the methodology of the society to which the spectacle gives expression" (15). Hopefully, this discussion has shown that, while these films talk the language of the simulacrum "to some degree," the distance between Hollywood and Las Vegas can be something like critical distance.

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Notes

¹ In addition to representing two new modes of entertainment, the connection between

Las Vegas and video is strengthened by the new casinos' increasing reliance on video slot machines and video arcades as sources of revenue. Unlike traditional entertainment options the casino offers its patrons, video games are expected to make a profit (Francis X. Clines. "Gambling, Pariah No More, Is Booming Across America." *The New York Times* 5 Dec. 1993, sec. 1:1).

² I am following Marshall McLuhan's notion of the media which links film to the "hot" medium of print rather than the "cool" medium of television (see *Understanding Media*. [Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995]). The relatively older media of print and film represent reality through a process of sequencing and linearity. The medium of television, to which I would add video and casino theme parks, represents reality through juxtaposition and simultaneity. McLuhan argues that the effect upon the person receiving the different media is hypnosis in the case of hot media like film and hallucination in the case of cool media like television (32).

³ Confirming the growing number of young visitors, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority reports that "31 percent of the city's 22 million visitors were under 40, and 14 percent were under 30" (Neal Karlen. "A Stroke of Genius." *The New York Times* 25 Apr. 1993, sec. 9:5).

⁴ Referencing Hollywood nostalgia for Las Vegas gives the film's parody a depth and relevance that might otherwise be missed if its parody were restricted to an ironic and ultimately self-indulgent reversal of possible antecedents like William Wilder's *The Lost Weekend*. See Michiko Kakutani's criticism of the film as part of a "New Nihilism" in *The New York Times* (24 Mar. 1996, sec. 6:30).

⁵ Here and elsewhere, my reading has been influenced by Laura Mulvey's notion of woman as spectacle. See "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989).

⁶ See Patricia Leigh Brown's report on Las Vegas's architectural changes in *The New York Times* (7 Oct. 1993: C4). In particular, her account of the destruction of the famous Dunes casino in order to make way for a new theme-park casino, Treasure Island, provides a good illustration of the simulacrum's omnivorous powers. The destruction of the Dunes was turned into a crowd-pleasing spectacle as the old casino was "felled by phony canon fire from an ersatz British frigate" (4). A. Wynn, chairman of Mirage resorts and owner of Treasure Island masterminded the demolition extravaganza and also had plans to work it into the plot of a made-for-television movie (4).

⁷ Maslin also indicates how the movie romanticizes Siegel and Hill by omitting, among other things, such details as Siegel's involvement with drug smuggling and Hill's life after his death (*New York Times* 13 Dec. 1991: C12). Furthermore, the movie's dramatization of the opening of the Flamingo as Siegel's last chance to redeem himself with the mob also distorts the historical record. See James F. Smith, "Ben Siegel: Father of Las Vegas and the Modern Casino-Hotel." *Journal of Popular Culture* 25 (1992): 1-23.

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Las Vegas Odyssey: The Poetics of Domination

For those of us living in Las Vegas, the everyday performance of domination that the city provides daily reminds us of our own vulnerability to the fates. In Las Vegas, power displays itself in, to borrow a phrase from the vernacular, an “in your face” manner. Las Vegas represents a “discursive encoding” (Bredbeck 77) which, if productively read, reveals a domination of every type: sex, wealth, chance, weather, and time (variously of and by the tourist) are represented by the Las Vegas entertainment industry and experienced by the Las Vegas tourist and resident alike. The art form symbolizing these forces is everything but subtle. The bigger, more ostentatious, transparent, outrageous, and repetitious the representation, the more satisfying the experience. It is a seduction by domination that “does not mask the ‘autonomy’ of desire, [or the] pleasure or the body” (Baudrillard 7) but rather enhances that desire. This paper suggests that these displays of domination fabricated and orchestrated for the benefit of tourist consumption represent primal natural forces, forces beyond the control of the individual, and as a result, Las Vegas exemplifies a poetics of domination.

Freud and Walter Benjamin argue that cities, like dreams, provide the symbols and images for projection, displacement, and condensation. Architects, manufacturing an experience that accesses memory and yearning, contrive a landscape for the symbolic activity. The city becomes a site for acting out the realization of private desire within the universal narrative of striving towards fulfillment. The city symbolizes mythic expression, a site for human interaction with the gods who represent the forces of fate. A Freudian perspective sheds light on the primal dynamics that underpin the Las Vegas experience. Freud suggests the need for imagining gods is fundamental:

[A] man makes the forces of nature not simply into persons with whom he can associate as he would with his equals—that would not do justice to the overpowering impression which those forces make on him. . . . He turns them into gods. . . . The gods retain their threefold task: They must exorcise the terrors of nature; they must reconcile men to the cruelty of Fate particularly as it is shown in death; and they must compensate them for the sufferings and privations which a civilized life has imposed on them (Pile 695).

The Las Vegas experience suggests all three tasks. Here the visitor repetitively faces the terrors of nature and of death, survives instead of succumbs, and is hedonistically compensated for being shackled by civilization.

Paradoxically, what Las Vegas offers is the ability to play with fate in a civilized manner: Individual desire is teased, then tempted, and finally tempered by environmental landscapes producing an immersion into a timeless and mythological world. In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Robert Venturi argues two points: first, architecture enlists symbols from past mythologies, guaranteeing that the visitor imagines and ultimately acts out desire; second, and of primal importance, is that the experience happens as a communal one with the ability of participants to communicate with each other at a variety of levels (Colquhoun, qtd. in Venturi 131). In other words, architecture encourages a mythic experience. Not only does Venturi argue architecture's achievement in this effort, he also maintains that without the opportunity to experience mythic imagination, communication as a universal community project cannot survive.

Giambattista Vico makes a similar argument advocating the experience of irrationality. According to Vico, irrationality is expressed through symbols and myth as a form of aesthetic experience that is not only desirable, but necessary for a society, and in this case, a global society, to continue (Deneen 187). So strongly did Vico believe in myth as necessary for the social fabric, he suggested that the Enlightenment project—which denigrates the importance of myth in favor of reason, science, and education—is in fact a threat to the social bond (30).

Taking the opposite view of myth—as do Vico, Freud, and Benjamin, among others—Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno side with the Enlightenment project of the rational and argue to “deny myth a place of esteem in modernity” (Deneen 170). Fittingly, the mythic masterpiece that Vico, on the one hand, and Horkheimer and Adorno, on the other, hold up as the metaphor for all of Western civilization is Homer's *Odyssey*: Vico with awe, Horkheimer and Adorno with disdain. Vico calls the *Odyssey* sublime; Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the *Odyssey* represents the undifferentiated individual who is at once dominated by the fates in a cesspool of seduction, but who, when able to assert his individual autonomy, is exploitive of both nature and of human beings.

Just as the *Odyssey* stands for western civilization, the Las Vegas Strip experience stands for the 21st century global circulation of money, desire, and power. The comparison of the two, the epic and the city, serves to broaden the vision with which Las Vegas is judged. Instead of looking at Las Vegas through the lens of the negative aesthetics of Horkheimer and Adorno which faults popular culture for subsuming individual autonomy by seduction, this paper suggests that the aesthetics of Vico and Venturi, of Freud and Benjamin, produce a much richer understanding of the complicated dynamics that have created and sustained the Las Vegas experience.

To provide a visitor with the sense of well-being, safety, and permission to act out an internal imaginative world, Las Vegas underpins its entertainment product of the mythical experience with the ancient Greek spirit of *xenia*. *Xenia* represents the reciprocal guest/host relationship between two *xenoi*, a word which means at once guest, host, stranger, friend, and foreigner. The relationship suggested by *xenia* is not based on friendship, but rather on obligation, the non-filial interaction of the host and guest. It works only if each side does not violate the terms of *xenoi*. In the Greek world, to do so is to offend Zeus himself. In Las Vegas, the judge of compliance to *xenoi* includes middle management casino monitors. Perched above the casino floor behind one-way mirrors, they serve as panopticons as they monitor gamblers. Security guards provide surveillance at ground level to maintain *xenoi*.

Perhaps every Las Vegas tourist, upon arrival in the city, wonders, as did the mythic Ulysses upon arrival at each new shore: "Ah me, what are the people whose land I have come to this time, and are they violent and savage, and without justice, or hospitable to strangers, with a godly mind?" (105:120, 141:175, 203:200). Not only does the city promise safety, efficiency, and protection, indicating a well-run society where the social contract is clear, it also promises a no-questions-asked escape to an oasis where desire is not only acknowledged, but also encouraged and often fulfilled. Las Vegas suggests that the tourist can beat the odds and hold the gods in check.

Ontological transportation between realms shores up the escape trope of the mythological journey. Traveling through the desert may not consume ten years of Odyssean wandering, but the journey to an oasis does assume a separation from familiar landscapes. Although, for Ulysses, the journey itself is the site of the poetics of domination where survival is the hope, the original setting sail from the shores of Calypso complies with the morality of *xenia*. She speaks, "[M]ake yourself a large raft with an upper deck that it may carry you safely over the sea. I will put bread, wine, and water on board to save you from starving" (Homer, Book V, para 12). Although the approach by land and air to Las Vegas is safe, the liminality of transport between the two modes of reality still figures large in creating the Las Vegas experience. Liminal space is that time and place when participants in ritual (communally shared activity) enter into mythical time where history and accountability are suspended and where return to the status quo is assumed and guaranteed. Las Vegas entertainment banks on the anticipation and the promise of secrecy and the guarantee of a safe re-entry that occurs in the transition. As long as the tourist behaves, Las Vegas will deliver.

Just like Ulysses after the battlefields, the tourist comes to Vegas because of the fatigue of the often unpleasant and unrewarded civilized life where reason and reflection, not imagination and passion, provide the engine of intercourse. Like the epic hero leaving the battleground of Troy, the Las Vegas

tourist leaves the battlefields of business and home. And, like Ulysses, the tourist leaves an entourage that will protect his holdings while he's gone. Similarly, meeting the standards of reason and restraint drives the behavior of both. Passions are ideally subsumed by the internalized censorship of civilization. Constantly striving, hero and tourist alike operate as good soldiers, collaborators, and leaders of battles, not wars. Like today's tourist working in the competitive marketplace, Ulysses is cunning. He can outfox the gods through trickery, argument, or personal charm. Ulysses, like his 21st century counterpart, operates on a register of self-interest. Loyalty to family, community, and nation are assumed. Rather the Vegas experience sharpens the mettle that supports the status quo. Both epic and 21st century travelers utilize skills that serve both worlds: problem solver, lover, man of vision, and someone who succeeds socially, sexually, and soldierly and whose public acclaim is unquestioned.

Narrative and the trope of the journey make up the epistemological and eschatological energy that drives the Greek epic and the Vegas experience. The narrative of both legend and earthly hero begins in the telling of a story. After the exhausted and naked Ulysses is washed onto the shores of the welcoming Phaeaceans, he willingly indulges their curiosity about his epic travels. With his carefully edited and self-serving story, consistent with maintaining his own *kleos* (reputation), he garners their sympathy and good will. By organizing the adventures into a narrative, this traveler satisfies the personal quest for knowledge and meaning. Ulysses reassures himself and others that he has learned how to control fate, guaranteeing his re-entry into the status quo of home, community, and nation.

As Ulysses tells it, his first stop after departing Troy is the land of the Kikonians. This is where he demonstrates the love of wholesale acquisition. With the intention of rewarding his men without consequence or payment, he and his beleaguered mates sack the city with unbridled rape and pillaging. Ulysses proves an opportunist and a wise, if ruthless, businessman. Here is a case of ignoring the rules when the opportunity strikes. This is Ulysses bargain shopping—inexpensive buffets, numerous “freebies,” and sexual adventure. When the investment outweighs the return and the avenging Kikonian troops arrive, Ulysses and most of his men escape, regretting only having been caught, not their misdeeds.

After weathering the dark clouds and winds of a hurricane, Ulysses and his men arrive at the land of the Lotus Eaters who consume the narcotic flower, another temptation which seduces his men. Those who consume the lotus succumb to the seduction of the narcotic and forget all about going home. In Las Vegas, the temptations of every kind of drug are everywhere, including alcohol and street and designer drugs.

A troubled sail then takes the men to their adventures with a savage monster, Polyphemus, leader of the Cyclops. The group of Cyclops, in stark contrast to the Greeks or the Phaeceans, is not civilized:

Now the Cyclopes neither plant nor plough, but trust in providence, and live on such wheat, barley, and grapes as grow wild . . . They have no laws nor assemblies of the people . . . (Homer, *Australia*. Book IX, para 6).

The one-eyed Cyclops match the most simplistic gambling machine, the one-armed Las Vegas bandits: slot machines for the basest form of Las Vegas gambling. Like Polyphemus, the slots are merciless and devour the lives of those who cannot resist their seductive nature. Slots, synecdoche for all gambling, are located not only in every casino, but also in Vegas supermarkets and drug stores. They are readily available and make gambling an easy diversion. Off-Strip casinos have brought gambling into residential neighborhoods, making the temptation omnipresent. Gambling suggests the arbitrary forces of nature, their promise of abundance, and their toying with human desire. Gambling is the popular metaphor that embraces entrepreneurial energy and complexity. Gambling on an investment, a company, or a sports event are all signs of virility, self-confidence, and belief in the system that governs all layers of human intercourse. Talk to a gambler and you'll appreciate how the win or loss of a wager reflects the self-esteem of the gambler. Talk to a gambler and you'll hear, "I must have done something right." Beating the odds means fate is rewarding not only the gambling skill but the gambler as well.

Ulysses outwits the Cyclops with a gamble. Ulysses is rewarded for not trusting the gods to save him. He uses his wits to gamble on an emancipatory enterprise. Not only are the men able to escape the monster's voracious appetite, but Ulysses also gets Polyphemus drunk. Polyphemus' drunkenness is another sign that the monster stands for the gross lack of self-control ontologically required of all civilized Las Vegas visitors: another of those obsessions that nature serves up to test reason.

Like the many comedians who play Vegas, Ulysses tricks Polyphemus with a play on words. When Polyphemus asks Ulysses' name, Ulysses says, "Nobody." When Polyphemus is assaulted by Ulysses and screams for help, when the other Cyclops ask him who is harming him, Polyphemus responds, "Nobody." He is never rescued (Homer 147). Although his wails for help can be heard by his neighboring fellows, Polyphemus is ignored.

Ulysses is punished for having outwitted the gross Polyphemus when his ship is blown to the island of the cannibals, the Laestrygonians. Consuming the spiritual body of the Cyclops, as Ulysses had done, differs little in the mythic

world from the material devouring of the Laestrygonians. Ulysses loses a few more men.

Once more succumbing to temptation, the men unpack the fierce winds from the sacks they had been warned not to untie and suffer all the hardships of rough seas. They then barely escape with their lives from the land of the cannibals. Finally the ships arrive at Aeaean, the land of the goddess Circe, and sojourn for twelve months of abundance. The Circe is an enchantress, sister to a magician, who uses her bag of tricks to keep Ulysses on her isle by subduing the men and magically turning them into swine, a fitting state for their uncivilized natures. The description of her palace is reminiscent of the home of local Las Vegas magicians, Siegfried and Roy. From his first sight of the home of Circe, Ulysses describes its unnaturalness:

It was an open place, and put together from stones, well polished and all about it there were lions, and wolves of the mountains, whom the goddess had given evil drugs and enchanted, and these made no attack on the men, but came up thronging about them, waving their long tails and fawning, in the way that dogs fawn about their master (Homer 157)

Like the myth, the appearance of harmless wild animals in many of the Las Vegas shows reminds audiences that a magical realm has been entered. If reality implies common sense, then the tourist has left the real world. Cars, tigers, elephants, and women disappear, while men are cut in half or moved across the stage. Seen by 400,000 people per year in Las Vegas, the avatars of magic, Siegfried and Roy, breached the mythical realm, only to arrive unexpectedly and tragically into reality, when one of the show's tigers lunged at Roy Horn, grabbed him by the neck, and then dragged his limp body off the stage. Before losing consciousness, Roy's last words were orders not to harm the tiger.

Circe, as does the Vegas entertainment industry, recognizes the limited time she will have with Ulysses and the help she must give him to leave her. She serves as the perfect *xenoi* and helps Ulysses plan for his departure from her arms to Hades. She instructs him that he must go there to meet with the blind Theban, the prophet Teiresias, "whose reason is still unshaken" even in Hades (Homer, para 40). Hades reinforces the message of self-recognition and self-acceptance familiar to the reasoned, Enlightenment ideal. The motif of death and rebirth suggests that the visit to Hades is pivotal in the reconstruction of the personality. Las Vegas is resplendent with images of death and rebirth as the many death-defying acts and magic shows suggest. Revisiting the Luxor Casino with its allusions to Egyptian motifs of life-after-death enhance the associations. But the message reinforced to both Greek and 21st century heroes is the message that Teiresias delivers: use restraint in the face of temptation. Ulysses is to warn

his men not to succumb to the temptations of slaughtering the Helios' cattle and sheep on the Thrinacian Island. They succumb. As a result, Ulysses is alone.

Calypso rescues him and keeps him for seven years. As Ulysses tells it, he pines away everyday, weeping at the shore. Apparently he is finally sufficiently convincing for the nymph to help him on his way. During his sojourn, Calypso serves as Ulysses' lover and surrogate mother, giving birth to a rejuvenated man. The portrait of the nymph suggests a compassionate and womanly human being who has enjoyed an earthly experience with all its sensual and intellectual challenges. When Ulysses begs to return home, Calypso speaks:

You are so naughty, and you will have your own way in all things.
See how you have spoken to me and reason with me. . . .
I am thinking and planning for you just as I would do it
For my own self, if such needs as yours were to come upon me;
For the mind in me is reasonable, and I have no spirit
Of iron inside my heart. Rather, it is compassionate (93).

Like Calypso, Las Vegas presents itself as a reasonable way to play with the fates. Ulysses never tells all, neither to the Phaeaceans, to Penelope, or to the real listener, similar to the new Las Vegas slogan: "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas."

No production performs myth as magnificently as the many Cirque du Soleil productions. Cirque du Soleil is a Canadian performance group whose signature pieces are elaborate productions showcasing the human body duplicating the movements and the energies of nature. Reminiscent of the Italian *commedia dell'Arte* tradition, Cirque features character types or allegorical representations of the forces of nature. A Pulcinella character plays the philosophical, eternally melancholic dreamer along with other types to suggest, but not individualize, the human role in this cosmic, mythical imagination (*Commedia para 1*). Cirque's work combines movement of all kinds: ballet, trapeze, gymnastics, juggling, and the breadth of circus performance tradition. The anonymity of the performers enhances the mythical feel of the performance.

In one of the productions, Cirque du Soleil's *O*, performers walk on, dive into, fly over, and splash in water. Movements suggest birth, joy, struggle, individual emotions, celebration, life passages, romance, and conflict—the wind, bending, fear, crawling, soaring. Performers are made anonymous through make-up and body wear, which enhance the emotional intensity of the movements, but also depersonalize the human, thus transforming the actors into mythological symbols. Viewers are not quite sure whether they are watching animals, microbes, or pieces of pasta undulating, twining, flapping. The human no longer exists but has become a feather in the breeze, a scrap of paper falling

from the sky. The mythic reminder is complete here of human frailty and vulnerability, victims rather than dominators of the fates. From the contortionist's back that doesn't break to the muscleman who horizontally balances himself on one hand comes the message that all human striving, the fate of the individual human condition, is to defy the gods.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, magic and art provide a direct conduit to forces that are forcefully relegated to opacity within the bourgeois world (14). The forces are therefore veiled in a seductive state whose power is masked and never demythologized. That is just the scenario of entertainment in Las Vegas, where its creators construct ever more seductive masks. Both magic and art are simultaneously ritual proof of the existence of primal forces, and they provide the reassurance that human effort can still control those forces. Magic and seduction in Las Vegas enact the poetics of domination in countless individual stories.

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