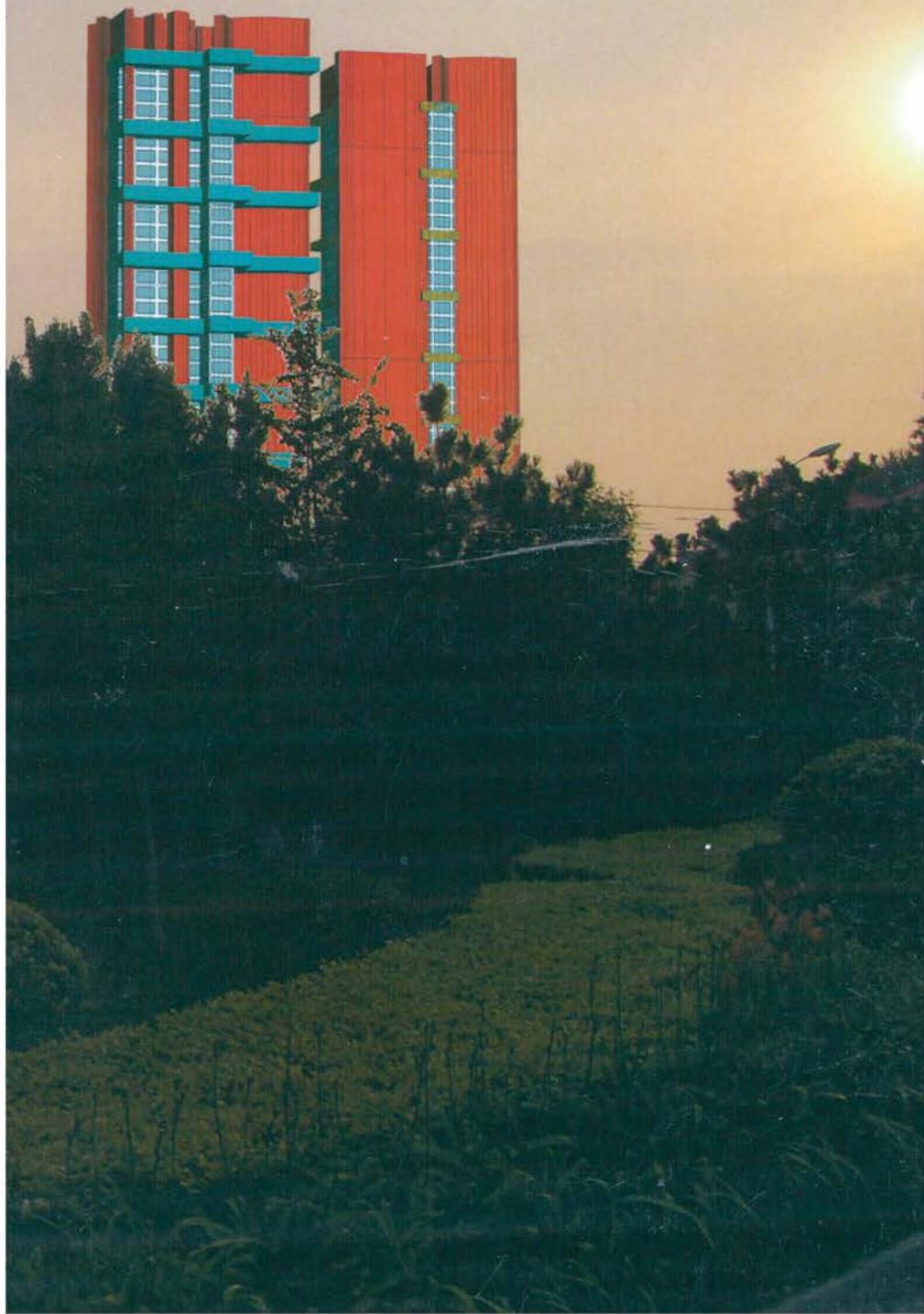


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POPULAR CULTURE REVIEW



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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From the Editor's Desk

As the economic crunch strangles university campuses throughout throughout the country, it's encouraging to see that at least interest in Popular Culture studies has not diminished. This year's FWPCA/ACA conference has a record number of participants, including many graduate students from around the country and abroad. In addition, this issue of *Popular Culture Review* includes two graduate student essays, David Boyles' "Othello: Race and Cultural Memory on *Cheers*," and Ken Eckert's "The Evolution of Mean: Satire in the American Elections of 1980 and 2008 Compared." We welcome them as the future of the profession.

Other authors display the diversity of popular culture. Nogin Chung discusses Zhang Huan's remarkable performance art in "A Tale of Metamorphosis: Zhang Huan's *My New York*," while Milford Jeremiah examines memorial tee shirts in "T-Shirts: Urban Language of Remembrance." Jules White discusses "The Monkees: A Happily but Safely Diverse Portrait for a New America."

Tim Richardson's "The Looks of Men: Doubling and Nostalgia in *Mad Men*" dovetails nicely with Thomas Connelly's "How Now Voyager? 'Proper' Bostonians on Film." In contrast, MaryLynn Saul questions the depiction of women in Arthurian films as she ponders whether they are "Powerful Witches or Weak Damsels."

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The Monkees: A Happily but Safely Diverse Portrait for a New America

The television series *The Monkees* ran in originals and reruns during a time of profound changes in American culture and society, from 1966 to 1973, when the series was picked up for syndication. On the surface, the four guys were no more or less than the “American Beatles,” targeted, perhaps, to a younger audience, but a closer look reveals that the series both heralds the promise and sketches limitations of the newest ideas about American diversity. One message was that four guys who looked so different could get along and prosper together. Even better, these were four guys whose individual musical tastes, explored in later seasons, represented different cultural influences—yet succeeded in playing Monkee music together. The greater and sadder message, however, was that there were limits to diversity. Middle-class white Americans watching *The Monkees* were reassured that, while African, Asian, and Latino music could influence mainstream American music in a positive way, African, Asian, and Latino citizens need not be honored as part of the broader American landscape. Ultimately, the show represented a diversity that was non-threatening to the millions of Americans who watched it every Monday night.

The decade leading up to 1966 saw vast changes in the American cultural landscape. Among them, the most important was the beginning of the modern civil rights movement. In the deep South, African-Americans fought for an end to segregation. Bull Connor’s dogs attacked civil rights marchers, and state troopers attacked those who were marching from Selma to Montgomery. But in other parts of the country, there was just as much resistance to change. In the west, for example, Asians and African-Americans worked to secure Seattle’s open housing law, enacted in 1963, yet it was rescinded a year later by voters’ referendum; however, tides were turning. All over the country, politicians and private citizens who wanted to keep the status quo were pushing against a rising tide of protest and a collective insistence that all American citizens be allowed to pursue the American dream. By 1966, the Voting Rights Act had passed; the National Farm Workers Union (United Farm Workers) had organized in California; the National Organization for Women had been created in Washington DC; in some areas of the country, African-Americans, Asians, and whites were working together; some schools, public and private, had quietly integrated without incident; and interaction among people of different races was becoming more common.

However, the television world of 1966 in which *The Monkees* debuted was nearly monochromatic, literally and figuratively. There was one major African-American star who wasn’t a singer or dancer: Bill Cosby, whose turn on *I Spy* (1965) represented the first time a black actor had been chosen for a dramatic lead. Diahann Carroll’s groundbreaking role in *Julia* would follow in 1968, the

last year of *The Monkees'* original run. Desi Arnaz, an actor, musician, and businessman, and in many ways an exceptional role model, was one of only two identifiably Latino men on television at that time. The only Asians to be seen outside of representations of Japanese war criminals, or the "Five Chinese Brothers" in the K-level cartoon of that name, were Bruce Lee as the comic book sidekick Kato in *The Green Hornet*, and the venerable cook Hop Sing in the western *Bonanza*. Not until 1969 did Miyoshi Umeki, the Oscar-winning actress, play Mrs. Livingston in *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*—and Mrs. Livingston was a maid. Native American characters, not always played by actual Native Americans, appeared in Westerns which gave no hint as to what real Native American history was. One might also mention that women were uniformly wives and mothers, and that openly gay characters were unheard of, although the occasional "camp" character appeared on a talk or game show, and that these trends mirrored real life. In sum, television as a medium was slow in recognizing the increased participation of minorities in American social and political life.

In this virtual environment, on September 12, 1966, *The Monkees* premiered (Dolenz 76). In the first season, two things were clear: first, that, as the *Los Angeles Times* announced when the show was sold to NBC, "[the Monkees'] prototypes are the Beatles, but unlike the Beatles, they are the world's most unknown teen-age idols . . ." (Sandoval 39); and more importantly, that the boys chosen to play the Monkees were diverse in terms of personality and talent. Micky Dolenz, a former child star raised in Hollywood, was a hyperactive, hysterically funny, and very physical comedian. Mike Nesmith, a Texan and talented musician-songwriter in real life, was the thoughtful member of the group. A director of the show, Jim Frawley, recalls that Nesmith was "very dry in his attitude and sense of humor. Very clever. Very smart." (Sandoval 29); he was one of the two who was a musician when he was hired. Peter Tork was an amiable, quiet character, whose persona lay somewhere between hippie and surfer, but who was always genuine; in addition, he was arguably the most talented musician of all. Last, there was Davy Jones, a former jockey with a background in musical comedy (Dolenz 85) who had clearly been hired to be the teenage heartthrob; he was English, very tiny, cute, and vaguely feminine, and like Micky, a natural-born entertainer. "If you put them all together," Frawley perceptively notes, "they were like one human being endowed with all those qualities. Each one of them was one quarter of the perfect man" (Sandoval 29). Yes, the group was manufactured: but the chemistry was apparent from the first show, and that chemistry stemmed from the fact that four very different personalities combined to produce something greater than their sum.

The pilot, "Here Come the Monkees," which was shown as Episode 10 of the first season ("The Monkees"), present the band as heralds of the new. An old friend of their manager, a Marine buddy, Charlie Russell, hires the band to rock the house at a posh country club; the occasion is his daughter Vanessa's sweet sixteen party. But after madcap shenanigans ensue involving Davy and Vanessa,

a history test she must not fail, and the Monkees incredibly enacting great moments in history so that she'll learn what she needs to know to pass the test, Russell fires, but then rehires the band. At that point, however, the security guard who has been chasing the boys makes a salient comment: by hiring the rock 'n' rollers over Sven Helstrom and the Swedish Rhythm Kings, Russell has sold out the country club and himself. The kids—Vanessa and her guests—are happy, but Russell has lost his reputation. While it seems absurd to consider these possibilities today, in this episode the Monkees represent rebellion: the suggestions are that they represent the wave of the future as well as the voice of youth.

The musically diverse tastes of the four were evident from the time they began to take control of their own musical destiny. Although the plan was that studio musicians—Glen Campbell, Larry Knechtel, and Danny Kortchmar among others—would produce a Monkees sound, Raybert Productions allowed the cast to create some of their own music. (A Monkee mutiny later resulted in the Monkees' producing their own music; but here, in 1966, producers were keeping a firm hand.) Mike had an affinity for country music, and brought his feel for the genre to the creation of "Papa Gene's Blues," and later, "Sunny Girlfriend." Peter and Mike had both been influenced by folk rock music, and "The Kind of Girl I Could Love" reflects this fact. Davy's performances on "When Love Comes Knockin'," and later, "Star Collector," belie his theatrical, music-hall background. Micky, who, in his autobiographical tome *I'm a Believer: My Life, or Monkees, Music, and Madness*, cites the Animals and Stones, as well as Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis as favorites, was the Monkee most in touch with rock 'n' roll; his vocals on "Saturday's Child" and, later, "For Pete's Sake," bears this out.

During the trajectory of the Monkees' show, there was no hiding the fact that the four came from different musical backgrounds, because of all their biggest hits—including "Last Train to Clarksville," "Daydream Believer," "I Wanna Be Free," and "I'm a Believer,"—none were truly rock tunes reflecting minimal influence by any other musical genre. The point was not that musicians of differing tastes could make Monkee music together—it was that the musicians in question took songs by standard pop writers (Tommy Boyce and Bobby Hart, Gerry Goffin and Carole King) and created a unique Monkees sound by filtering those songs through their own sensibilities.

The Monkees' musical performances on the show also reflected their varying tastes; the free-form structure of the show allowed for any number of interesting variations of the traditional teaser or tag. For example, Davy performed "Cuddly Toy" in tie and tails, singing and doing a soft-shoe as the theatrical feel of the music demanded. Micky did a fantastic homage to James Brown during a staged performance of the R & B influenced "Goin' Down." Micky also ventured into what would become psychedelic rock, performing "Daily Nightly" onscreen and thereby introducing the Moog synthesizer to the masses. If there was a chase, whether it involved cars, horses, or feet, Mike and

Peter's songs and voices often lent a folksy Western flavor to the background music, allowing the audience to make a subconscious connection between Monkee madness and the great lawman-outlaw or Cowboy-Indian chases in popular Western films.

Given this variety, one might assume that the Monkees, whose popularity was growing exponentially at the same time as the country was changing, would at least acknowledge the power and energy of the hydra-headed political movement towards civil rights and cultural diversity. There were several events, fictional and real, which suggested that, in fact, they did. For one, Micky appeared in season two with a totally "keen" hair cut that suggested he no longer wished to conform with the "moptop" vision set forth by the show's creators. In fact, it was an Afro. Obviously, he had originally submitted to having his hair actually curled, and obviously he had stopped doing so. But at a time when "Black Power" had only recently become a slogan, and men and women of color were beginning to turn away from the curling iron and from straightening chemicals in favor of a natural look, it was a noticeable statement. There was also the matter of Micky having changed his childhood stage name—a very WASP-y "Mickey Braddock"—back to his real name, Dolenz.

The Monkees' shows and music also made political statements. The producers first prevented the boys from making overtly political statements in public: Sandoval mentions that Peter, in particular, was fervently anti-capitalist and anti-war, and Peter has a recurring role in Micky's book as the Monkee who railed against "meat eating, fat-cat, rain-forest-killing, bourgeoisie fascist pigs" (Dolenz 181)—and the "suits," alarmed at the prospect of alienating the parents of their ten- to fifteen-year-old target audience (Dolenz 84), granted few early interviews. However, the Monkees' shows did covertly address social issues of the day. In an early television program about the corporate devaluation of craftsmanship and a craftsman's personal touch, season one's "Machine vs. Monkee," the boys thwart a corporate entity which wants to replace an old-school, expert toy craftsman with a more efficient, but obviously soulless, machine. In season two's "Monkee Mayor," the boys step in to stop a heartless tycoon from paving paradise, or the city, at least, and putting up parking lots. Clearly, there was no lack of social conscience on the part of the show's writers.

In addition, despite the producers' reluctance to adopt political stances which may have alienated their viewers' parents, the Monkees' songwriters were happy to include political commentary in their songs; oddly enough, the producers, having remained unconcerned about the music, allowed these tunes to be included on the show (Sandoval). "Pleasant Valley Sunday," for example, begins with a member of the middle-class, bedroom-community of Pleasant Valley looking around and observing his neighbors on a typical Saturday morning, but then sharing an epiphany where he begins to question his consumerist values. Each snapshot gives us a sense of a person involved in some banal activity, a person who has bought into the American dream and never questioned whether he's fulfilled. We meet "a local rock group," apparently not

that good, rehearsing a new song; a woman “proud . . . that her roses are in bloom,” a comment which hints that she’s involved in a dilettante’s gardening project; a man quite literally mesmerized by the televisions he has set up in every single room of his home. Finally, we find that the speaker, in the process of making his observations, comes into a new form of consciousness where he can see the darkness, or nothingness, behind the facade; and that his words seem to bubble up from his unconscious—and crystallize the effect Pleasant Valley living has had on his sense of Self. It then becomes clear that he has learned to question the meaning of his existence: “Creature comforts, goals, they only numb my soul, they make it hard for me to see. / My thoughts all seem to stray to places far away; / I need a change of scenery!”

Other songs performed on the air or used as background music also questioned the need to conform, especially when it came to supporting the Vietnam War. “Randy Scouse Git,” for example, parodied the official lines of American politicians and military apologists: “Why don’t you hate who I hate, kill who I kill to be free?” Another Monkee ballad and one of their most poignant songs, “Zor and Zam,” is about two kings who pledge to do battle against each other, only to find themselves alone on the battlefield when the time comes to fight; it answered the question that was a popular catchphrase during the 60s: suppose they gave a war and nobody came? Besides the obvious, which was that some of the lyrics were inaccessible to their target audience, but not to their parents, it should be said that the Monkees and their writers did respond to the rising tide of activism, although it was an uncontroversial, safe response—a response which spoke generally about the risks of adherence to conformity rather than addressing specific racial or gender issues.

The Monkees was a completely different kind of show, and a comedy to boot. They sent powerful messages about friendship, cooperation, and compromise to their young audience. Their songs sometimes carried a progressive, soul-affirming message. More importantly, the characters were similar to the actors who played them, so their realness brought a decent grounding to an otherwise outrageous show.

That was the promise.

On the other hand, the limitations were stringent. While the Monkees themselves cited a number of multicultural musical influences—and toured with Jimi Hendrix as an opening act—and later an R&B horn and rhythm section—the television show itself remained devoid of Black or Latino characters or onscreen musicians. As Sandoval, and all four Monkees recall in various interviews, the producers of the show, for all their claims about creating something radically different, wanted a show that was reflective of mainstream America, and mainstream Americans—white, middle-class, and traditional in gender roles. One wonders what might have been had the four actor/musicians, along with their songwriters, been able to fully realize their individual visions over the course of the show.

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Othello, Race, and Cultural Memory on Cheers

Shakespeare occupies an ambiguous and anxiety-ridden place in the mass American consciousness, representing Americans' general ambivalence to the position of high culture. Despite this ambivalence (or maybe because of it), Shakespeare is often employed as a medium through which high culture is both marketed within, and lampooned by, popular culture. Pop culture citations of Shakespeare, like those within sitcoms, often rely on the fact that the audience is familiar with Shakespeare—the historical figure, the set of canonical plays, the cultural history of those plays, etc.—but not too familiar. Thus, Shakespeare may play a large role in our cultural memory, but that cultural memory is only fragmentary. This essay explores the ways the 1980s sitcom *Cheers* relies on equal parts memory and forgetting when citing Shakespeare and dealing with the troublesome issue of *Othello* and race.

The episode under consideration here, “Homicidal Ham,” represents the essential conundrum for late 20th-century middlebrow liberalism in its encounters with Shakespeare in general and *Othello* in particular. It attempts to erase the unsettling racial issues of the play by inscribing the idea of fragmentary cultural memory while simultaneously exploiting the racialized elements that drive the play’s drama. The episode’s performance of *Othello* institutes the idea that modern audiences have only a fragmentary knowledge of Shakespeare and then, through its exclusion, consigns race as one of the elements that needs to be forgotten. It hopes to point toward a colorblind future in which *Othello* is no longer a play about race. But even as it is attempting to erase race, it simultaneously engages in a particularly racist line of *Othello* citation, which I have dubbed the “Uncontrollable-Othello narrative,” which draws its power specifically from the most racialized elements of the play.

The Uncontrollable-Othello narrative is a bizarre line of Shakespearean citation that involves an actor playing Othello who becomes consumed with the character’s jealous rage and attempts a real-life murder. The legend of the intertwining of life and art in the performance of *Othello* stretches back to at least the 19th century. Edmund Kean, known for his emotionally charged and frightening performances of the character, seems to be an impetus for the story.¹ In the 20th century, the idea of the murderous Othello actor has proven to be a surprisingly durable trope for filmmakers of all types. The Uncontrollable-Othello narrative was first used in film in the 1911 Danish silent film *Desdemona*, in which a jealous actor murders his wife onstage during a performance of *Othello*. This plot was used in two other silent films as well as an obscure 1936 British thriller, *Men Are Not Gods*. A variation on the Uncontrollable-Othello narrative also makes an appearance in the acclaimed 1945 French film *Les Enfants du Paradis*. However, the most well-known

appearance of the Uncontrollable-Othello narrative is George Cukor's 1947 film noir thriller *A Double Life*.

In *A Double Life*, Ronald Coleman plays Anthony John, an actor known for losing himself in his roles, who begrudgingly agrees to play Othello opposite his ex-wife. Due to John's convincing performance, the play enjoys a long run, but the longer the play goes, the more John loses himself in the role. He becomes obsessed with a blonde waitress named Pat Kroll and becomes convinced that his ex-wife/co-star is having a relationship with the play's publicist, Will. He eventually murders Pat in the same way he murders Desdemona onstage. Will becomes suspicious and leads the police to him. In the film's final scene, the police close in on John during a performance, so he takes a real knife to kill himself onstage during Othello's suicide.

While the film clearly tries to anchor John's transformation in psychology, particularly some combination of pop Freudianism and Method acting, the racial elements are also made clear. John is first seen rehearsing Othello's soliloquy from Act III, Scene ii while looking at sketches for Othello's makeup: sketches that make it clear that he will be performing in blackface. As he gets to the line "Haply, for I am black," he stares directly at the camera, framed in a classic film noir lighting with half his face lit and half his face in darkness, clearly illuminating the white/black and sanity/madness binaries. Interestingly, blackface is never talked about by any of the characters and Coleman's makeup is done in such a way that it is often difficult to notice in this black and white film. However, this scene makes it clear that Othello's black character is being used as a metaphor for John's "dark" submerged id, which is released by his performance. Though it is made clear that all of John's performances affect his personality (his ex-wife, in an early scene, explains that they "were married while we were doing Oscar Wilde and divorced while doing Ibsen"), it is only *Othello* that leads him to murder.

Evaluating the various films that employ the Uncontrollable-Othello narrative, Tony Howard asserts that "there is a racial factor here. Othello used to be envisaged as a savage sexual underself waiting to consume the most sophisticated of men, the classical actor, who dons black make-up and is tainted by pitch."² The sheer number of films that employ this motif (which also includes more recent films such as *Stage Beauty* and *In Othello*) tells us that there is something specific to *Othello*, or at least to the popular conception of it, that gives this motif its power. There are no films in which an actor playing King Lear goes mad or an actor playing Macbeth is manipulated by his wife into killing someone.

It is clear then that the films that use the Uncontrollable-Othello narrative all want to illustrate the dangers of performativity, particularly for white actors performing an "alien" role like Othello. Though there is a desire to turn Othello into a universal symbol of submerged male sexual jealousy, Othello's race is never too far away. The role of Othello requires levels of performativity. When it is played as originally intended, it is a white actor performing as a black man

who is in turn attempting to perform as a white man, being assimilated into white society and taking a white wife. These layers of performativity are similar to Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines (such as Olivia and Rosalind) who are in turn being performed by cross-dressing males. As Dympna Callaghan and Virginia Mason Vaughn have argued, Othello is not a "black" role, but a role for a white man performing in blackface.³ The role has always been a performance of blackness, not a representation of it, and a large part of the role's power is located in its ability to unsettle the white audience with its performance of the other. It is this same danger that informs the Uncontrollable-Othello films and these films, in turn, reinforce the idea that the play's almost unbearable drama, which famously upset readers such as Johnson and Coleridge and has occasionally induced physical and even violent reactions in audience members is inextricably linked to Othello's race.⁴ And as "Homicidal Ham" illustrates, even when Othello's race is visibly erased, this dangerous performativity still manifests itself.

"Homicidal Ham," which originally aired in October 1983, early in the second season of *Cheers*, begins with the reintroduction of Andy, a character from the first season's episode "Diane's Perfect Date." He is a stranger whom Sam sets up on blind date with Diane, only to find out he had recently been released from prison for murdering a waitress. "Homicidal Ham" opens with Andy returning and attempting to rob the bar with an unloaded gun in order to return to prison because he cannot find a job. In contrast to his earlier appearance, in this episode Andy is portrayed as a pathetic, childlike Norman Bates figure whose murderous tendencies are driven by his domineering mother. Diane takes pity on him and asks him what he aspires to do. He reveals his ambition to be an actor, and Diane, a former literature graduate student and the show's resident pretentious intellectual, offers to help him prepare an audition for her old drama teacher.

The rest of the episode takes place a week later, when Andy and Diane are set to perform their scene at the bar. During their rehearsal in the bar's pool room, we find out that they will be performing a scene from *Othello*. No mention is ever made of Othello's race or the possibility of wearing blackface, and even the drama teacher Professor DeWitt, who is presumably familiar with the play, does ask about it. It is also not explained why Diane chooses to perform a play about a man who kills his wife with a man who went to jail for killing a woman.

Diane's decision predictably backfires. Andy has developed a crush on her and becomes angry when he sees her kissing Sam right before their scheduled performance. In the front of the bar, Diane grows nervous at the now-frightening looking Andy and tries to stall performing the scene, which we now find out will be the strangulation scene. As the scene progresses, it becomes clear that Andy is actually strangling her. Diane cries out "Help, this psycho is trying to kill me," but the blue-collar crowd is oblivious as Coach responds, "That's the first line of Shakespeare I ever understood."

The erasure of Othello's race is by far the most obvious thing that separates "Homicidal Ham" from the other Uncontrollable-Othello films. As previously discussed, blackface makeup, as used in *A Double Life*, is often a clear symbolic marker of the actor's change in personality. While Derek McGrath, the actor playing Andy, mimics many of Coleman's mannerisms, particularly the widened eyes, the racial element is forgotten.⁵ However, as we shall see, this apparent racial ignorance masks a complex set of assumptions about the play and the intended audience.

So far, the only critical work on "Homicidal Ham" has been done by Marguerite Rippy in her essay "All Our *Othellos*."⁶ Rippy compares "Homicidal Ham" and *A Double Life* and their use of Othello as a "symbolic referent to the aspects of white male consciousness that American society perceives as dark, foreign and primitive."⁷ Rippy attempts to provide a psychological explanation for the Uncontrollable-Othello narrative. Most importantly, she illustrates how both productions eliminate the role of Iago, placing the impetus for the lead character's jealousy on his transformation to a black man, not on Iago's deception.

Rippy's comparison of "Homicidal Ham" and *A Double Life* is illuminating, but one area where it falters is the examination of blackface. Rippy dismisses the issue by arguing that a depiction of miscegenation would have been a taboo in the Reagan-era 80s. But the reasons behind the complete erasure of Othello's race are much more complicated. To begin with the most obvious, referencing Othello's race would have required one of two equally problematic tactics: casting a black actor or using blackface. If the episode was conceived after "Diane's Perfect Date," casting a black actor would have been out of the question, since they were forced to use the same actor. Even if it was not, having a black actor casually deliver the line "I killed a waitress there" would have raised another set of problems.⁸

Blackface would have been the other option, but would have been considered unacceptable on television, which, despite its vaudeville roots, has always had an aversion to the practice. Even the notoriously racist program *Amos 'n' Andy*, originally performed on radio by white actors, cast black actors when it moved to television in the 1950s. In Othello's infrequent citations on television, all talk of blackface has been eliminated. An episode of "Have Gun—Will Travel" was the first significant appearance, with Vincent Price playing a Shakespearean actor who performs the role without blackface. As in "Homicidal Ham," *Othello* is used as a referent for sexual jealousy, but race is never even mentioned.

Othello's other major TV citation was in the episode "Lamont as Othello" of the sitcom *Sanford & Son*, one of the first sitcoms to feature a predominantly African-American cast. In this episode, blue-collar junk dealer Fred Sanford walks in on his son Lamont rehearsing the strangulation scene with his white drama teacher and thinks Lamont is actually trying to kill her. It is interesting that in this episode, in which Othello's race is explicitly discussed, jealousy is

not. If one watched this episode with no prior knowledge of the play, it would only be known that the play is about a black man, in Fred's words, "choking a white woman to death." It is important, though, that the role is clearly defined as "a black man," though no mention of blackface or how the role was traditionally performed is ever made.

Sanford & Son, the only sitcom to ever engage Othello's race, however superficially, was produced by Norman Lear, whose prolific sitcom output in the 1970s, including *All in the Family* and *The Jeffersons*, was known for dealing with issues such as race, class, and gender. *Cheers*, however, was a decidedly anti-Lear program and a definite product of the Reagan era. While it has been lauded for its mixing of social classes, all of its primary characters throughout its 11-year run were white. Minorities were a rarity on the show, even among the extras playing bar patrons. After the explicit confrontations about race on the 1970s Lear programs, 80s sitcoms such as *Cheers* preferred to ignore racial conflict.

A consideration of race in *Cheers* must also take into account the show's Boston setting. A largely segregated city of deeply entrenched ethnic enclaves, Boston in the early 1980s was perhaps best known for the bitter and violent school busing crisis of the 1970s, in which residents of white working-class neighborhoods rioted to protest the busing of black students.⁹ Though it has surprisingly not been discussed in the literature on the show, setting this all-white show aimed at a primarily white audience in a city known for its racial hostilities could not have been pure coincidence. It is the clearest indicator that *Cheers*, like many other television shows of its era, wanted to put forth an idea that the Reagan 80s was a postracial world in which the racial conflicts of the 60s and 70s had been solved. This is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that, from 1984 to 1992, *Cheers* and *The Cosby Show*, a program that put forth the postracial fantasy from the black point of view, were the twin anchors of NBC's Thursday night schedule. Separate but equal was recreated through primetime comedy. The vision of Boston that *Cheers* put forth furthered the idea that all of the city's racial problems had been solved. The exterior shots of the bar used at the beginning of every episode were shot at the Bull & Finch Pub in the affluent and predominately white Beacon Hill neighborhood which, like other upper-middle class neighborhoods, was largely untouched by the busing crisis.¹⁰ This is tourist-trap Boston, where the residents want to pretend racial conflict does not exist (and where, due to the lack of diversity, it does not). Though the bar is supposedly blue-collar, the characters (including Italians such as Coach and Carla) have a definite air of WASP about them. The distinctive accents and ethnic identities of working-class neighborhoods such as South Boston and Dorchester are not heard.

In addition, the Boston Red Sox, Sam's former team, were a constant specter on the show. The Red Sox were known, at least among African-Americans, as an overtly racist organization that had been the last major league team to integrate and had been hostile to Black players into the 1980s.¹¹ Red Sox

paraphernalia decorated the bar and Red Sox players made cameos on the show. All of these Red Sox players were, not surprisingly, white. As with the busing crisis, these racial tensions were ignored as well.

It is obvious that *Cheers* was not comfortable dealing with race. Its citation of *Othello* is especially interesting, then, because it came at a time when many Shakespeareans were just as uncomfortable dealing with the racial implications of the play. “Homicidal Ham” occurred at a critical moment in the performance history of the role, as the idea that Othello should only be played by a black actor had gained currency and also engendered a backlash. “Homicidal Ham” aired in 1983, four years after the RSC declared it would no longer produce the play with a white actor in the role. It also comes two years after Jonathan Miller’s BBC version with Anthony Hopkins in the title role, in which Miller’s stated aim was to make the play not about race. Miller chose not cast a black actor because “casting a black actor would encourage audiences to ‘equate the supposed simplicity of the black with the exorbitant jealousy of the character.’”¹² However, despite this stated antiracist claim, the film drew criticism. As Lois Potter points out, “what the director’s critics objected to was not his ideology but its practical result: a white actor was to play the most famous black character in drama, in a televised version likely to become the standard image of the play for a whole generation of school and university students.”¹³ Miller’s BBC *Othello*, despite its antiracist protestations, entrenched the idea of a white Othello and gave institutional support to the interpretation that the play is about jealousy, not race.

Given this climate, both in sitcoms and *Othello*’s performance history, it is not surprising that *Cheers*, like Miller’s version, attempts to submerge the uncomfortable racial elements in *Othello* and universalize the play as a story of jealousy. Lacking Miller’s Shakespearean credentials to fully form a theoretical argument that the play is about jealousy, not race, the creators of *Cheers* try to enforce a colorblind version of the play on its audience through a case of what could be called hopeful forgetting.

The episode inscribes the idea that the average viewer is supposed to recognize the names Shakespeare and *Othello*, but have only a fragmentary memory of them. Before performing the scene, Diane gives a brief plot summary in a condescending, school-marmish tone to the blue collar denizens of the bar, obviously assuming that they are unfamiliar with the play. Later, the scene’s big punchline—Coach’s “That’s the only line of Shakespeare I ever understood”—is built on the onscreen audience’s ignorance of the play.

This interplay of recognition and ignorance in the on-screen audience creates a situation in which the real audience watching the show is given license to forget Othello’s race. The viewers of the episode, like the on-screen audience, are supposed to know vaguely that *Othello* is a play by Shakespeare but not remember specifics. With Othello’s race erased from the collective memory of the mass audience, the play can then be universalized as, simply, a play “about a man driven mad with jealousy,” as Diane calls it right before the performance.

But it is only with this collective memory loss that the play can be universalized in such a way.

Of course, Othello's race has largely not been forgotten in the collective memory. If one knew nothing about *Othello* before watching this episode, one would not know that Othello is black. This could then be called a case of hopeful forgetting, as the show's creators realize that much of the audience will associate Othello with a black man but are simply hoping that they will overlook it. They are imposing Miller's version of the play not through an argument that Othello should be white, but instead by leaving it out altogether. However, there is still the troublesome question of why, if they are trying to erase Othello's race, they use the undeniably racist Uncontrollable-Othello narrative? As has been discussed earlier, the "Uncontrollable Othello" story cannot be separated from race. It is predicated on the instability of a white man playing a black man. It could then be surmised that the creators of the episode are only endorsing the Miller version on the surface, but keeping the unspoken racial associations which give the Uncontrollable-Othello narrative, and arguably the play itself, its power.

That Othello's race is still a presence can also possibly be seen in the staging of the strangulation scene. As outlined by Pascale Aebischer, the staging of the strangulation scene, like Othello's race, has been altered over time to fit the sensibilities of the times and carries with it specific racial connotations.¹⁴ The original staging of the scene was most likely done in full view of the audience, with Othello wrapping his hands around Desdemona's throat. However, by the Victorian age, the scene had been softened, often played behind bed curtains, with Othello using a pillow instead of his bare hands. In the era of the great Shakespearean actors, the focus was shifted away from the dying Desdemona and onto the star playing Othello, who often imbued the part with great pathos. These changes in staging coincided with the idea that Othello was not black, but instead a "tawny Moor" and actors began to wear much lighter black makeup. As a consequence, says Aebischer, "What emerged in Victorian stagings, then, was a correlation between race and brutality: the more toned down and effaced the scenes of domestic violence were, the more civilised, 'white', was the Othello represented."¹⁵

This performance history must be kept in mind when viewing "Homicidal Ham." Andy and Diane's performance nearly perfectly fits Aebischer's description of how the scene was originally staged. They perform their scene in mock Elizabethan costumes with an unadorned twin mattress bed on a makeshift stage on the raised portion of the bar near the front door. The strangulation is done exactly as Aebischer describes it, with Othello's hands around Desdemona's throat and Desdemona fighting back. Of course, it is not Desdemona fighting back but Diane, as she is actually being choked by Andy.

Therefore, while Othello's race is visibly absent, the staging of the strangulation scene highlights the most savage and barbaric interpretations of Othello, with all of their attendant racial connotations. Andy is a primitive and a

madman, embodying, as Rippy argues, a failed white male sexuality which comes close to Othello's stereotypical black male sexuality, an incongruous combination of innocence and potential for violence. Andy as Othello, even without blackface, is a representation of what Karen Newman has called Othello's "monstrous desire."¹⁶ Andy is then, in many ways, like Othello in the more racist depictions that Aebischer describes: the savage who hides behind the mask of civility until his sexual identity is threatened, when the savage comes to the forefront. In this way, then, it once again mimics the Miller version. In Anthony Hopkins' performance, race is deemphasized, but more abstract signs of the "savage" come out, from his lion's mane hairdo to the campy growl he lets out at the climax of the murder scene.

In this seemingly innocuous and forgotten-about 23 minutes of television, there is actually a microcosm of the problems that confront modern performers, audiences, and scholars when they approach *Othello*. Though there have been noble attempts to strip the play of its racism so that it may remain in the canon, the racist associations represented by the Uncontrollable-Othello narrative have permeated the cultural memory. While many of Shakespeare's greatest characters commit murder, only Othello has such a clear association with murder in the popular consciousness. This is no doubt due to the fact that Othello's crime carries with it such powerful racial signifiers, and Othello as a character represents the black man as stand-in for the white male id. That this powerful symbol of what one hopes is an outdated racial consciousness carries with it the ultimate stamp of cultural authority, that of Shakespeare, makes it almost impossible to reconcile.

Early in the episode, in justifying her enterprise to Sam, Diane says that "Anyone who loves the theatre loves mankind." To Diane, Andy's love for the arts outweighs his murderous tendencies. She is following in the liberal tradition of using Shakespeare as a civilizing influence. However, she makes an error in her choice of text. By choosing *Othello*, she unwittingly chooses the one character in Shakespeare that cannot be controlled. The question becomes: how much of the responsibility is put on the character and how much is put on the actor? Would Andy have been uncontrollable in another role, such as Hamlet? Performing the scene between Hamlet and Gertrude in the bedroom would have made sense, since his murderous tendencies are blamed on his oedipal relationship with his mother (as he is pulled off of Diane, he screams, "I'll clean up my room, Mommy!"). Even the episode's title, "Homicidal Ham," seems to hint at *Hamlet* more than *Othello*. But Hamlet is not the text performed. Reviewing how *Hamlet* and *Othello* have been woven into the fragmentary cultural memory, it is not hard to see why. The more well-known character of Hamlet would not work in this scenario because he is not seen as capable of eliciting the visceral reaction in both actors and audiences that Othello does, and it is not hard to see that this visceral reaction is inextricably tied to both Hamlet's whiteness and Othello's blackness.

This inextricable tie between the play's power and Othello's race becomes a difficult problem for modern productions and citations that wish to keep the play in the cultural memory but not endorse its racism. However much "Homicidal Ham" is trying to ignore the racial implications of *Othello*, it is also simultaneously guilty of exploiting them. In doing this, "Homicidal Ham" illustrates the problems of adapting *Othello* to fit the tastes of a modern audience. The various Uncontrollable-Othello narratives seem to reify the idea that the play's drama cannot be separated from a stereotypical viewing of Othello as a dangerous black man. Modern productions and citations which try to ignore this problem will end up as schizophrenic and confused as "Homicidal Ham."

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Notes

¹ See Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of Othello* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961) for a detailed discussion of Kean's emotional performances.

² Howard, Tony. "Shakespeare's Cinematic Offshoots" *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film. 2nd Edition.* Ed. Russel Jackson. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007) pg. 314.

³ See Dymphna Callaghan. *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (London: Routledge, 2000) and Virginia Mason Vaughan. *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500–1800.* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

⁴ See Edward Pechter, *Othello and Interpretive Traditions* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999) for a detailed description of audiences and readers' reactions to the play, especially Ch. 1 "Othello in Theatrical and Critical History", pp. 11–29.

⁵ I have found no evidence that David Lloyd, the writer of this episode, or anyone else involved with *Cheers*, specifically had *A Double Life* in mind when they created the episode. But the many similarities suggest that the film inspired the episode.

⁶ Rippy, Marguerite Hailey. "All Our Othellos: Black Monsters and White Masks on the American Screen". *Spectacular Shakespeare: Critical Theory and Popular Cinema.* Eds. Courtney Lehmann and Lisa S. Starks. (Madison, WI: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002).

⁷ Ibid. pg. 41.

⁸ For a consideration of *Cheers'* problems with race, see Brown, Robert S. "Cheers: Searching for the Ideal Public Sphere in the Ideal Public Space". *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed.* Eds. Mary M. Dalton and Laura R. Linder. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). Pg. 259.

⁹ See Formisano, Ronald P. *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in 1960s and 1970s.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Bjorkland pg. 8.

¹¹ See Bryant, Howard. *Shut Out: A Story of Race and Baseball in Boston.* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹² Potter, Lois. *Shakespeare in Performance: Othello.* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002). Pg. 154.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Aebischer, Pascale. "Black Rams Tutting White Ewes: Race vs. Gender in the Final Scene of Six *Othellos*". *Retrovisions: Reinventing the Past in Film and Fiction*. Eds. Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, and Imelda Whelehan. (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001). pp. 59–74.

¹⁵ Ibid. pg. 60.

¹⁶ Newman, Karen. "'And wash the Ethiop white': femininity and the monstrous in *Othello*". *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*. Eds. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor. (New York: Methuen, 1987) pp. 143–162.

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- "Diane's Perfect Date." Directed by James Burrows. 23 min. Paramount Television. *Cheers: The Complete First Season* DVD Disc 3.
- "Homicidal Ham." Directed by James Burrows. 23 min. Paramount Television. *Cheers: The Complete Second Season* DVD Disc 1.

The Looks of Men: Doubling and Nostalgia in *Mad Men*

Back during the presidential primary season, when the field was still open and the party debates still included half a dozen or more contenders to the nomination, I was sitting on my couch and watching CNN. The discussion turned to the questions of which of these candidates seemed more authentic to the general public, implying that *authenticity* was a measure of comfort and that this comfort could, in part, clinch the nomination. While listening, I reached toward the giant bag of tortilla chips in which I was participating and found, emblazoned across the top, the claim “Authentic Mexican Taste.” At that moment I came to directly encounter the old post-colonial claim that authenticity refers not to some intrinsic characteristic of an object or product (chips or candidate), but to some extrinsic value against which the object is judged. And that value is, of course, for the most part illusory, since the bag of chips didn’t say which authentic region of Mexico the taste replicated. I was certain, though, that I’d never been there.

My experience of *Mad Men* is much the same. The first season takes place in 1960 and I’m not old enough to remember that year. And even if I were, my people never, ever made it to Madison Avenue. Or even New York City. What I *can* compare the impeccable staging of this series to is the films and television programs I know from the time and, in that comparison, the staging is, indeed, impeccable. But herein lies an ambivalence in *Mad Men*. While it certainly looks like (what I know of) 1960 New York, what this staging allows—the scenes of sex and emotional cruelty, or at least the relatively graphic manner in which they are treated—don’t resemble anything that would have or in most cases could have been *shown* in 1960 (except, perhaps, comically). This is really 21st century television. The show places us contemporary folks back then, generating at once a kind of nostalgia for their “simpler” sexual politics while allowing the performance of a blatant racism and sexism, for instance, that generally wouldn’t be okay in a contemporary series.¹ And it does this without the kind of irony that would allow us to forgive the behavior as something we’ve outgrown. They aren’t us but they are like us.

This ambivalence is precisely the point. *Then*, overt racism and sexism were apparently de rigueur. *Now*, we can be more sexually explicit, more violent, etc. And on television, we can have our *then* now and our *now* then. But the result of this swapping is more than just a fun combination of anachronisms, since we understand that sex, of course, *happened* back then (if only in a slow fade) and, more troubling, that the daily sexism and racism *then* is still with us, though its display may be less tolerated. In effect, there is a kind of warping, much like that of the möbius strip, and this warp is where we find the jouissance in programs like *Man Men*. What we enjoy and what repulses us become confused as the past

and present become commingled in performance.² We can find an analog to this warping in one of the main characters of the series.

1. Don is and isn't a Dick

Season 1's "Babylon" begins with the protagonist, Don Draper, taking a breakfast tray up the stairs to his wife Betty on Mother's Day. He slips on a toy left there by one of their children, falls back to the floor at the foot of the stairs, and hallucinates/remembers the birth of his half brother. The scene does double duty. It reminds us (with Don) that his present nuclear family is important to him at least inasmuch as Don's childhood was by all accounts poor and difficult (his mother was a prostitute who died during childbirth; his father was abusive, then died, and he was raised by his step mother and "uncle," etc.), in contrast to his present (1960) luxury and apparent contentment. More importantly, though, this initial gesture in the episode reminds us that Don Draper was Dick Whitman. "Don Draper" is an identity Dick assumed to get out of the Korean War and escape his troubled rural home life. Draper is a mask for Whitman and functions for many of the characters in the series as the prime signifier for masculine success.

We can, of course, proffer Whitman/Draper as a classic example of the Lacanian split subject, the subject who is not identical with itself. Indeed, this seems to work really well since, as Lacan makes clear, "it is of the nature of each and every signifier not to be able to signify itself" (Gallagher). That is, the subject can never find a single signifier by which to fix its identity in the field of the Other, but is always born(e) in between, in/by the gap engendered by the proximity of signifiers in the signifying field. Thus, the Lacanian subject is always contingent, which is to say castrated, a subject submitting to the symbolic order. One cannot say that Don Draper is really Dick Whitman—Draper has a family and a job and success—any more than one could say that Dick Whitman is dead insofar as he consistently returns in the cinematic scope. In fact, Dick Whitman is very much alive as that which returns, as repressed content embroiled in the present (contingent) circumstances because that content is (re)constructed precisely in/by the present situation. This last distinction is important, because we are not talking now about Draper's historical past, but about the manifestation of that past as it takes hold in the present; that is, as a symptom. As Slavoj Žižek makes clear, "there is no repression previous to the return of the repressed; the repressed content does not precede its return in symptoms, there is no way to conceive it in its purity undistorted by 'compromises' that characterize the formation of the symptoms" (*Enjoy* 14).³ The Dick Whitman we see in the show is not some visiting time traveler, but something with/in Draper. Draper's hallucinations, his response to his half-brother's visit, etc. happen *in the present* regardless of what the past might be like. Put another way, Dick Whitman is obviously *on the screen now* as a signifier for a whole host of content Don would like to avoid. And in every appearance, we return to Don in his present situation with whatever he has "remembered" hovering above him. Or, rather, he is literally beside himself.

If Dick Whitman is what Draper was or could have been but isn't, Don Draper is made up. He's a fiction, a persona via which our protagonist has amassed a great deal. And by assuming the identity of the dead man and leaving the farm behind for a life in the city, Draper has become an ideal, a model, at least to those around him. He has a lovely wife and children; his job is both artistic and lucrative; his subordinates and his boss admire and emulate him. Don Draper is by most accounts the workaday Cary Grant/Roger Thornhill cum George Kaplan. Draper, however, is a real fiction. That is, we cannot say that Draper doesn't exist insofar as the man who was Dick Whitman has, via identification as/with Donald Draper, assumed a particular symbolic mandate (husband, father, boss, lover, etc.—the perfect man). Žižek argues that

insisting on a false mask brings us nearer to a true, authentic subjective position than throwing off the mask and displaying our “true face” . . . A mask is never simply “a mask” since it determines the actual place we occupy in the intersubjective symbolic network; what is effectively false and null is our “inner distance” from the mask we wear (the “social role” we play), our “true self” hidden beneath it. The path to an authentic subjective position runs therefore “from the outside inward”: first, we pretend to be something, we just act as if we are that, till, step by step, we actually become it. . . In other words, the conclusion to be drawn from this dialectic is the exact opposite of the common wisdom by which every human act (achievement, deed) is ultimately just an act (posture, pretense): the only authenticity at our disposal is that of impersonation, of “taking our act (posture) seriously.” (35)

The primary point to make clear here is that when we talk about the protagonist, we mean Don Draper as such. The symbolic efficacy of Don Draper will be sketched later, but Draper is a serious character.

However, though Draper makes some sense as an example of the split subject, he's clearly not a person. Don Draper is a character in a television program and I would like to resist a simple psychoanalyzing of a TV character. Rather, my argument here is that Draper's position on the show functions both as the obvious point of identification for the viewer (he is the protagonist) and as a difficult ethical example in the field of the series. If Draper-the-character is symbolic of something, he is ambivalently so.

2. Chickens

“Babylon” is arranged in part around two separate advertising accounts. The first to be introduced is for Israeli tourism and is the impetus for Draper's examination of the “research” available to him, consisting primarily of head shots of beautiful Israeli models, photographs of concentration camp atrocities, and the novel *Exodus*. At the same time, the office has taken over the campaign for Belle Jolie lipsticks. The copy writers are at a loss as to how to proceed with

the latter ("I don't speak moron") and so decide to "throw it to the chickens." That is, all of the secretaries in the office are herded into a room containing rows of tables and chairs, the door is pointedly locked behind them, and the women are asked to pick their favorites from the collection of lipsticks, try them out, and answer survey questions asked by a stern German woman. The trick is that all of the men in the series, including their boss, Roger, are hidden behind one-way glass in a room with a full bar and lounge chairs. That is, all of the men *with the exception of Draper*. At various points, one man circles and x's the faces of women who are obliviously using the other side of the glass as a mirror, another asks if anyone minds if he takes off his pants, and the main secretary Joan (a bombshell redhead who knows what's going on) seems to look directly at them through the glass, turns her back to them, and then bends to lean over a table. The men stand and salute.

Here we have an exact performance of the classic male gaze proffered by Laura Mulvey, where:

The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (1175)

This standard understanding of the male gaze posits that the viewer identifies with the male characters as they watch women. I would suggest, however, that this almost perfect rendering of Mulvey's gaze in fact undermines her understanding via the introduction of the one-way glass, so that what our attention is drawn to—what makes this scene uncomfortable (and a scene that simply wouldn't work in a contemporary setting for all sorts of politically correct reasons)—isn't what/who the men are looking at but *how* they are viewing, separated by a distance, hidden in a way that "beats the hell out of x-ray specs." Quickly, the one-way glass becomes a representation of the television screen and, instead of enjoying the masculine specular fantasy Mulvey calls gaze, we are confronted with our own participation in such fantasies and must instead recognize therein our desire to watch. That is, Mulvey's gaze is really something else, fantasy, and the gaze is to be found elsewhere. Todd McGowan counters Mulvey's formulation by claiming that "[t]he gaze is a blank point—a point that disrupts the flow and the sense of the experience—within the aesthetic structure of the film, and it is the point at which the spectator is obliquely included in the film. . . As the indication of the spectator's dissolution, the gaze cannot offer the spectator anything resembling mastery" (8). This gaze is, according to Lacan, the object cause of desire as it is rendered visible (105). Thus, Slavoj Žižek makes much the same point as McGowan when discussing the "zero-level pornographic picture" as "that of a woman displaying her genitals *and* defiantly returning the gaze. . . The

camera's eye here is the object-cause which curves the space, the third intruder which 'spoils the game' . . ." (178) so that "[t]he gaze is thus not where one would expect it . . . but in the traumatic object/hole which transfixes our look and concerns us most intensely—the model's eyes staring at us here are, rather, to remind us: 'You see, I'm watching you observing my gaze . . .' " (179). While Žižek's pornographic image isn't quite ready for prime time, the redhead Joan bending over the table certainly performs a nice, television-friendly approximation for us.

This staging of fantasy is, in fact, two scenes interrupted by another in which Don Draper is meeting with Rachel, the owner of a 5th Avenue department store who is Jewish and the object of Draper's interest. At this point, we should recall that the flashback to Draper's childhood is there to remind us in part that Don Draper is also Dick Whitman and that he has escaped a depressing, abusive home on the farm by inventing his life through various lies and that he is the sole male character not present in the Belle Jolie lipstick trial. This last is no accident. Draper seems to be the masculine ideal. He's successful, charming, the one man who—at least to the other men in the office for whom he is a model—seems uncastrated. He is smarter than the other men; he drinks and works harder than the other men; he is (or seems to be) all-around better than the other men of the office. And he has his own women. Draper has a beautiful wife (Betty, who is the perfection of the secretaries in the room) and a bohemian girlfriend, in addition to whatever Rachel is to become. He is Freud's mythical primal father. That Draper is necessarily excluded from the sad scene is not an accident of plot.

From the standpoint of the other men in the series, we can see that Draper's absence sustains them *as a group* insofar as they are all linked together by an essential not-being-Don-ness. That is, the men of the office form a set—Men—which is closed by the exclusion of Draper. In his graph of sexuation, Lacan argues that the masculine set is determined by the uncastrated exception so that

$\exists x\overline{\Phi}x$ marks that there is one (the Mover, God, or here the uncastrated Draper) who does not fall under the phallic function, effectively allowing for the delimiting of the set of all men by positing the exception or necessarily excluded term, and

$\forall x\Phi x$ indicates that therefore all men fall under the phallic function or, as Lacan puts it, "it is through the phallic function that man as whole acquires his inscription." (Encore 79)

This phallic function is precisely castration as the mark or cut that is the lack or negativity around which the subject coalesces and it is what allows for the collection of all these (masculine) subjects under one heading, thereby allowing for the signifier *man*. Important here is that *Mad Men* does not assume a

masculine subject, but performs explicitly the fantasy under which masculinity is established. The glass between the men and secretaries of the scene is so obvious precisely because Don (who can apparently have all women) is conspicuously absent. He is with a woman.

3. "Those People"

While the men enjoy the secretaries, Draper is meeting Rachel for lunch. The problem he is there to discuss with her stems from a new advertising account for the Israeli Board of Tourism. Up to this point, the episode has obliquely conflated Jewishness with femininity in pretty troubling ways, so that (for instance) the written material Don has gone through contains both photos of attractive Israeli models *mixed in with* black-and-white images of Holocaust victims, after which the secretaries at the agency are captured, locked into the room with the lipsticks.

In the beginning of the scene, Draper explains that he is looking for advice about the Israeli tourism account, to which Rachel responds, "And I'm the only Jew you know in New York City?" Draper replies, "You're my favorite" and, soon after, accidentally spills some of his drink. In the first of two intimate moments, Rachel uses her napkin to dab at his tie and, while looking into his eyes, mumbles, "You're usually so put together." (Of course, Draper really is "put together.") As Draper begins to ask questions, Rachel balks at being treated as an expert, at one point saying "I don't know what I can say. I'm American. I'm really not very Jewish. If my mother hadn't died having me I could have been Marilyn instead of Rachel, no one would know the difference." Of course, she's referring explicitly about being Jewish, but given the confusion of the Jewish and the feminine, Draper's immediate response, "What *is* the difference," cannot help but resonate at the level of sexuation, too.

Rachel explains that Jews have lived in exile for a long time and suggests that they have managed to do this well because "we thrive at doing business with people who hate us." Draper responds, "I don't *hate* you." "No," says Rachel, "individuals are wonderful . . ." and Draper interrupts, "That's not what I meant." Rachel softens, and talks about how a country is important and, though she doesn't want to live there, "it just has to be. For me it's more of an idea than a place." Draper then takes her hand across the table (the second intimacy) and says "Utopia." "Maybe," responds Rachel, who then removes her hand. She explains that "they taught us at Barnard" the two meanings the Greeks had for the word: "the good place" and "the place that cannot be." Abruptly, Rachel excuses herself and leaves.

It is clear that Rachel's Jewishness and femininity are connected, constructing her as an amplified Other, an other whom Draper doesn't hate, one who has the answers he needs both professionally (this is the excuse for the meeting) and personally. But she doesn't have those answers, except insofar as she introduces the fundamental situation of exile. Rachel's parsing of the word *utopia*—The Good Place and The Place That Can Never Be—might be read in terms of fantasy and desire.

As fantasy, *The Good Place* may be a return to what one has lost—a homeland, sure, but also sexual rapport that was complete and perfect and is now missing but might be realized in the future. In the episode we are discussing, along with the specular fantasy of the secretaries and the occasionally tender meeting between Draper and Rachel, there are two other notable scenes between men and women. The first occurs directly after Draper's fall from the stairs at the beginning of the episode, as the day is ending and he and his wife Betty are going to bed. After some banter, they begin to kiss. Betty asks Draper to turn off the light. He obliges, returns to bed, runs his hand up her thigh, and Betty says, "I want you so much. I thought about it all day."

"Me, too."

"No, I mean it. It's all I think about. Every day. I hear a car coming down the driveway; I put the kids to bed early, I make a grocery list, I make butterscotch pudding, I never let my hands idle; washing my hair; drinking my milk. It's all in a kind of fog because I can't stop thinking about this. I want you. So badly."

"Shh. You have me; you do." Of course, she doesn't have Draper, at least not completely. But on its own, there is a great deal of innocence and caring and, really, who wouldn't want that? Indeed, this is a domestic utopia in the first sense, a good place to be.

The scene between Draper and Betty is directly mirrored later in the episode. Draper's boss Roger is having an affair with Joan, the bombshell redhead. Near the middle of the episode, we see them in a hotel room together, preparing to leave. Roger talks about wanting to get Joan her own apartment and Joan argues that she likes living with a roommate (Roger responds that he will get her a bird) and that she prefers the freedom that the status quo offers. Toward the end of the episode, we find Roger in the hotel room waiting as Joan enters (apparently late). They talk and laugh and kiss, then Joan hears a noise and notices the covered bird cage on the table. Roger removes the cover and the bird tweets. For a moment, we see Joan's face from the other side of the cage, as if she is behind the bars. Roger says, "You can't blame a man for trying. I just hate the thought of having to share you" as he unzips her dress. Joan replies, "You don't have to share me now" as she pulls him down onto the bed, on top of her. "Mmm, Joanie, you smell good. I've been thinking about this all day." Joan asks Roger to cover the bird; he obliges, and returns to bed.

Clearly, the roles have reversed here in interesting ways. Where once we had Betty waiting around for her man to come home, we now have a philandering husband who takes every opportunity to sneak away to be with his mistress. Where we once had Draper saying to his wife "You have me; you do," we now have the more honest Joan protesting "You don't have to share me now." The difficulty is that this isn't a strictly one-to-one trade. The shot of Joan through the cage should remind us of the secretaries being locked in the room with lipsticks (actually, Joan does the locking). And Betty asking for the lights to be turned off is the same as Joan wanting the birdcage covered insofar as both

are reactions against being seen. Again, a reference to the scopic reminiscent of the secretaries behind the glass.

One way of reading Lacan's famous denial that there is any sexual rapport is as an insistence that the two positions are not complementary. That is, they are not concomitant operations that allow for easy exchange. This relates to why Lacan can also claim that Woman (as a signifier) doesn't exist. If the category Man depends upon an excluded, uncastrated primal father of some sort (the exception that proves the rule), the feminine category is defined by its non-exclusion:

$\exists x\Phi x$ marks that there is not one who does not fall under the phallic function, so that the set of all women is unbounded and contingent, and

$\forall x\Phi x$ indicates that therefore all women do not fall wholly under the phallic function, thus eliding the possibility of a totalizing signifier for woman; women certainly exist, but as Don Juan learns, completing the set is impossible as he is always one-shy.⁴

Functionally, then, by conflating the Jewish and the feminine, the episode indicates the fantasy-dimension that forms the common ground for both racism and sexism. For man. On the feminine side, there are a few more options. A woman may be the phallus (Betty, the secretaries) or have it (Joan). Here we find The Good Place, a space of lounge chairs, nicely stocked bars, and expensive hotel rooms that may have been lost to us today but for which there is still a vacant spot waiting (we like to watch). And this Good Place is *authentic* insofar as it fits nicely into the hole we have prepared for it (nostalgia for lost excesses, sacrificed jouissance projected into the past). The Good Place offers a fantasy of completeness that is bolstered by what McGowan sees as the primary work of cinema. Such a cinema of fantasy "allows the subject to relate to the lost object as an object that is simply out of reach. In fantasy, a spatial or temporal barrier, rather than an ontological one, intervenes between the subject and the lost object" (24). So functions nostalgia as a recollection of an earlier time when things were simpler, men were real men and women were beautiful and one knew one's place in the world.

But the feminine may also indicate a lack in the Other (the Other qua "the locus in which everything that can be articulated on the basis of the signifier comes to be inscribed," *Encore* 81). Instead of being inscribed as a masculine subject — $\$$, castrated (Joan)—or as the phallic support for masculine jouissance (Betty, the secretaries), the feminine may also be drawn in terms of her relationship to the (lack in the) Other— $S(A)$ —such that "she is doubled, that she is not whole, since she can also have a relation with Φ " (81). This second alternative has more to do with desire as it suggests that, as a Place That Can

Never Be, such a rapport not only cannot exist, but never has existed except in the search for it. With S(A), there is something (S) that cannot be accounted for in the set of all signifiers (the Other, A) and is conspicuous precisely because it is absent. From this feminine (and apparently Jewish) subject position, exile is the essential state of things.

4. Babylon

That Don Draper isn't included among the other men, that he can indeed be the hero of the story—given that he has lied about his past by taking on the identity of a dead man, that he has a mistress, and that he's wooing a third woman—is made possible in the series because Draper is presented as a man chasing desire itself, not covering that lack (of an object) with fantasy. In his scene with Rachel and throughout the series, Draper is interrogating the lack in the Other qua women, etc. in hopes of coming to terms with the Whitman/Draper split so that his own past remains there, an efficient but not a necessary cause for his current conflict. The irony of the show (and of life) is that his interrogation is what keeps the boat afloat, as it were. The attempt to lay the past to rest (or to find the signifier) is what keeps it present, reifying lack as a contemporary, contingent circumstance, not a bad childhood that can be overcome or a lost utopia that one must find one's way back to.

In the final scene, Draper has gone to a café with his bohemian girlfriend and one of her other boyfriends. Here, they discuss the commercialization of art in terms that evoke thoughts of the commercialization of sex. Finally, in order to both pull the themes of the episode together and to indicate the ambivalences we have been discussing, there is a performance Psalm 137 from which the episode takes its name. Over this lament of Jewish exile we are shown Draper framed in/by the bent arm of his bohemian girlfriend and surrounded (via montage) by the other women in the episode. We see Betty putting lipstick on their daughter. We see Rachel arranging men's ties at her store. And, finally, we see Joan and Roger leaving the hotel discreetly, separately, and ultimately waiting in silence at the curb, as far apart as the screen allows. Joan is carrying the bird cage.

By placing Draper in the midst of these women, these visuals—along with the psalm of exile—precisely indicate Draper's doubling. On the one hand, he is the enjoying father that functions as the phallic support for the masculine fantasy that direct enjoyment (*jouissance*) is possible (or, for us, that it once was possible; that we have effectively sacrificed that *jouissance* is paradoxically what allows us to enjoy the show). On the other hand, Draper is the signifier for the not-whole. He is a stranger even to himself, and when he asks Rachel "What is the difference" between Jews and non-Jews, between women and men, we have to recognize that Draper is also asking about himself and Dick Whitman, himself and the other men, etc., and that the only answer is exile. Something is not accounted for in the symbolic order. And that something is desire. If Don Draper can be considered at all ethical, he is so insofar as he does not give up on his desire (settling for simple masculine fantasy) and he is likewise excluded as

both a mythic father (thus, from the scene behind glass) and as a (feminine) subject interrogating his place with/in the Other. The series as it stands is Draper's search for desire itself and, like Odysseus, searching makes him heroic.

Ultimately, the appeal of *Mad Men* may be the fact of its double nature bolstered by Don Draper's existential dilemmas. The work of *Mad Men* is the work of Don Draper. The series is a Good Place that we might wish to return to—a fantasy of a simpler and more stylish time, an enjoyment that we have since lost.⁵ But it is also a Place That Can Never Be, a presentation of time that could never exist as we experience it, a 21st century 1960 that displays for us what we always have been missing from behind one-way glass.

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Notes

¹ Some exceptions to this would be *The Shield* on FX, HBO's *The Sopranos*, and others in which sexism/racism are combined with 21st century explicitness so that the former is a kind of the latter.

² An obvious example with this move in a series set contemporarily would be *The Sopranos* (the shows share an executive producer), where we're dealing for the most part with an alien subgroup who don't live by the same rules we do (this portrayal is one reason Italian American anti-defamation groups were upset), so one way of imagining the people of the past would be as an ethnic and cultural minority.

³ For more on trauma and the construction of cause after the fact, see Richardson, JAC 24.2.

⁴ Lacan, Encore: *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, 79. It is in this way we should understand Lacan's proclamation that woman is not-whole; she is not wholly defined by the phallic signifier.

⁵ It is difficult not to notice the rampant cigarette smoking in the show, for instance. On this topic, executive producer Matthew Weiner responds: "I've been shocked by the reaction to the smoking in the series. People are in cultural denial to its existence, when it really didn't disappear in the workplace until the 1990's. There's a real moral superiority about it now, but back then it was really as common as eating. I wanted the smoking in the show because it was such a great irony. To see a society in this mass denial, where adults are unaware of what they're doing. The image of who we are and what's being sold to us and what the reality of it is—it's such an integral part of that irony." (TV Time Machine interview transcribed at TVBarn.com, <http://blogs.kansascity.com/tvbarn/2008/12/1-hour-intervie.html>)

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T-Shirts: Urban Language of Remembrance

A recent article appeared in *The Baltimore Sun* entitled, “Clothed in Grief for City’s Dead.” The purpose of the article was to examine “words of mourning” seen on T-shirts worn by young adults to commemorate the passing of friends or of family members, especially death as a result of street or of domestic violence. According to the author, in street vernacular these are known as *Rest in Peace T-shirts*. Further inquiry reveals that they are popular articles of clothing worn primarily by males whose friends or relatives, also usually males, have succumbed to death.

Historically, individuals use other forms of expression to show grief on the passing of a loved one or to keep the departed individual’s memory alive. In the inner-city of Baltimore where this phenomenon of memorial T-shirts appears, besides other traditional expressions, graffiti may be used to memorialize individuals, and it can be seen on walls, on sidewalks, or on impromptu signs erected to mark the passing of individuals. However, the presence of T-shirts to mark the passing of individuals has greater impact than the message found on graffiti since graffiti is stationary, and the reach of the message is limited to those persons who happen to be present in a specific location where it posted. Therefore, unlike graffiti as a mode of communication, the message observed on memorial T-shirts, can be referred to as a *language of remembrance* and this new term will be used as an operational definition throughout this article.

It is notable that communication seen on T-shirts, unlike messages seen on articles of clothing present on other occasions (e.g., athletic events, college affiliation, family reunions), has entered the culture as a different medium of communication. Moreover, this new medium of communication has become a feature of certain individuals in inner-city life.

To be considered as a language of remembrance, the language of T-shirts must be emotional in content, used to remember the passing of someone, and visually displayed on a T-shirt. Having read the article by the reporter of *The Baltimore Sun*, two further questions needed to be asked: First, how do messages seen on T-shirts communicate remembrance? Second, how does the language seen on these specific T-shirts in an urban setting reveal elements of popular culture?

Mode of Study

Data for this study were obtained from observational research methods carried out in Baltimore City. Several places were visited (primarily malls and the urban university where the author is employed), obviously where people congregate in large numbers. Upon being informed of the research, several colleagues and students contributed examples of messages noted on T-shirts.

Various Features to the Data Set

It should be noted that several T-shirts had the same message (e.g., *In Loving Memory*); therefore, there was an element of repetition of messages in the study. In addition, it should be pointed out that not all T-shirts with language could be considered as data relevant to the study. For example, a T-shirt inscribed with the language of *Original Gangsta [sic]* might convey a negative or a positive emotional message from the individual who wears that article of clothing to readers of the message. That particular message could be considered as a commercial device to enhance the sales of a fashionable article of clothing but not a memorial message. Therefore, some forms of language seen on T-shirts are in keeping with current clothing trends or are in keeping with the larger youth and hip-hop culture where certain forms of clothing mark the wearer as a member of that subculture. In instances of this type, where choice of language is ambiguous, judicious decision-making was applied as to what constitutes a language of remembrance and whether such messages could be included in the data.

Other researchers have been interested in the general topic of clothing (Crane 87–88). Daniel Roche, for example, examined the culture of clothing in earlier times, especially the clothing of uniforms as a reflection of societal change (44). According to past investigators, clothing conveys psychological and cultural values. Psychologically, clothing tells viewers something about the way in which the wearers see themselves. This perspective could be positive or negative. Culturally, clothing communicates a shared sense of beliefs and values from wearers to observers within the same cultural world. For example, a person who wears a T-shirt with a picture of his or her favorite sports team expresses a shared belief to others who have a close affinity with that particular sports team. When coupled with written language, the message adds an element that strengthens communication from wearers to readers. Essentially, it becomes an issue of shared meaning.

Modes of Communication

Generally, when discussing communication, it is primarily oral communication that is being referenced. Obviously, however, other forms of communication are used to convey a message from one individual to another (e.g., bells, drums, sign language, text messages). Minimally, communication involves a message directed to someone, through a specific medium, to an audience. With that minimalist view of communication, the message written on T-shirts is a form of communication. The message conveyed on an article of clothing is directed from a sender, usually a family member or a friend of the deceased individual, to an audience, sometimes near and sometimes far. But is there more to the message written on T-shirts than what readers see?

It should be noted that for written discourse, unlike speech, writers have to anticipate the informational needs of the recipients regarding what will maintain interests without feedback. As Deborah Schifrin has noted, one approach in effective written discourse is the use of metaphor and visual imagery (187). This

approach of reader appeal seems to be true in the case of how composers of the message of T-shirts use language and imagery to obtain that objective.

Part of the lore of T-shirts, as an expression of remembrance, is the language that is found on these garments. The language is direct and conveys sentiments from the addresser to the addressee. Notice the brevity of these initials *R.I.P.* on a T-shirt. They say a lot without using any words. In several instances, imagery and metaphor are salient features of the language of remembrance. Although elements of color, size, and texture have some significance on the final appearance of the message of T-shirts, what the message conveys is a critical element of these forms of clothing. Take, for instance, the message that reads: *Gone But Never Forgotten*. It is here that a sender of the message and the audience come together in a symbiotic relationship. There is a sense of agreement on the part of the sender that the reader would share the view that the departed individual would always be remembered.

If the message is to have its greatest effect, the messenger must take into account a number of factors that influence the power of the message. First, the audience is a central feature in communication. Not to know one's audience creates problems for the messenger. Notice the use of commercials in modern life as companies that sell beverages, primarily various brands of beer and athletic footwear, take into account a certain audience, primarily middle-age and urban youth. Based on the language and the accompanying visual elements (e.g., beach setting, game watching) that co-occur with commercials, the composers of these messages must take the typical viewing audience of a particular program into account if the message is to have its greatest effect.

Furthermore, adequate communication gets us into the area of language processing. Effective communication is determined by the way in which individuals process language. In this case, since the language of remembrance is done primarily with words and with phrases, as opposed to complete sentences, the lexicon is a good place to begin a brief analysis of language processing.

Language Processing

In lexical processing, R. Reed Hunt and Henry Ellis advanced the notion of *ordered search theory* in that individuals select words based on the relative frequency of a word's meaning (321). In the event that the most frequent use of the word does not meet the reader's expectation, the next most frequent use of the word is activated. Another perspective on lexical processing, *reordered access theory*, is proposed by Susan Duffy et al (qtd. in Hunt and Ellis 323). The central aim of this theory is that all meanings of a word are initially activated, but non-lexical sources of information can influence the speed or strength with which the various meanings are activated (323). As is the case with *ordered search theory*, frequency of meaning will be activated quickly or strongly.

When readers process the message of remembrance, they may use one or both of these systems of lexical language processes noted above. The language written on T-shirts has no value unless readers can process it in a manner that is

in keeping with what the sender intends. Take this example of a language of remembrance: *Another Dead Soldier*. In keeping with search order theory, readers might settle for the first meaning of the word *soldier*, a person involved in an army or in military conflict. If that is not the intended meaning of the word *soldier*, other meanings appear. These meanings might include a hired individual, one who works for a specified cause, an enlisted person, as distinct from an officer. When comprehension occurs, the process has been successfully carried out. Here comprehension is successful if it comes as close as possible to the sender's intended message. Take, for example, the meaning observed on a T-shirt that influenced this paper: *Sky is the Limit*. Composers of the message and its readers must agree on some common meaning of this statement. In other words, senders and readers of the language of remembrance must agree that the words used to describe the life of the deceased person pertain to a life of endless potential. This common set of words, including the examples mentioned above, must convey the meaning of remembrance. The concept of similarity of meaning is part of what John Field refers to as *lexical sets*. Lexical sets pertain to words that are grouped together in the mind that have a common semantic value (50). Thus, words of remembrance, although they vary linguistically, must convey common semantic values to readers.

In many instances, a picture of the deceased appeared on the T-shirt. The addition of a visual element to the written word adds an element of gravity to the message on T-shirts. Given the limited space that T-shirts allow, messages must be succinct. The focus is less on traditional forms of syntax and vocabulary and more on a direct form of communication. Thus, a message that says *Another Dead Soldier* does not conform to traditional modes of syntactic correctness.

Moments of mourning and remembrance are highly charged emotional events, and individuals must find an outlet for the emotional pain experienced on such occasions. In addition to the cards, hugs, tears, and words of condolence found at such moments of remembrance and mourning, the presence of T-shirts, with words and pictures of the deceased person to be remembered, adds another expression of memory and caring by those who wear them.

Collectively, these methods of expression to show remembrance are cultural in that they represent a collective way of life, beliefs, and values. As Stuart Hall argues, culture is about feelings, attachment, and emotions, as well as concepts and ideas (2). Certainly, language is a vehicle to bring these ideas into fruition. Language is representational, and representation is carried out through images, sounds, the written word, and so on (Hall 1). The message on a T-shirt that states *In Loving Memory* conveys a representation of deep feelings and an emotional expression to readers regarding the manner in which the deceased is regarded. If the goal is to evoke emotional responses on the part of readers, it may be concluded that the messages seen on T-shirts serve that purpose. Since language is a study of mental phenomenon, it is not out of place to include a brief remark between the connection of language and emotions.

Research into neuropsychology and neurophysiology has shown that areas of the brain, primarily the limbic system and amygdala where neurons project to the hypothalamus, are connected to the cerebral cortex, the so-called higher brain where certain areas of the brain (e.g., frontal and temporal lobes) are involved with language (Snyder 44). Such insights into brain structure and function have relevance here since language has neuroanatomical correlates. Therefore, the role that emotions play in shaping language of remembrance cannot be overlooked.

Even if the composer of the memorial message might not be able to be interviewed, it can be inferred that those individuals responsible for the structure of the messages take an emotional component of communication into account as they go about the task of designing T-shirts with an emotionally charged message. Thus composers of T-shirt language summon these emotional components of grief, loss, pain, and social ties in shaping communication and the tone of feeling that accompanies the way in which readers interpret the language of remembrance. This process of evoking emotional language, specifically that of remembrance, takes place whether the method of communication is oral or written. Zoltan Kovecses takes a similar view when he claims that “conscious feelings are expressed and spread through language” (36). Therefore, in composing the message of T-shirts as forms of remembrance, issues of emotion are central to such an undertaking.

Coupled with an emotional component of the message seen on T-shirts to denote remembrance, composers of T-shirt messages choose language that readers can easily comprehend. Unlike speech, where feedback is immediate, the language of T-shirts must be processed with no help from composers. An example of language that is easy to comprehend is *R.I.P.* This statement is a type of universal language to mark the departure of a loved one, and family and friends frequently use this choice of language to convey to others their sentiments about the deceased individual. Thus, the use of language and its emotional components are closely linked in conveying words of remembrance to readers of the language of T-shirts.

To this point, communication within a minimalist perspective has been considered and the chief concern is with the basic features of communication involving senders, a medium, and receivers of the message. However, a feature of communication that has relevance to this topic is discourse analysis.

T-shirt Language as Discourse

All forms of discourse address the functions of language, the structure of text, and the relationship between text and context. Discourse, according to Margaret Wetherell, is the study of language in use (14). One issue that is central to a study of discourse is that it considers the study of language as social action. In other words, analysts are interested in how such issues as social variables play a role in our understanding of language and how language use plays a role in social life (Holtgrave 1–2). To say that something is a social variable is to say that it takes on different values in specific contexts. Clothing,

as with other aspects of physical appearance, conveys various social aspects. Therefore, wearing a specific type or style of clothing and the manner in which it is worn conveys a message from wearers to readers about the wearer's ethnicity, income, religious affiliation, and social class. Regarding language or discourse, it, too, takes on different social variables, and the variables are constrained by factors such as the interlocutor's age, ethnicity, gender, setting, and purpose of communication. These factors must be considered for communication to be meaningful. They are similar to Dell Hymes' claim of communicative competence (58). On a similar note, Schiffriñ finds that writers, in much the same manner as speakers, "design their discourse for their projected recipients" (187).

On a related topic, Norman Fairclough, in his analysis of critical discourse, argues that communication depends on which social conventions are assumed to be held (3). This approach to discourse is part of the manner in which people interpret features of text. This is certainly the case with respect to the message documented on T-shirts in that the messenger has a specific message in mind and uses a specific method to transmit that message. As was mentioned above, written communication falls within the broader scope of language, and written communication on T-shirts is relevant for such a study.

Within the context of discourse analysis, meaning is constructed in terms of what users do with language. One area of meaning that can be deduced from this study of meaning is that analysts are concerned with social meaning (Barker and Galasinski 25). In the view of these researchers, "meaning is regulated by power which governs not only what can be said under determinate social and cultural conditions but who can speak, when, and where" (12). A key feature of this insight to meaning is power. Power here is not a means of suppressing someone. Rather, it is used in a sense of giving power to oneself. It is similar to Michel Foucault's use of the word "power" (55). This view of language and power also relates to an issue of identity. Individuals take on themselves the power to be in control of their lives and the way they present themselves in society. By using certain lexical items (e.g., *Fighter*), composers of T-shirt messages do just that.

An additional issue in a discussion of discourse analysis that has a place in this analysis of the language of remembrance is that of *speech acts*. The topic of speech acts might have been indirectly referenced to some extent in the previous pages when the number of words noted on T-shirts was discussed.

Speech Acts in Popular Culture

Beyond the traditional structural analysis of language (e.g., phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics), what individuals do with language is an area of language study that has come to the attention of analysts Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (214). The topic of speech acts began with the earlier works of Austin and Searle. Searle, for instance, was interested in what he terms "characterizations" of linguistic elements. That is, he was interested in such issues as whether an expression is used to refer, to make sense, or to analyze certain propositions (4). Although the adjective is *speech*, this can be extended

from speech to written forms of communication. With speech acts, the interest is in what individuals do with language, and written communication serves that purpose equally as well as the spoken form of communication. In discussing the concept of speech acts, the philosopher Paul Grice has established several guidelines or maxims in conversation, part of the broad cooperative principle. These maxims are *manner*, *quality*, *quantity*, and *relevance*. The notion of conversation can be incorporated with respect to T-shirts if, as previously noted, there is a minimalist principle of speaker and audience, in this case what readers encounter regarding the language of remembrance of T-shirts at these emotional events. One of Grice's maxims that is relevant here is *quantity*. By this maxim, communication should be fashioned with as many words as required, no more or no less.

Therefore, the message is short and to the point. A message that says *R.I.P.* says many things although it is constructed with three letters. It is not just a shortcut of sorts. There is more to the message than the letters seen can convey. It is supposed, for example, that the person, whose life is remembered, lived a life that was productive in the eyes of family and friends. In the end, the suggestion is that the departed one does so in peace.

Another maxim advanced by Grice is that of *relevance*. The maxim of relevance, according to Grice, has direct bearing on the issue being discussed. One could argue, and rightfully so, that the message of remembrance is in keeping with the event of sorrow. It would seem strange to find language that is not relevant. Relevance must also be in keeping with what messenger and audience share regarding the language of remembrance. A message that reads *In Loving Memory* suggests that the departed individual led a life that should be remembered. The principle of relevance, therefore, is a factor in composing the language of remembrance since the words chosen for this event should be in keeping with the overall theme of memory. Let us address the second of these topics: T-shirts and culture.

T-shirts and Popular Culture

Regarding the word *culture*, there is general consensus in defining the word as culture represents shared meaning to the extent that people interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves in ways to be understood by each other (Hall 2). For this study, I am using the word "culture" in much the same manner as Hall does above.

As an added note to this definition of culture, Ronald Inglehart reminds us that culture is an ever-changing phenomenon (xxi). Unlike earlier attempts to place a definition of culture into a dichotomy of folk versus urban (Storey 1), features of culture can be placed along a continuum. Forms of dress, for example, would be in keeping with the idea of a cultural continuum. Within the larger society, styles of dress are traditionally placed in categories of formal or informal, proper or improper. Today, however, there is a gradual progression along a dress-style continuum, regarding what employers and what students, for example, can wear at work or at school, respectively. In other words, individuals

may choose the type of dress style that is keeping with a specific social or with a specific occupational event. What was considered as acceptable or unacceptable modes of dress in the work place or in an academic setting in the past has yielded to a lessening of strict dress-code standards.

As for popular culture, consider Jib Fowles' claim that popular culture, among other aspects, is received by individuals (105). Moreover, Fowles presents several guidelines that are relevant to this investigation. First, he sees popular culture as modes of behavior received by individuals. Second, individuals turn symbols into meaning. Third, social behavior is less likely to be directed by traditional external protocol and more likely to take account of the emotional make up of individuals (106).

Taking the first of Fowles' observations and applying it to the T-shirt research, individuals who wear T-shirts assume that T-shirts, as modes of remembrance, are received by members of the group or by members of the larger community. Presently, it is common to see individuals wearing these modes of dress at funerals or after the funereal event has taken place. Previously, these forms of dress would be considered as inappropriate on such occasions. Gender is not an issue since males and females wear memorial T-shirts, although males appear to be the ones who are most frequent wearers.

Some members of society may ostracize members of the group who wear T-shirts to the funeral. Such individuals may consider these forms of clothing as demeaning to the local community or to the larger community. Unmindful of the negative views expressed by some individuals, the growing presence of T-shirts in the community where mortality takes place would support Fowles' claim in that T-shirts are cultural forms received by a majority of members of a specific community. Furthermore, as symbols, individuals wear T-shirts to present meanings beyond the shirts themselves. The interaction of symbols and the meaning associated with T-shirts are similar to the Saussurian view of *signifier* and *significant* (11–12). In other words, both the T-shirt and the social event reinforce each other to make meaning. Besides, this interaction is similar to Lemke's view of an *utterance*, a bridge between the linguistic and the social (21). This observation of arriving at meaning is similar to that proposed by Jacques Derrida in that "meaning is generated through the play of signifiers and not by reference to an independent object world it can never be fixed" (qtd. in Barker and Galasinski 10).

In addition, the language written on T-shirts, as forms of remembrance, would support Fowles' observation of breaking traditional external protocol. As was noted earlier, individuals use many mechanisms for remembering those who have passed on. These mechanisms may take the form of headstones, memorial services, shrines, and sympathy cards. Thus, when persons who use other forms of expression to show remembrance and grief are observed, agreement with the third of Fowles' points is possible in that the wearing of T-shirts, as modes of remembrance, defies traditional ways of showing respect and memory for those who have left family and friends. In short, they have used traditional forms of

clothing in a new way. This reconstruction of traditional ways of behavior into new forms is comparable to Dick Hebdige's concept of *bricolage* in which certain aspects of clothing in British culture have been reconfigured to give them new meaning (61). In short, it was the act of wearing meaning-laden objects in ways that is seen to violate customary modes of behavior. That is, T-shirt wearers use these objects that are different from what individuals would normally expect at such events.

The use of T-shirts as forms of cultural expression can reveal the way in which those involved in these cultural methods view themselves in the larger society. This perception can be placed within the topics of *cultural politics* and *cultural identity*.

Cultural Politics

Barker and Galasinski define the term cultural politics "as a series of collective social struggles organized around the nodal points of class, gender, race . . . to describe the social in terms of specific values and hope for consequences" (61). Within the definition of cultural politics, these analysts consider a place for language in that they place older forms of language within a new form and meaning. For these investigators, cultural politics is a way of taking charge of cultural elements, including forms of communication. Take the example observed on a T-shirt: *A Fighter Against Hunger*. The composers of the message have used the word "fighter" to convey a meaning that they have considered their own. Some persons might disagree with the meaning that messengers seek to convey with that T-shirt. However, within the realm of cultural politics, composers of the message have taken authority to use language in a manner that they regard as their own. In short, they have given a new meaning to the word "fighter."

To some readers, the word "fighter" might convey meanings similar to those intended by the sender. To others, the word might convey other meanings. For the messenger, the word "fighter" is structured in a new way. It is here that the semantic concepts of conceptual and associative meaning become apparent. Yule, for example, notes that conceptual meaning conveys the literal interpretation of a word. Associative meaning, on the other hand, pertains to the various associations that individuals attach to a word (100). Although the language observed on T-shirts tends to evoke an associative meaning, there must be some agreed upon common semantic value of the words since readers tend to draw various interpretations from these messages, as opposed to the conceptual meaning from them.

A major tenet of cultural politics is that things are not fixed but are changing. This view is also similar to that advanced by Derrida's notion of *difference* in that he sees events and the meaning of events as changing situations (65). Unlike a traditional view of a fixed approach to cultural events, terms such as *logo centric* and *phonocentric* have emerged from this view of culture as an ever-changing phenomenon. Regarding the language of T-shirts, the relevance of this view of culture as changing can be seen in that composers

of the message of remembrance, primarily, have changed the language and the meaning that have traditionally been associated with certain lexical items.

The manner in which older cultural forms are reinterpreted in new ways is closely allied with the idea of power. Power, according to Barker and Galasinski, is productive of the self that enables some kinds of knowledge and identities to exist while denying it to others (57). Cultural politics as power can be seen regarding the ownership claimed by messengers who place their message on T-shirts in the way that they impose new meanings on words. When a message on a T-shirt states *Only the Good Die Young*, the messenger has claimed ownership of the word “good” and perhaps the qualifier “only” as a way of taking charge of these units of language.

T-shirts and Cultural Identity

In addition to cultural politics, Baker and Galasinski find that *identity* also accompanies cultural politics. Here, too, the use of language is a tool for establishing identity. Identity, according to these analysts, is referred to as a “cut” in language (43). In assuming cultural identity, concepts (e.g., class, ethnicity, self) cannot be extended. There must be a temporary closure if some common agreement on identity is to be achieved. The term “cut” is used primarily by Hall in that individuals must construct a temporary halt in the open-ended manner in which meaning is achieved. Hall considers discourse and identity as part of the open-ended manner of arriving at meaning. It does not mean, however, that meaning is open-ended. There must be an element of closure for meaning to be achieved. For those who compose the language of remembrance noted on T-shirts, there must be an agreed upon definition of certain expressions. For the message *Only the Good Die Young*, this statement must include a cut or some constraint regarding such terms as “good” or “young.” In short, there are boundaries to those words. Cultural identity is associated with cultural politics in that it gives individuals the power to name and the power to legitimate the social world (Barker and Galasinski 56).

On a related topic, Carmen Fought has pointed out that, cultural identity, as it pertains to language, is also accomplished through a social process, involving the interaction with members of an in-group or with members of an out-group. Cultural identity, as she further notes, does not take place in a vacuum or inside the individual’s head (35–37). The language on a T-shirt that states *Only the Good Die Young* makes the point that the messenger takes into account those members who are considered as part of the in-group in that they share certain experiences and have a worldview similar to that of the messenger. In addition, the message, if carefully examined, should reach to others outside the group. For example, a message that states *Rest Peacefully* conveys a shared perspective from messenger to audience. After all, meaning is the final aim of messages sent by writers to readers.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to place the messages seen on T-shirts within a discussion of language and remembrance. To do so, the language of T-shirts was placed within the general context of communication. What for casual observers might be a phenomenon of urban youth can be examined from the perspective of discourse. Specifically, language processing and the role of lexical choices were reviewed. In addition, the topic of the language of remembrance within popular culture, defined as a collective mode of thinking and doing, was investigated. Furthermore, a major feature of discourse as it pertains to this essay is that of cultural politics and cultural identity. It is in the area of cultural politics that individuals define themselves in a power relationship to existing beliefs and existing norms of behavior. Using perspectives from critical discourse analysis, the research drew on the theoretical framework of critical analysis discourse, using such concepts as power, identity, and speech acts. It is hoped that future studies on this topic might involve other forms of language seen on T-shirts and at other settings to determine the central purpose of language on these forms of clothing.

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A Tale of Metamorphosis: Zhang Huan's *My New York*

"The body is a big sagacity, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a flock and a shepherd."

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

In times of trouble, we search for a higher being with more power who could give us at least an impression that he—it has been almost always “he” with the exception of the Bionic Women—would save us all and deliver us to a better world. The people of Metropolis need an interplanetary exile like Superman; citizens of Gotham City cannot live peacefully without the presence of a reclusive millionaire in black attire called Batman; and New Yorkers benefit from the comforts of their cosmopolitan city thanks to Spider-Man. However imaginary American superheroes are, these characters from comic books and Hollywood movies have satisfied the psychological needs of the public (who search for divine images that are closer to our world) with physical and sometimes violent superpowers and contradicting personal flaws, issues, and doubts.

Chinese performance artist Zhang Huan takes the role of American superheroes in his performance of *My New York*, the first performance piece he did after 9/11. For the 2002 Whitney Biennial, the artist choreographed a tale of metamorphosis. He was initially draped in a white cloth, stood on a wooden panel, and was brought to the museum courtyard. With removal of the cloth, his raw meat-suit was in full view. Its grandiosity hid the actual lean body of the artist and allowed a super-powerful appearance. The newly transformed Meat-Man was set down on the ground, and instead of performing eye-popping martial acts, he simply walked through the crowd, distributed white doves to pedestrians, and withdrew from the scene by going back into the museum.

Despite some critics' acclaim that his work presents the “gaze of the Orient,” Zhang’s performance does not pander to Western concepts of Chineseness through his Orientalist apparatus.¹ While the artist has established his fame in China (later internationally through various performance pieces where he tested the endurance of his own body in extreme circumstances and turned his body into a kind of “existential metaphor”) questioning Chinese heritage and society, his artistic quest has globalized to examine a sense of belonging and the issue of assimilation in different geographical locations—starting with *My America* (1999), *My Australia* (2000), *My Japan* (2001), *My Sydney* (2004), *My Boston* (2005), *My Rome* (2005), and *My Switzerland* (2005).² Critic Roselee Goldberg found the unifying subject in these works to be “a distillation of the geographies.”³ While *My New York* should be understood in

a larger context of Zhang Huan's artistic repertoire that confronts the cultural confluence and conflicts, I argue that it does not exploit his "Chinese-ness" but problematizes our binary schema of the worldview. The performance is not an exotic tableau of the Asian body in the Euro-centric American continent, but rather a familiar tableau of the hefty American bodybuilder's body through metamorphosis of a slim Chinese man. Zhang Huan presents a complex saga of the body through an easily recognizable heroic icon that is "a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace" in Friedrich Nietzsche's term, the powerful and the powerless, and the strong and the weak. This was exactly what the artist noticed in newly transformed post-9/11 New York City where, according to Zhang himself, "many things appear very strong, but in actuality they are very weak."⁴ Like American superheroes who were granted superpowers but underwent psychological traumas and suffered from insecurity, the artist found the very same propensity in the city of New York and made it his subject.

Like Batman's black armor and Spider-Man's spandex suit, Meat-Man requires a beefy suit as the symbol of his super powers. It aggrandizes the body and bestows the aura of aggressive might and commanding vigor to the person. It makes him super-human. It transforms the ordinary man into a superior creature. Unlike those fictional superheroes' operative outfits, however, Meat-Man's costume does not facilitate better performance but rather prohibits it since his beef costume was incredibly heavy—over 110 pounds (50 kilograms)—and caused him to struggle while walking.⁵ This impracticality of the suit makes the process of self-aggrandizing neither pompous nor outlandish but rather burdensome.

The use of meat as artistic medium has been explored by other contemporary artists like Jana Sterbak whose *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* (1987) presents a dress stitched together from 60 pounds of heavily salted and air-dried raw flank steak and leaves it on the gallery floor to show the natural aging process. Like *Vanitas* that meditates on the brevity of life and the inevitability of death, *My New York* exaggerates the stinking, mortal, weighty flesh of the body through the presence of meat that to an extent the medium becomes the very subject matter itself. Unlike *Vanitas* that differentiates the body of the artist and the meat dress and addresses more exclusively on vanity of fashion and beauty, Zhang's work does not allow the viewer to see rotting meat for the vanitas lesson, as Meat-Man disappears from our view before meat decomposes. Instead, his work leads us to see gluttony of humanity. He treats the material not only as a marker of the body's mortality but also as part of the body itself. The meat outfit here is not meant to be construed as a dress but as the excessive body itself formed by a high protein diet. The muscles of the meat body are over-sculpted towards the level of Mr. America's surreal bodies. As the artist put it himself:

In New York I see many body builders who, for long periods of time, do training exercises beyond their bodies' capabilities.

They have every kind of vitamin or supplement imaginable in their bodies, oftentimes it's more than their hearts can bear . . . A body builder needs over ten years to create this kind of effect, but I became a body builder overnight.⁶

In this performance where he claims the city to be his own, he becomes an American bodybuilder, for he believes Bally Total Fitness (and other fitness clubs in every other block of Manhattan) and its muscle-building craze reflect the current socio-political mood of the city that requires a new facade. New York City, which has been claimed and self-claimed to be the center of art, music, theater, finance, and even the world in general (as filmmaker Ric Burns proudly entitled his PBS documentary on the rise and fall of the World Trade Center) becomes a victim of terrorism.⁷ Its unabashed faith in optimism and hope seems to be shaken by the traumatizing experience of 9/11. Understandably, the reactions that followed were about being preemptive. As the U.S. government takes preventive measures and re-strengthens its iconic image of the world's only superpower as part of its relief effort to alleviate and ease New Yorkers' intimidations and fright, Zhang provides a commanding facade for the city through an iconography of the bodybuilder which connotes vigor, strength, and resilience. Beneath the powerful musculature, however, Zhang reveals in his statement that Meat-man's body is physically overloaded just as bodybuilders' bodies that appear robust are in fact medically overburdened and stressed out. Is this disclosure his sly implication that this city that appears so spirited might be also internally weakened?

Furthermore Meat-man's gluttonous physique seems to target America's meat-oriented food culture, and the profit-driven cattle and beef industries in particular, as well as its obsessive fascination with muscle building workouts. The amount of meat all stitched together to form a whole human body enlightens the viewer how our dietary system relies on the beef industry (if one is not a vegetarian). Panic over the spread of mad cow disease and its human analogue, the new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, did not truly grasp the United States, compared to Western Europe. By 2003, voluntary recalls for more than 10,000 pounds of beef took place for fear of an epidemic, two thirds of the American export market for beef had dried up as Asian countries banned imports of American beef, and stocks of the McDonald's and Tyson Food, the world's biggest meat processor, fell exponentially.⁸ As meat and bone meal—a form of animal feed rendered from cows and fed to cows—is blamed for spreading the epidemic, the very disease is often considered to be the ultimate fallout of human greed that broke the natural food chain. Cows should be grass-fed, but in the name of better taste and marbling which would guarantee better sales, they have been forced to feed on their own species, which has resulted in a pandemic. Exposure of interior human muscles materialized by unsafe beef in Zhang's performance redirects the viewer's focus from the fascinating beauty of surreal musculature of Meat-man to the dangers of human greed.

In this view of the interior muscles of Meat-Man, the viewer realizes what we encounter is not really the superheroic being but a victimized being whose skin is flayed. Meat-man is not wearing a meat-suit but appears on the streets minus his skin. His skin seems to have been stripped off as a form of martyrdom like Saint Bartholomew (who was flayed alive and then crucified upside down for refusing to worship pagan gods). As Michelangelo depicted his self-portrait on the flayed skin of Saint Bartholomew in the *Last Judgment* of the Sistine Chapel, Zhang Huan seems to provide a reversed version of self-portrait in this image of the body without skin. While Zhang himself does not comment on any Christian connotations here, religious sentimentality in *My New York* is prominent, especially considering Meat-man's only action during the performance. His action is not like those in Hollywood superhero movies loaded with special effects and stuffed with eye-straining action sequences designed to leave you glutted with sensation, but is a very muted, quiet mission of handing out doves to bystanders in the streets so that they can free the birds. The doves, a symbol of peace, reconciliation, and liberation, seem to be the reason why Meat-man had to suffer from being flayed alive. The skinlessness of Meat-man must be an inevitable consequence to save these peaceful creatures. The viewers are only witnessing the end sequence of a heroic martyr who seems to have gone through excruciating hardships to emancipate the doves. The moment of climax is over and we are only allowed to rejoice in this last scene of redemption.

The unsaid, unexplained, hidden narrative of Zhang's performance has a Buddhist allusion since the very act of liberating the doves references "the Buddhist tradition of setting live animals free to accumulate grace."⁹ At this juncture, his references to Christianity and Buddhism cross over. At this point of convergence, we encounter irony. Meat-man's reenactment of the peace-keeping activities of American fictional superheroes and Buddhism during his promenade contradicts the body of meat itself. Beef indicates violence in Asian Buddhist cultures due to its link to killing of animals and it is rather discouraged to feed on meat. But Meat-man's over-muscular body itself also signifies near-cannibalism since he must have eaten his brethren to maintain this level of musculature, which contradicts the very act of promoting peace. As the post-9/11 United States has connected the meaning of peace and peace-keeping with preemptive strikes, Meat-man, in *My New York*, seems to question the very meaning of peace. Zhang's performance is not an example of ridicule or satire, not a political criticism against war, but rather a kind of self-awareness that realizes ironies and complexities in the meaning of peace and violence as they converge or intersect so frequently.

The viewer's unsettled mind after the awakening can be relieved knowing the whereabouts of the lost flayed skin of Meat-man. Where is the skin of Meat-man? It seems to belong to the Buddha. As recent scholars and art critics like Pernilla Holmes, Jacquelyn Bass, and Mary Jane Jacob argue, Zhang Huan's latest works gradually concern Buddhism and its meanings and often feature direct Buddhist images.¹⁰ Where is Meat-man's original cow skin? We find the

lost flayed skin in the face of the Buddha that is made of cow hide. Sculpted like bas-relief, the Buddha's face with the archaic smile of Ancient Greece soothes the viewer and provides relief. It is like the Christian faith that addresses Saint Bartholomew's pain and suffering during his martyrdom because he is compensated greatly by God as he is admitted to the heavenly kingdom. The persecuted image of an overmuscular man seems to be transformed into an image of the enlightened being in Nirvana. The artist affirms that to him art is "another kind of religion" that provides a "feeling to save" people—Christians and Buddhists alike—and eases their suffering.¹¹ This redemptive component of art is enacted in *My New York* and grants Meat-man a super-heroic appearance in which the viewer finds consolation.

Zhang Huan's Meat Man denies our easy access to the body. Instead of making statements, Meat-Man poses questions about our certain convictions in what is good, bad, right, or wrong, and presents his own case as an ambiguous being that can be either, neither, and both. The metamorphosis happening here does not aspire to create another superhero for American popular culture or a Chinese substitute but complicates the meaning of the body as it oscillates between humanity and animality, the power and the powerless, war and peace, Christian and Buddhist, the East and the West, and good and evil. It is both an evocation of brutality and an inspiration for compassion. The body of Meat Man is a plurality with one sense.

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Notes

¹ David Gleeson, "Zhang Huan," *Art Papers* 27, no. 5 (September/October 2003), 60. For the artist's own view on his earlier performance pieces, see Qian Shijian, "Performing Bodies: Zhang Huan, Ma Liuming, and Performance Art in China," *Art Journal* 58, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 60–79.

² Mathieu Borysewicz, "Zhang Huan at Deitch Projects," *Art in America* 88, no. 10 (October 2000), 168–169.

³ Roselee Goldberg, "Zhang Huan at Luhring Augustine," *Artforum* 40, no. 7 (March 2002), 139.

⁴ Quoted in Yilmaz Dziewior, "Self-Made Man," *Zhang Huan* (London: Phaidon, 2009), 75.

⁵ Zhang Huan, "A Piece of Nothing," in *Zhang Huan: Altered States* (Milano: Edizioni Charta and Asia Society, 2007), 95.

⁶ Zhang Huan, "My New York." <http://www.zhanghuan.com>

⁷ Rick Burns, *The Center of the World-New York*, PBS American Experience Series (2003).

⁸ Sandra Blakeslee, "Stringent Steps Taken By U.S. On Cow Illness" *New York Times*, January 14, 2001; Matthew L. Wald, "Mad Cow Disease in the United States: The Overview; U.S. Scours Files to Trace Source of Mad Cow Case," *New York Times*, December 25, 2003.

⁹ Eleanor Heartney, "Zhang Huan: Becoming the Body," in *Zhang Huan: Altered States* (Milano: Edizioni Charta and Asia Society, 2007), 45.

¹⁰ For more information, see Pernilla Holmes, et al., *Buddha and Ash* (London: Haunch of Venison, 2008); Jacquelynn Bass and Mary Jane Jacob, eds., *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹¹ <http://www.zhanghuan.com>

How Now, Voyager? “Proper” Bostonians on Film

Certain clichés characterize the depiction of the “Proper Bostonian” in Hollywood films: a curious mid-Atlantic accent with its signature broad “a” and dropped “r”, stiffness of demeanor, correct dress, unvarying habits, unflappable rectitude, and proud provincialism are usually showcased, to the extent that they are now encoded culturally. Sometimes, the veneer of puritan pride is scratched away to reveal personal or spiritual corruption.

This paper will discuss performances ranging from Bette Davis versus Gladys Cooper in *Now, Voyager* (1942), Basil Rathbone versus Spencer Tracy in *The Last Hurrah* (1958), Ryan O’Neill against Ray Milland in *Love Story* (1970) to Paul Newman versus James Mason in *The Verdict* (1982). We will conclude though, with one Proper Bostonian who emerges immaculate from the harrowing of the hell that is the world beyond Boston. (With the exception of *The Last Hurrah*, each of these films has a crucial sequence that takes place far from Beacon Hill.) The conclusion will also note the almost de Certeauvian tactical triumph of one Proper Bostonian.

Though it may be misunderstood or despised by outsiders, the Proper Bostonian code is occasionally challenged from within, as we see in John P. Marquand’s satires. Marquand’s mild sarcasm via the merely befuddled characters in *The Late George Apley* is diluted into blandness by the film, and the harsher critique offered by the anguish of *H.M. Pulham Esq.*’s title protagonist, has its major punch pulled by the demands of the Hollywood Production Code. The film excises the decade-long affair between Pulham’s wife and his best friend, an affair that Pulham neither acknowledges nor seems to even suspect. The conflict between Boston and New York City is dramatized by a youthful Pulham’s sojourn as an advertising executive in New York. He falls in love with a free spirited colleague, and for a moment seems ready to leave Back Bay behind. Though the film deletes even a hint of adultery, it retains Pulham’s shrugging betrothal to “the right girl.” The screenplay mainly treats Robert Young’s regret that he let Heddy Lamarr slip from his grasp when he failed to remain in Manhattan with her and answered his father’s importuning that he return where he belonged. From the perspective of pure cinema, King Vidor’s opening sequence is a perfect example of cutting to establish context—indeed it is textbook Pudovkin. We see Robert Young as Pulham fussing over every detail of his wardrobe and household trappings, then he makes sure his terrier is properly accoutered for their walk, and we observe how this is part of an unvarying routine, which we will see played out again to reconfirm Pulham’s complacence. Contrast these richly textured sequences with the flat presentations in the *Apley* film; Colman’s constitutionals are plot functions, not character revelations. He might as well have described them in dialogue; they

are irrelevant cinematically. Be that as it may, both films retain hints of Marquand's impulse to unseat the Proper Bostonian from his cultural easy chair. John Ford's *The Last Hurrah*, true to the spirit of Edwin O'Connor's novel sends up the Proper Bostonian for purely comic effect. Later, more lacerating depictions of the Proper Bostonian, in *Love Story* and *The Verdict*, will offer the superficial traits of Boston Brahminism as evidence of villainy.

From Hollywood's perspective, "Boston" is very much a foreign country; its inhabitants, whether Boston Brahmin or Boston-Irish, are othered—seeming to be voyagers on the verge of breaking down in the alien corn—for it is not unusual for a departure from Boston to catalyze a crisis. "Boston" is not so much a place as a state of mind or being, a *mentalité*—and the Proper Bostonian is a creation of cultural locution as much as location. One can hardly comment on "cultural location" without drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha. Recall Bhabha's comments on V.S. Naipaul, who remains one of the most controversial "Englishman" alive (*The Location of Culture* 148 ff.). Bhabha draws attention to Sir Vidia as a writer who makes almost everyone uncomfortable, mostly because he refuses to be a "third world" writer. He is a Trinidadian by birth, Indian by heritage, and British by choice. It is worth noting that recently Bhabha was named by the *Boston Globe* as one of the ten most fashionable Bostonians. For this article, Bhabha was quite dramatically photographed in a striking chalkstripe suit (Agnew 28). Of course in a sense, Naipaul is not "British," nor can Bhabha be a Proper Bostonian—and the situation is doubly complicated by Bhabha's being of the Persian minority of Mumbai (Bhabha xii). Such complex permutations of identity are far from the cinematic certainties of the Proper Bostonian on film.

Bhabha's "locating" culture begins with his assertion: "It is the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the *beyond*" (Bhabha 1). And he emphasizes the way we define our "presence" by noting the prevalence of the prefix "post" as applied to "modernism," "feminism," "colonialism," etc. To Bhabha "the beyond" is a new horizon—to which I offer the response of the apocryphal Proper Boston Lady who upon being encouraged to travel abroad sniffed: "Why should I go there, when I'm already here?" It would seem proof positive that Bhabha's remonstrance that "singularities of class or gender" as primary conceptual or organizational categories have been left behind shows us that not only is the concept of the Proper Bostonian null, but the world of the Boston Brahmin is a void.

What is more, the "Protestant establishment" famously analyzed by E. Digby Baltzell is by no means the ascendancy it was. Let us dismiss once and for all the notion that some sort of Eastern Seaboard Elite maintains control—or even much influence on the "master narrative" of American culture. Consider a recent episode of *Grey's Anatomy* in which Dr. Addison Forbes Montgomery desperately retreats to the hospital chapel to pray for her critically ill brother Dr. Archer Forbes Montgomery. There she is "saved" by the bisexual Latina Dr. Callie Torres, who coolly demonstrates to her how to pray; in Dr. Torres' case:

asking her Blessed Lord to offer guidance in her latest lesbian love quest. Gone it would seem are the days of easeful authority wherein the Upper Cruster holds and keeps the upper hand.

Yet this does not prevent the Proper Bostonian from becoming an iteration that for us is indeed a sort of othered identification, and to use the Barthesian lexicon Homi Bhabha fluidly employs, it is indeed a possessor of "mythic prestige" redolent of a rich "symbolic consciousness" (Bhabha 70). And if we follow Bhabha's instruction, it follows therefore that we must desire the Other. The ambivalence in this particular instance has a marvelous historical/literary avatar in William Dean Howells, the Ohioan who made his pilgrimage to Boston, but whose later relocation to Manhattan signaled the city's descent from Athens of America to banned-book-ridden backwater. Thenceforth, its denizens might be perceived as having the romance of decay—something like decadent Venetians perhaps. This also allows us to draw on Clifford Geertz's construction of the moment of comprehension of another culture as akin to getting a joke (*Local Knowledge* 80). Yet we must also consider something beyond the facility of decadence; recall the earlier, fundamental change in the culture of the city as it was transformed from hotbed of rebellion prior to the American Revolution to bastion of good taste and morals a century later. What is more, a place regarded as the most "English" city in America—certainly that is the heart of Beebe's argument about the city's culture—thereby we have seen Boston exchange the rebel's liberty cap for the epigone's hat-in-hand, and foredoom itself to secondary status even as it grasped the laurels.

Consider the opening sequence in *Now, Voyager* in which a series of shots gradually take us inside the Vale mansion—impossibly located on Marlborough St. in Back Bay. Impossible as this absurdly imposing edifice has a driveway, lawn jockey, and the name "Vale" imposingly engraved in stone. (Features that Olive Higgins Prouty, author of the film's source, found laughable.) The camera takes us inside to the well-drilled hustle and bustle of the household preparing for the arrival of teatime guests—and one intruder. The servants settle down; all is in readiness; the mise-en-scène holds its breath. This moment is shattered by the tapping of a man's pipe on a, no doubt, antique China vase. "Messy things pipes, I like 'em" explains Dr. Jaquith to an unflappable footman. Claude Rains' Jaquith is of course the intruding psychiatrist challenging instantly the decorum and authority of Gladys Cooper's Mrs. Henry Windle Vale. Now both performers are British, but only one, Mrs. Vale, is a Proper Bostonian. She is as stiff as he is rumpled, as distant as he is beckoning. The rigid reception she grants him is a beautifully textured presentation of the Proper Bostonian phenomenon of having "customs but no manners."

Of course this phrase comes from Cleveland Amory, who surely had little idea how important his text *The Proper Bostonians* would turn out to be, but it is also true that the book followed certain established norms of cultural definitions. Yet, an oddity of the Proper Bostonian type is the confusion between old and New England; as we have just seen, English actors are frequently cast as

Bostonians: Leo G. Carroll or Ronald Colman as George Apley, in the stage and screen versions respectively, of *The Late George Apley*; Basil Rathbone as Norman Cass, Sr. in *The Last Hurrah*; Gladys Cooper as Mrs. Henry Windle Vale in *Now Voyager*; Ray Milland as Oliver Barrett III in *Love Story*; and James Mason as Edward J. Concannon in *The Verdict*.

There are of course historical, social, and cultural explanations, but when one considers the “Hollywood” version of the Proper Bostonian, the idea of the Proper Bostonian and its attendant issues become troublesome in a society that supposedly rejects elitism. So the Proper Bostonian is easily mocked, and the character serves as either villain or clown but is almost never “normal.”

Let us return to *Now, Voyager*. The Charlotte Vale of Bette Davis versus Gladys Cooper as her mother in this 1942 film is most interesting. (Worth noting, as well, is the fact that Davis was born in Massachusetts, spent a great deal of time in Maine, and was quite proud of her Yankee roots.) Viewers of the film today are probably influenced by Pauline Kael’s ironic view of it as “a campy tearjerker.” Kael highlights a sequence in the film that is pertinent here: Charlotte “dismisses priggish Elliot Livingston” with the words, “Let’s not linger over it.” This immediately demonstrates Charlotte’s reasserted sang-froid, a characteristic crucial to her class.

To give Livingston his due (and John Loder’s performance), he does take Charlotte to a concert at which Tchaikovsky’s “Symphony No. 6 (the Pathétique),” is performed—although it is no doubt music chosen to heighten Charlotte’s anguish rather than Livingston’s romantic aspirations. Not to mention the fact that she is sitting between her allegedly erstwhile lover and her fiancé. While the romance between Charlotte and Elliot is regarded by Mrs. Vale as though it were a noble dynastic linkage, what is more significant is the way that the Vale family relations are depicted and how they sound. They are either “Britishized” or they just speak like typical stage actors of the period, which means they use mid-Atlantic stage English. Of course, John Loder was yet another English actor playing a Bostonian, and an ignoramus could be excused for thinking that even Bette Davis was affecting a British accent. Regarding stage English, it is something that has vanished from our playhouses: the old-time diction of a theatre that dreaded contractions and dropped “g’s.” Stage English insisted on the long “i” pronunciation in “neither” and “either,” the long “e” for “been,” and the long “a” in “again.” How quaint now sounds the critic of yesteryear, chiding performers for saying “yooman beans” rather than “human beings.” This style of speaking now sounds so foreign that should one use it before students they think it is a “British accent.” Indeed, in discussion of Boston films in the Internet Movie Data Base (www.imdb.com), there is a refrain of “why are they using British accents?”

Finally, consider the cast of *The Late George Apley*: George Apley, his wife, his daughter, and both his brothers-in-law are each played by British actors. It is interesting that the two British-born women sound American, but the men’s accents are decidedly mid-Atlantic—of course Ronald Colman’s voice is

eternally “Ronald Colman.” Anglo-American intonations aside, the screenplay—taking its cues from the George S. Kaufman and John P. Marquand stage adaptation—insists on *imposing* Bostonian lore into speeches and *telling* rather than *showing* what it is to live on Beacon Hill. In particular, the catalogue of calumny hurled at Apley by his future son-in-law, a native New Yorker who encounters the Brahmin in New York City, is merely a list of gustatory and cultural clichés: he makes the hub of the universe spin, eats baked beans for breakfast, and keeps improper books out of the hands of the young. Overall, Joseph Mankiewicz’s direction gives the film a strangely detached aura. There is a goldfish bowl quality to the proceedings, as though it were some sort of anthropological study. This is not to say it has a trace of the documentary about it, or even cinema vérité. It is strictly a Hollywood soundstage and back lot affair lacking the slightest trace of Bostonian ambience. For example one of the novel’s most humorous passages is so garbled in the film that it is reduced to a labored exemplum delivered to a servant by the master, that is then explained to the audience to make sure they get the joke (Recall Geertz’s sociological metaphorical explanation of our “getting the joke” as a way of understanding another culture). Apley merely recounts his discomposure on seeing a man at his front door in shirtsleeves on Marlborough St. In the novel, Marquand uses the shirtsleeve sighting to make a comic point about the failure of the South End to become another Back Bay: the Apleys move back to Beacon Hill when their patriarch spotted a man in his shirtsleeves on the front steps of his South End townhouse.¹

There may be something more than local vocalization to the performance of Proper Bostonianism. Lucius Beebe, in what remains the best book on the subject, *Boston and the Boston Legend*, speaks with unimpeachable authority; he is after all his own subject in many ways—even though he deserted Boston’s civilization for the fleshpots of Manhattan and points west. Beebe emphasizes the closeness of the “mother country” by which he means the geographical as well as historical closeness of England to Boston. Anglophilic class distinction and its problematic nature are brought to the fore by any discussion of Proper Bostonians. Yet we must consider the reduction of the Bostonian figure from mercantile swashbuckler to Cambric-tea-swilling peruser of odd volumes who is the basis of John P. Marquand’s satire. So the awareness of the problem of Boston’s decline is part of the problem. One peculiar Hollywood studio film, the Raoul Walsh 1952 production of *The World in His Arms*, is an exception. In this film, Gregory Peck plays Jonathan Clark, a sea captain whose first appearance is heralded by the call and response mantra: “the Boston man.” A “Boston man” in this context would seem to be a combination of ladies’ man, honest trader, and nature lover—in short of all things bright and beautiful. Given the film’s mid-nineteenth century time frame this is perhaps not too outrageous. Numerous maritime and financial histories of the city give great play to the worldwide phenomenon of the Boston merchant—not the least of whom was the legendary Thomas Handasyd Perkins who was a millionaire before he was out of his teens.

Peck's sea captain is the bravest brawler, most desired lover, and the only ethical sailor in the Pacific. His reputation precedes him to Russian America where he wages a one-man war against colonialism, aristocracy, the exploitation of women, seal hunting, and poorly trimmed jibs. Peck's performance is a rule-proving exception.

It may be that in the later 20th century, the Proper Bostonian is not limited to characters of undiluted WASP heritage. In the 1974 film *The Verdict*, consider Paul Newman's Frank Galvin versus James Mason's Edward J. Concannon. Newman's character is a shamrock-on-his-sleeve Boston Irish Catholic who antagonizes the "Irish Yankee" portrayed by Mason. The face-off between the characters recalls Spencer Tracy's Frank Skeffington against Basil Rathbone's Norman Cass in *The Last Hurrah*. Rathbone's performance's icy detachment contrasts beautifully with the wily warmth of Tracy's Skeffington.

Of such is the contrast between Newman and Mason, though Newman's character ratchets up the confrontation due to his hotheadedness. *The Verdict* is a legal drama, based on an actual case, featuring an important early exchange that Newman and Mason "do not have" in the judge's chamber, the judge played, with no attempt to hide his Irish origins, by Milo O'Shea. Mason spends most of the scene in just barely perceptible exasperation, and he delivers his coup de grâce with the careful donning of his Melton overcoat. He takes it off of the coat rack, puts it on, sighs ruefully, and leaves. Newman has kept his coat on. This is, of course, a signal faux pas for a Proper Bostonian. Once upon a time, Leo G. Carroll's performance in the stage adaptation of *The Late George Apley* was dismissed by Boston Brahmins almost solely on the basis of an entrance he made wearing his overcoat into a drawing room. Returning to *The Verdict*, it is not only that Newman arrives late for the appointment; he makes no effort to distinguish between his lateness and the necessity of restoring propriety by hanging up his coat. We need not expound upon the "Irish" judge taking his breakfast at his desk, yet we may contrast his feeding from a tray with another aspect of Mason's characterization.

The most telling moment in Mason's performance is his lithe exit from his law office after ordering the junior partners to work overtime on the case. Escorted out by his entourage, he looks back over his shoulder and exhales, "We'll be at Locke-Ober's." What is crucial in this line delivery is the way Mason throws it away. It is clear from his intonation that dining at the century-old "Winter Place wine rooms" (as Lucius Beebe referred to the grand old restaurant) is his habit, that this is by no means an occasion. Contrast the Victorian elegance conjured by Locke-Ober's with the barroom in which Newman's Galvin and his cohort take their meals. It does not even look as though the food is served on plates, but is put in some sort of basket. Later, in dialogue between Galvin's mentor, Mickey Morrissey, played by Jack Warden and the plot's meta-legal Mata Hari, Laura Fischer, played by Charlotte Rampling (an English actress); we get Galvin's back-story. He had aspired to the elitist, genteel way of life Mason's character affords us glimpses of. We

learn that Galvin had originally worked for a white shoe law firm and was married to one of its partner's daughters. Mickey tells Laura that Galvin was in awe of anyone who owned a yacht. Mickey cynically explains—in a rare reference to the seahawking days of an earlier Boston archetype:

MICKEY. Stearns, Harrington, you know who that is?

LAURA. Should I?

MICKEY. A huge law firm. Okay? They put him in the firm, he's married, everything's superb. Franky, he's starting to talk like he comes from Dorsetshire, some fuckin' place, "You must drop by with Pat and me . . ." Okay . . ? He thinks that anybody who knows what a "spinnaker" is got to be a saint. I told him "Franky, wake up. These people are sharks. What do you think they got so rich from? Doing good?"

Warden's character, Mickey Morrissey, obviously a well-connected old timer, also invokes the anti-Brahminism of the Skeffington character in *The Last Hurrah*. One of the most-quoted lines from Mamet's screenplay is Morrissey's description of Concannon:

A good man . . ? He's the Prince of Fuckin' Darkness.

Thus Concannon's adoption of the Brahmin's code and mode is rendered a satanic betrayal.

Note the earlier reference made to Dorsetshire. Even Mamet loses linguistic course mid-Atlantic. Though he might have discovered there were settlers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony from Dorset, and Dorsetshire is part of non-rhotic accented England, linguistic links are not so readily made. The "you must drop by" that Morrissey sneers at may remind observers of the linguistic foibles of George H. W. Bush, who infamously requested "just a splash more" coffee at a New Hampshire truck stop during his presidential campaign.

The contempt here may also remind one of *Love Story*'s Ali McGraw's Jennifer Cavalleri's initial dismissal of Oliver Barrett IV. Note too that "Oliver Barrett III" was played by the Welsh-born Ray Milland, who had been a Hollywood leading man for decades, but here portrayed a Harvard-Club-dining monster. More importantly, the first scene of this blockbuster film introduced an epithet to the uninitiated that is probably the only trace of Proper Bostoniana left in popular culture. We see the first meeting between Oliver Barrett IV and his beloved—"the [future] 25 year-old girl who died." He asks Jenny, who works at Radcliffe's Schlesinger Library:

OLIVER. Do you have this book?

JENNY. You have your own library.

OLIVER. Answer my question.

JENNY. Answer mine first.

OLIVER. We're allowed to use the Radcliffe library.
JENNY. I'm not talking legality; I'm talking ethics.
JENNY. Harvard's got five million books; Radcliffe a few thousand.
OLIVER. I only want one. I've got an hour exam tomorrow, damn it!
JENNY. Please watch your profanity, preppy.
Oliver. Why do you think I went to prep school?
JENNY. You look stupid and rich.
OLIVER. Actually, I'm smart and poor.
JENNY. No, I'm smart and poor . . .

The banter continues and Oliver asks her about her music class:

OLIVER. What's polyphony?
JENNY. Nothing sexual, preppy.
OLIVER. I told you, my name is Oliver.
JENNY. First or last? —
OLIVER. First.
JENNY. Oliver what?
OLIVER. Barrett.
JENNY. Barrett like the poet?
OLIVER. Yeah, no relation.
JENNY. Barrett like the hall? —
OLIVER. Yes.
JENNY. I'm having coffee with a Harvard building.
OLIVER. I'm not Barrett Hall. My great grandfather just gave it to Harvard.
JENNY. So his not-so-great grandson could get in?

Thus with the reduction of Oliver Barrett IV to "preppy" we come to the end of the Proper Bostonian's ascendancy. Oliver's family is depicted as harsh, the exchanges between father and son are bitter, even nasty—while with the passage of years and it being quite acceptable to trust anyone over 30, Oliver Barrett III seems eminently reasonable. Of course, though, from the film's perspective, even suggesting that self-indulgence and instant gratification ought not be the poles of existence automatically marks one as a despot, if not a fiend. All of the film's references are intended to disparage, and even make disgusting the traditions of Oliver's family, but the good, clean, decent, working class values of Jenny's family are meant to exemplify salt-of-the-earth preciousness. Even though Oliver's father gives his son thousands of dollars for Jenny's care—simply because he asks for it—we are to regard him only as a horrid old stiffneck.

The superficial similarity in characterization between vile old Mr. Barrett and mean old Mrs. Vale in *Now, Voyager* is fascinating. Mrs. Vale is like Mr. Barrett in that she seems to offer only financial support to her child, but Gladys

Cooper's Mrs. Vale is portrayed as an individual who is evil, *not* as the embodiment of a malevolent class, which is the case with Ray Milland's Mr. Barrett. Oliver Barrett is determined to reject all the prerogatives of his class because of his hatred for his father. In this vein, as well, albeit comically, we find the film George Apley, who in spite of his virtues, is somehow unpleasant. Apley's trusteeship of the "Boston Society for Waifs," and his insistence that those who are comfortably well-off have a duty to assist the less-fortunate come off as insufferably pompous, and he gets his comeuppance. Whereas Charlotte Vale, inadvertently rewarded for precipitating her mother's sudden death with a massive inheritance, will zealously aggrandize her legacy.

So let us conclude with Charlotte Vale, the most admirable portrait of a Proper Bostonian on film. De Certeau's argument at the opening of "Histoire et psychanalyse" is almost a gloss of Charlotte's triumph over "cannibalizing history." What is more, it is as though she is inscribing a de Certeauvian "historiography" over her old self (477-78). She is a heroine who endows "Cascades," the sylvan mental institution that restored her sanity, donates a new building for it, and serves on its board of trustees. What is more, she selflessly agrees to go on taking care of the rebarbative Tina, her child-by-choice, indefinitely, and abjure further carnal knowledge of her lover. And if we can regard "Proper" Boston as a Never-Never Land, how perfectly fitting it is that Bette Davis' Charlotte Vale should admonish Paul Henreid's Jerry Durrance by saying: "Don't let's ask for the moon, we have the stars."

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Notes

¹ "Shortly before he purchased in Beacon Street he had been drawn like so many others, to one of the shady squares of the South End. When he did so nearly everyone was under the impression that this district would be one of the most solid residential sections of Boston instead of becoming, as it is today, a region of rooming houses and worse. You may have seen those houses in the South End, fine mansions with dark walnut doors and beautiful woodwork. One morning as Tim, the coachman, came up with the carriage, to carry your Aunt Amelia and me to Miss Hendrick's Primary School, my father, who had not gone down to his office at the usual hour because he had a bad head cold, came out with us to the front steps. I could not have been more than seven at the time, but I remember the exclamation that he gave when he observed the brownstone steps of the house across the street.

"'Thunderation,' Father said, 'there is a man in his shirt sleeves on those steps.' The next day he sold his house for what he had paid for it, and we moved to Beacon St." (Marquand 25-26)

Lest 21st century readers find such a description too remote, allow me to report that the present author's father would not step out onto his front porch to retrieve his morning newspaper if he were not shaved and fully dressed.

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The Evolution of Mean: Satire in the American Elections of 1980 and 2008 Compared

A comparison of the American presidential elections of 1980 and 2008 seems, at first blush, to be an arbitrary choice. The former resulted in a Republican landslide under Ronald Reagan and the latter a Democrat victory under Barack Obama. Furthermore, the Reagan era has already been studied, whereas right now it seems premature to speak of Obama's legacy. Nevertheless, the two elections have numerous historical parallels. The 1980 campaign featured a president with dismal approval ratings who was seen as impotent in managing problems in Afghanistan and Iran, and whose domestic policies had given rise to stagflation and an energy crisis: "the stock market limped along . . . the housing business was in shambles, the auto industry was asthmatic, and the trade deficit was at an all-time high."¹ The description could as easily apply to George W. Bush's America in 2008. Jimmy Carter was demonized by some cynics as the worst president ever, and the appellation now seems both quaint and eerie.

Humor columnist Dave Barry deadpans that calling something *satire* usually means "you will not laugh once."² Why is election satire important? Its study is critical because, just as fish do not realize they are in water, we do not realize how much of our popular culture is based on political humor. Occasionally the media recognize this condition. *Slate* pundit Troy Patterson wrote in April 2008 about "the Satire Recession," arguing that modern news satire has declined into nothing more than "personality jokes"³ that rarely rise above cutesy, ad-hominem gags. Yet satire in the 1980 election also rarely rose above humor based on one-liners, and if anything, was safer and less partisan than that of the 2008 campaign. I would like to, in fact, make the opposite argument: in comparison to the 1980 American presidential election, the 2008 campaign featured satire which was more biting, more partisan, and was used by a media more aware of satire's political role and influence.

The 1980 Presidential Campaign

The 1980 presidential elections shaped up as a perfect storm for incumbent president Jimmy Carter: "Inflation, recession, hostages, unemployment—they combined in a truly beatable combination."⁴ The Democrat party was weakened by spats between Carter and his staff and a leadership challenge from Ted Kennedy, and even the balloons at the national convention refused to cooperate.⁵ Carter dismissed Reagan as a threat and undermined his own gracious southern reputation with increasingly negative campaigning. In the famous final debate, Reagan's legendary sunny disposition prevailed as he asked viewers, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" The genial, telegenic former movie actor trounced Carter days later, winning by a margin in the popular vote

of nearly 10%. The Democrats would not regain power for 12 years until Bill Clinton's victory in 1992.

The severest criticism of the Carter presidency came from the newspaper press, in particular, cartoonists. As a visual medium, part of the joke was depicting Carter as a dwarf with giant lips, but the cartoons usually parodied what was seen as Carter's vacillation or ineffectiveness. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Carter was pictured as a Pollyanna "holding a deed to the Brooklyn Bridge that is signed by Leonid Brezhnev. The shocked Carter is saying, 'You mean he lied to me?'"⁶ In another, a tiny Carter appears in an ant costume for a stage play, reduced to an insignificant role by his press secretary, while Ted Kennedy plays a grasshopper.⁷ Other cartoonists played on his supposed penchant for obfuscating, depicting Washington saying, "I cannot tell a lie," Nixon saying, "I cannot tell the truth," and Carter saying, "I cannot tell the difference."⁸

Yet these quips were exceptions in the campaign of 1980. Apart from the *National Review*'s more erudite audience, much of the media parodied not the candidates' issues or actions, but their personal tics, the pseudo-satire based on personality which Patterson criticizes. Much of the spoofing was not really satire of the person or his politics, but rather riffing on comedic stereotypes. Ted Kennedy was introduced as "the senator from Pizza Hut."⁹ Gerald Ford was a one-joke character on *Saturday Night Live* where Chevy Chase would play him tripping and falling in the pool. In my childhood in the early 80s there was a Canadian cartoonist named Ed Uluschak, and I remember that any panel set in a prison always had Nixon's nose peeking through the bars. During a canoe ride in April 1979, Carter reported that he was attacked by a swamp rabbit, which he struck with a paddle. The event suggested weakness; a biographer noted that Carter "had to deal with Russia and the Ayatollah and here he was supposedly fighting off a rabbit."¹⁰ Yet the incident exploded into a running gag having less to do with Carter than with *Monty Python*. A *Washington Post* cartoon followed imitating a movie poster for *Jaws*, with the legend *Paws*.

One learns what life in 18th century London was like by reading Pope. Good satire *exposes* reality. The purpose of much election humor in 1980, however, was to invoke laughter. Much of the lampooning is what Mikhail Bakhtin would call, in his work on Rabelais, the carnival style of folk humor. A medieval European festival day often involved parodies of secular or religious authority figures, and the church usually distinguished between something done "in earnest or in pley," as Chaucer would say. Some written humor was biting, such as Jules Feiffer's cartoons on Nixon and Reagan, but much was playful teasing. In one *Saturday Night Live* sketch Carter guest-hosts a call-in show and a caller needs help with his acid trip;¹¹ the joke is in the situation and not specifically on Carter. A Johnny Carson skit with Reagan also makes fun of Secretary of the Interior James Watt's name as Reagan misunderstands 'Watt' and exercising at 'the Y' in a "Who's on First" spoof which is only tangentially about Reagan.¹² Although Bakhtin is speaking about medieval Europe, these "comic verbal

compositions”¹³ still thrived in 1980, with radio singles featuring mock candidates answering questions with pop lyrics (in one Carter answers questions with Billy Joel’s “Don’t Ask Me Why”¹⁴) and political sendups in low culture such as *Mad Magazine*.

Bakhtin also argues that a feature of folk humor is that its target includes the speaker; “it is directed at all and everyone.”¹⁵ It seeks to poke fun at the world the celebrants live in, but carnival humor essentially validates the establishment; the church and state support the world of the festival. Humorists knew that the business of television is entertainment, and there was no shame in befriending the candidate. Comedians such as Bob Hope made fun of Reagan with *Reader’s Digest*-safe one-liners, saying the only reason people voted for him is that they were afraid he would “go back to acting.”¹⁶ This sort of fond send-up is more vaudeville than bite, and barely qualifies as satire, if at all. As Wagg says of 1960s satire, such humor operates within the system; it was “a bit of institutionalised cheek and the President laughed to confirm that this was OK.”¹⁷ The style is that of a celebrity roast, and one of Hope’s DVD compilations is tellingly called “Laughing With the Presidents,” and not *at*.

The lack of sting in 1980 election satire can also be seen in the general lack of partisanship. Bob Hope made jokes about Carter as he did with Reagan, saying “I don’t know what people have against Jimmy Carter. He’s done nothing.”¹⁸ Fairness is not an essential part of satire, and Orwell does not give the Soviets equal time in *Animal Farm*; but at the time it was expected or mandated that both sides be presented. Johnny Carson made fun of both Carter and Reagan, and print humorist Dave Barry was also careful to be bipartisan and inoffensive. His criticism of Reagan is also the ‘forgetful old geezer’ trope and avoids becoming too pointed; in one of his books a chapter about Reagan is called ‘Napping Toward Glory.’ Elsewhere Barry posits that there is a secret ‘stupid ray’ aimed at the White House, as nothing else would explain how Carter, a nuclear engineer, would tell the press he was attacked by a rabbit.¹⁹ Columnist Art Buchwald jibed at both parties, but his humor also tended to be inclusive. One column lists the top lies by campaigning politicians; number 38 is “this is the best enchilada I’ve ever tasted.”²⁰ There was an assumption that satirizing both sides was playing fair, but the seriousness of a satirical attack is undermined if it is understood as jesting. The humorist is kidding, but “real satire means it.”²¹

There were also practical business reasons for ‘fairness’ in 1980. George Kaufman said, “Satire is what closes Saturday night.” Network television was broadcast to as wide an audience as possible, and the genuine satirist might, at best, alienate half his or her audience; at worst, his remaining audience might misunderstand. The safest route in election humor has always been to attack an oblique and impersonal target such as government or the election itself. Any number of quotations from Twain to Plato may be raised to cynically invoke the stereotype of the glad-handing congressman and the humorless bureaucrat; even

politicians may join in, as Reagan did when he said that politics is the second oldest profession, but “it bears a very close resemblance to the first.”²²

The candidates in the 1980 presidential election generally avoided satire themselves. Ford had attempted to joke about his clumsiness in an impromptu skit with Chevy Chase, to mixed results.²³ Carter could have an acid tongue with journalists, once sighing, “I don’t have very much for you today, so you can just put away your crayons.”²⁴ Although Reagan could show flashes of temper and his off-the-cuff “We begin bombing in five minutes” joke about Russia during a sound check in 1984 was poorly received, he knew better than to antagonize the reporters who were covering him—although his staff publicly groused about wits such as Paul Conrad, who referred to the California governor as “Reagan Hood” for robbing the poor to give to the rich.²⁵ Light needling of Nixon had worked for Kennedy in 1963, but not for Adlai Stevenson against Eisenhower in the 50s; Stevenson’s learned jibes bombed, and the elections went down as ‘the egghead’ and ‘the general.’

Reagan initially seemed exempt from attack because of his age. A Conrad panel depicting politicians throwing their hats into a ring and Reagan tossing a cane was met with angry protests.²⁶ Reagan was known as ‘the Teflon president,’ and so the target was usually his aides. James Watt was considered so anti-environment that Reagan himself could quip that Watt was “strip-mining the Rose Garden,”²⁷ without obvious questions about who had appointed him. Reagan’s running mate, George Bush Sr., would be dogged by cartoons depicting him as a lackey, and what was called the ‘wimp factor’ for Bush Sr. was likely a contributing factor in the later anti-intellectualism of the GOP. Yet Reagan was occasionally parodied. Before the election, *Doonesbury* did a feature called “The Mysterious World of Reagan’s Brain,” where reporter Roland Hedley toured “an idyllic America, with 5¢ cokes, Burma shave signs, and hard-working white people.”²⁸ Radical satirist Paul Krassner would write, “There was a fire in Ronald Reagan’s library and both books were destroyed.”²⁹

Over time the ‘Ronnie Ray-Gun’ cliché of the president as a doddering warhawk acting out his old movies became common, particularly after the Grenada invasion of 1983; even in his first election Reagan was derided by third-party candidate John Anderson as “a product of Eighteenth-Century Fox.”³⁰ Yet in 1980 Reagan was able to dispel most personal criticism with his famous sunny optimism. He was also so skilled at using satire himself to depict government as “the original evil empire, an institution berserk in a blizzard of paper”³¹ that he seemed funnier than the people reporting him. Nevertheless, he was a company man very much like Johnny Carson or Bob Hope, and his humor was mild and indirect; his assaults on Carter were limited to sighing, “There you go again” at the final election debate, and in doing so he gained the good will of the electorate.

The nature of satire in the 70s and 80s should not be oversimplified as lighthearted. There were certainly examples of cutting satire in print media; in 1972, Senator Edmund Muskie wept after a mean-spirited editorial appeared

suggesting his wife was an alcoholic, and bumper stickers followed saying, “Vote For Muskie Or He’ll Cry.”³² Muskie dropped out of the presidential nomination race. Walter Mondale, a gentle pastor’s son, was unequipped to deal with the vitriol hurled at him. Yet the bulk of media humor in the 1980 election suggests a carnival tone.

The 2008 Presidential Campaign

To paraphrase Woolf, around 1984, human character changed. Much of the change in how news and culture were transmitted was technological, as cable television stations dedicated to special audiences such as news and rock videos sprang up. Other developments were demographic, as more youth-oriented entertainers such as David Letterman began to eclipse the older generation. By the mid-80s, satirical treatments of Reagan had turned nasty. The ‘Star Wars’ initiative in his second term was met with hooting derision by pundits. He was satirized perhaps even more bitterly in England, perhaps as a sort of proxy for Thatcherism; he was a regular on the *Spitting Image* puppet show and angrily mocked in pop songs such as Simply Red’s “Money’s Too Tight to Mention” (1985), which fades out with the sexual taunt, “Did the earth move for you, Nancy?” A graphically violent and controversial 1984 video for Frankie Goes to Hollywood’s “Two Tribes” features Reagan and Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko in a bloody cage fight to decide their countries’ issues. George Carlin would evolve from more abstract humor to expletive-laced diatribes about Reagan and the Moral Majority. This new bluntness and angry vulgarity anticipated the media world of the 2008 presidential elections.

One of the contiguous links between 1980 and 2008 was familial; the son of Reagan’s vice-president now held office as the incumbent. Although Bush’s handling of the 9/11 terrorist attacks raised his popularity, his perceived bungling of the Iraq war, unpopular domestic security measures, and a sliding economy made the election a replay of 1980: an increasingly negative McCain campaign failed to dent Obama’s affable optimism, and Obama handily took the election with a 7% voter margin. The satirical tone of the election was considerably changed. Some cartoons gently celebrated Obama’s ethnicity; one Mike Luckovitch panel has Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King on a cloud watching an Obama speech, with Lincoln telling his cloudmates, “You’re not dreaming.”³³ Physical exaggeration is normally a staple of political cartooning, but making fun of Obama’s appearance evidently had the unpleasant aroma of a minstrel show, and so the text usually had to carry the gag. One cartoon shows Obama in Berlin, telling the crowd, “Ich bin ein beginner,”³⁴ referring to his alleged inexperience.

Yet overall, print cartoonists, now competing with electronic news sources, had become more acidic in order to stand out. Hillary Clinton was excoriated as a scheming opportunist, and although much of it was merely stock jokes about ambitious harpies and Bill’s libido, some cartoons were bluntly personal. It would not have been acceptable to mock JFK’s war service, but McCain’s maudlin insistence on his POW ordeals eventually tried journalists’ patience;

one Doonesbury panel has a journalist asking McCain to e-mail the press a document, and McCain replies, “You know, my friend, I didn’t *have* a fancy laptop in prison.”³⁵ McCain’s age led to morbid and apocalyptic cartoons in which he dies and is succeeded by Vice President Palin. Jeff MacNelly once pulled back a panel depicting Jimmy Carter laying a wreath entitled *R.I.P.* on Truman’s grave with a ghostly *S.O.B.* rising up from the earth, after MacNelly decided he had gone too far.³⁶ In 2008 it would not have stood out.

“Sarah ‘Flash Card’ Palin”³⁷ was also a cartoonist’s dream. Typically drawn with a beehive hairdo and surrounded by bats, she was skewered for her perceived lack of competence—she was unable to name a printed source she regularly read to NBC’s Katie Couric, and was rumored by party insiders to have called Africa a country—and for her angry insistence that her unmarried, pregnant daughter was off-limits to the press, all in a political party which stressed traditional family values. The newspapers generally did not comply. Carter’s brother Billy had been caricatured as a drunken hillbilly in the 70s, and Bill Clinton’s sexual scandals in the late 90s had somehow made satirizing the intimate matters of a candidate’s family acceptable. It was now fair game to portray the candidate’s children.

The cartoon controversy of the election would be a cover of the *New Yorker* depicting Obama dressed as a radical Muslim with his wife clad as an anarchist carrying a machine gun, fist-bumping as an American flag burns. The editors insisted that the drawing was meant to mock the people who held such views. It would perhaps be the purest satirical act of the election, as it was, typically, misunderstood. Satire must also be judged by its impact, and one blogger noted that “any satire that can be easily used to further the viewpoint it’s trying to satirize, is, by definition, a failure.”³⁸ The worst emotions were brought out in all. Democrat organizers called it tasteless; Republicans decried humorless Democrats who believed Americans so unable to grasp satire that “imagery must be as tightly controlled as at an exhibition of Stalinist realism paintings,”³⁹ all while enjoying the benefits of voters who did in fact miss the joke and believe that Obama was a Muslim terrorist. Yet the illustration made a taboo subject acceptable, allowing pundits more freedom to satirize not Obama’s ‘race’ but ugly perceptions of his ethnicity. A sarcastic cartoon depicts Obama lazing on a Hawaiian beach smoking marijuana, burning an American flag with radicals, and having ‘666’ tattooed on his forehead, with a flustered McCain adding, “I’m John McCain and I’m ashamed to say my supporters believe this message.”⁴⁰

Yet overall the influence of print was waning in favor of a much wider media universe than existed in 1980. An explosion of specialty cable channels had enlarged and fragmented the television viewership, and the internet had changed all concepts of media delivery by making it interactive, as niche and amateur websites steadily nibbled away at conventional, top-down media industries. The economic constraints of having to inoffensively entertain a general audience were less applicable to much new television programming, and were irrelevant to non-profit websites. Thus there were fewer checks by

advertisers on bad taste. Northrop Frye would call obscenity “an essential characteristic of the satirist,”⁴¹ and satire is seldom above a good fart joke; but much 2008 humor was especially prurient. A pornographic film titled “Who’s Nailin’ Paylin” with a Palin lookalike appeared. Independent videos were uploaded to sharing sites such as YouTube, such as ‘Obama Girl’ and response parodies. In one episode Obama Girl calls ‘Hillary Clinton’ to convince her to support Obama, only to be told, “Thank you! I worked my whole life to be president only to be thwarted by a girl in hotpants . . . [well], this fifth of Jack Daniels isn’t going to drink itself.”⁴² News parody site *The Onion* reports the election result as “Kobe Bryant Scores 25 In Holy S—t We Elected A Black President.”⁴³

This sort of viral internet humor is sharper and perhaps more satirical in a purer sense than Bob Hope (the words ‘zany’ and ‘antics’ are never good signs). Although some internet spoofing can have an element of carnival silliness, it is less within the accepted establishment. Most internet humorists have not met the politicians they satirize and their tone is not of a joshing intimate but of an outsider. The field is no longer dominated by white male entertainers with Hollywood or Washington connections. Bakhtin distinguishes pure satire from festive laughter in that “The satirist whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it.”⁴⁴ It is not helpful to push a medieval typology too far, but the carnival jester is present in the crowd, and the lone blogger is usually isolated, in front of a monitor. Celebrity journalist blogs such as the *Huffington Post* are nearly establishment media sources, and even the *Onion* is now linked by CNN; but any dissident crank may and can create blogs, flash cartoons, or YouTube videos of independent satire free of any commercial interests which might water down the material to make it palatable to a broader audience.

The breakdown of older concepts of bipartisanship in political satire has also waned since 1980, as there really are no longer general audiences. Economics, technology, and culture have all evolved to permit much more balkanized viewerships, also assisted by the ending of the FCC’s 1949 Fairness Doctrine in 1987, which had mandated addressing both sides of issues. These developments have wrought not only satire that is biting and uncensored, but has tended to create highly partisan audiences where group amplification polarizes opinion. Bulletin board websites and blogs, of course, have no expectation of objectivity, and can be wholly one-sided and abusive to dissent; there are fan sites for candidates and for specialized interest groups. Even the *Huffington Post* openly identifies itself as liberal, and few are in doubt on Michael Moore’s politics with his films and sarcastic books.

The influence of the culture wars has also extended to network television, which is now increasingly categorized into ideological camps. The McCain and Clinton campaigns’ claims of media bias were hardly new, going back to Adlai Stevenson’s gripe that the press was as objective about Democrats as dogs are about cats.⁴⁵ Networks were singled out as being ‘in the tank’ for Democrats in

2008; Jay Leno quipped that the election was “a huge celebration over at Barack Obama headquarters, otherwise known as MSNBC.”⁴⁶ Much of the sniping was directed at Rupert Murdoch’s Fox network, and its perennial right-wing bias was itself a subject of campaign humor. David Letterman joked that “At the end of the evening, the electoral vote count was 349 for Obama, 148 for McCain. Or, as Fox News says, too close to call.”⁴⁷ Even comedians such as Leno and Letterman were beginning to become frustrated with the traditional expectations of fairness, and Letterman especially pushed the envelope with a half-joking sequence of gripes directed at McCain after the latter conspicuously canceled an appearance: “Did you see the concession speech last night? John McCain was generous. He was gracious. He was statesman-like. And I was thinking well, he should have tried that earlier.”⁴⁸

A new and prominent factor was also network news shows which were themselves satires of news shows, such as programs by Stephen Colbert and by Jon Stewart. One episode of the *Colbert Report* has Colbert making fun of McCain’s claims of superior experience, noting that “clearly he has hundreds of years of experience.”⁴⁹ In another episode McCain is stated as “pointing out that Obama called Sarah Palin a fat ugly hog and offered legislation requiring kindergartners to watch their parents doing it doggy style.”⁵⁰ Stewart, on *The Daily Show*, mockingly parrots McCain’s rhetorical comment that “I know what fear feels like” with “I know what an enlarged prostate feels like.”⁵¹ Despite the vulgarity of much of the humor, as with the *New Yorker* cover, some of these faux-news programs were so authentic that commentators fretted about voters unaware that such comedians were being ironic and that most of the candidates’ video images were edited or faked for satirical purposes.

Satire became an election issue itself in 2008, and there were complaints that satirists were in fact swaying the election. In the 1970s, *Saturday Night Live* was considered edgy for even depicting a president humorously, although Chevy Chase’s Ford did little more than pratfalls. In 2008 more people might have seen Tina Fey’s impression of Sarah Palin than they did of the actual candidate. *SNL* seemed to agree with Hillary Clinton’s charge that the media was favoring Obama in a debate skit where the CNN moderators offer ‘Obama’ a pillow and a hot and bothered Soledad O’Brien fans herself after Obama’s vacuous closing remark that journalists “can take sides; yes we can.”⁵² In late 2008, a Montreal radio comedy team telephoned Palin *herself*, impersonating French President Nicholas Sarkozy. In embarrassing Palin by having her foolishly praise fictional Canadian Prime Minister ‘Stef Carse,’⁵³ a popular Quebecois entertainer, a week after the actual national election, a certain line had been crossed.

Nevertheless, some cultural trends were unchanged from 1980 to 2008. McCain’s prospects might have been stronger had he taken on the genial persona that served Reagan so well, but it did not jive with McCain’s reputation as an irascible congressional ‘maverick.’ Palin ran with her ‘barracuda’ image by mocking Obama’s experience: “I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a ‘community organizer,’ except that you have actual responsibilities.” Campaign

ads made fun of Obama's popularity, painting him as "The One" as religious imagery follows and a voice asks, "Can you see the light?"⁵⁴ Early in the campaign Obama dismissively called Hillary Clinton "Annie Oakley" for her attempts at faux populism, but after voters did not receive his sarcasm well he subsequently modeled Reagan's affability and statesmanship, and in later photographs he even began to sport a touch of grey for added gravitas. Ironically, a young, mixed-race Democrat successfully inherited Reagan's grandfatherly charisma, and even more strangely, his Republican foes remembered nothing from Carter's loss.

Conclusions

The differences between the American election campaigns of 1980 and 2008 are not essential but ones of degree. There were still examples of the sort of festive folk humor in 2008 which sits on the fringes of satire, shading into simple playfulness. Some of the 2008 campaign humor was still nonpartisan folk comedy; in another YouTube segment of Obama Girl, bikini girls dance as a CNN 'React-o-meter' scrolls, and late-night talk shows also made general, inoffensive gags about the length of the campaign or "jokes that merely say, 'John McCain is old,' or 'Bill Clinton likes the ladies.'"⁵⁵ There were post-election columns written about how the election of a popular president may spell the decline of what *Salon* dryly calls the "satirical industrial complex."⁵⁶

Nevertheless, the overall trend is that in comparison to 1980, the political satire of 2008 was more piercing, more partisan, and more aware of itself as a political influence. Various causes have been adduced for this shift from the communal, festive satire of "laughing with" to the cynical satire of "laughing at,"⁵⁷ from the loss of public trust after Watergate to Reagan's denigration of his own calling. Nevertheless, much of the change in tone of 21st century satire is technological, as specialized cable shows and privately-generated content have created strong niche markets for darker and more partisan forms of satire. Yet while the internet might have developed as chaotically as it did anyway, it was Reagan's ideological petulance in vetoing down the FCC's Fairness Doctrine in 1987 which helped lead to shock-talk radio and the partisan television networks which would help defeat McCain in 2008.

Future media innovations or cultural shifts may reemphasize the carnival style of humor; but for now, the more elegant, bipartisan tradition of print satire is fading. Newspapers are folding and cartoonists are retiring without heirs; pundits such as MacNelly and Buchwald have passed on. Berke Breathed's *Opus* comic ended in November 2008 as its creator explained that with "the cable and Web technology allowing All Snark All the Time,"⁵⁸ he wants to protect the innocence of the strip from the coarsening climate around him. Even Dave Barry, with his self-deprecating ramblings about his dogs and high-school pictures, ends a recent column wistfully by asking, "Now that this election is over, whatever the hell happened, can we please grow up and stop being so nasty to each other? Please? OK, I didn't think so."⁵⁹ Even Dave Barry senses the present ascendancy of mean.

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Notes

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Powerful Witches or Weak Damsels: Female Characters in Arthurian Films

One could hardly imagine three more different depictions of Morgan le Fay in film than those in John Boorman's 1981 *Excalibur*, NBC's telefilm *Merlin* from 1998, and TNT's adaptation of Marion Zimmer Bradley's novel *The Mists of Avalon* in 2001. These are three among many adaptations of the Arthurian legend in film over the years. From a 1904 version of *Parsifal* to the 2004 *King Arthur*,¹ there have been many visions onscreen of the storyline and principle characters, with each writer or director giving the tradition his (principally his) own interpretation. In contrast to the original medieval versions of these stories, in which one would not expect to find positive and powerful female figures (with the exception of the Lady of the Lake), one might hope that contemporary films might contain such a figure. These three films in particular show a progression in the female characters, especially the magical female characters, evolving from a male-centered point of view in *Excalibur* to a female-centered point of view in *The Mists of Avalon*. The question posed particularly by *Mists* becomes whether the female characters actually gain in power at the same time that they gain in audience sympathy or do they lose power in order to gain a sympathetic portrayal.

A confrontation between masculinity and femininity is represented by the movie *Excalibur*, which came out in 1981. The movie fairly declares war on femininity as represented by the three female characters: Igrayne, Morgana,² and Guenevere. Only Igrayne has a positive effect on the society by giving birth to Arthur, through submitting to what is essentially a rape by Uther in disguise as her husband Cornwall (his title). Igrayne in fact submits to masculine authority in every scene she appears in, acting as the prize for a potency contest between Uther and Cornwall. She displays her sexuality in her dancing at the feast, as "requested" by her husband ("Igrayne, dance!"), and does not protest when Uther brutally tears away her gown and has sexual intercourse with her while still wearing his armor. The relative power of man and woman is clearly illustrated in this scene: Uther is wearing the armor symbolic of manhood and Igrayne is nearly naked and defenseless.

The strongest female character, and not coincidentally the most negative, is Morgana, who fulfills a similar purpose as Mab in *Merlin*. Boorman gives her a reason for her enmity, which is developed in the scene where Uther rapes her mother Igrayne. Morgana, a young child at the time, watches this horrifying scene, while knowing, through a natural talent for magic, that the man is not her father Cornwall but rather Uther in disguise. This hatred provides a psychological basis for her hostility to the product of this violence—Arthur. As Jacqueline De Weever explains, "Boorman supplies his own motive for Morgana's actions, actions that are directed mostly against Merlin for his

creation of Arthur and thus for depriving her of her rightful inheritance" (57). It is also possible that Morgana also notices because of the fact that Merlin raises Uther's son he thus has power over Uther, an observation that she later uses to her advantage when she raises Arthur's son and uses him as a weapon against Arthur.

All Morgana's motivations are negative rather than positive: again according to de Weever: "Morgana makes clear that her motives are threefold: to avenge her mother's rape by Uther Pendragon, to produce a god-king who will displace Arthur, and to achieve power" (57). Her version of power is a negative one as is seen when she achieves her second goal. She tells Merlin that she wants to learn more magic because it would give her great power, and she temporarily achieves enough power to trap Merlin himself. After learning magic from Merlin, Morgana only appears to act from a need for power, and no further inner conflicts or concerns are presented. She is simply the evil, one-dimensional antagonist of Arthur and Merlin.

Besides Merlin's magic, that Morgana also learns, there is power in armor and swords, principally Excalibur, in the film; this power is primarily a masculine power. As Norris J. Lacy points out in his discussion of Excalibur itself, "here there is an additional link, between the king's sword and his virility. Arthur is without the sword . . . left to him by Uther, and accepted as the symbol and instrument of his authority" (37). As emphasized in this quote, the sword is associated with men in its symbolic value. However, Uther originally acquired it from the Lady of the Lake, so its origin appears to be feminine not masculine. Although the Lady is there to bookend the beginning and ending of the sword in the film, all the other symbolism of the sword in the film is masculine, and decidedly so. An example of this is when Arthur discovers that Lancelot and Guenevere have betrayed him. When Arthur discovers the two lovers lying naked in the woods, he thrusts Excalibur into the ground between them, and leaves in anger. Leaving his sword behind, Arthur has become impotent, and has become the Wounded King and the land is turned into a Waste Land: Lancelot exclaims in horror, "The king without a sword, the land without a king!" After Lancelot also runs away, Guenevere is left with the sword, which she encircles with her naked body. The phallic nature of Excalibur is never more clear than in this scene. The lovers have cuckolded and emasculated Arthur. He does not regain his potency until Perceval brings him the grail. Later, wearing the masculine symbol armor again and on his way to confronting Mordred on the battlefield, he visits Guenevere. The two forgive each other and make peace, and Guenevere returns Excalibur to him, which Arthur draws from the white cloth in which she has wrapped it, as if from a scabbard. Thus, Guenevere returns to Arthur the masculine potency—represented by Excalibur—of which she had previously robbed him.

However, considering the film's use of the character of the Lady of the Lake is where a modern film has reduced and devalued an important and even

powerful role from the medieval source material. Originally, the Lady of the Lake, in her various incarnations since there was more than one character fulfilling that role, even in the same text in some cases, could be very active in a very positive way, more than simply lying under the water and occasionally taking action. Anne Bertholot, for example, has traced the character's development over time and shown that in the French sources she often appears as a goddess Diana-type, and in the Post-Vulgate *Suite* she even creates a place for herself of "her own place and people from then on, without having to submit to masculine authority" (98). In many of the texts she appears in, however, the Lady of the Lake's most controversial act is to dispose of Merlin; however, this is mitigated by the fact that "By assuming Merlin's function of supernatural advisor at Arthur's court, Niviène [one of the many versions of her name] justifies her acts and becomes respectable" (98). In later actions, the Lady of the Lake establishes her power in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, as Amy S. Kaufman notes, after Guenevere has been accused of poisoning an apple, it is Nyneve [another version of the name] who finally reveals the real culprit, thus it will "reinforce female authority as the voice of verdict in an otherwise patriarchal system" (61). When Nyneve gains the love of the knight Sir Pelleas, who had been hopelessly in love with the Lady Ettard, "the balance of power in their forthcoming marriage is immediately made clear" meaning "marriage neither tames nor controls the wild and unpredictable Nyneve" (63)—she will be in control. According to Kaufman, "Nyneve meets her magical match in Morgan le Fay, and many scholars consider these two women, especially as they appear in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, to be exact opposites" (64). In *Excalibur* there is no female to oppose Morgana, only Merlin, who is done away with, not by the Lady of the Lake, but by Morgana. Therefore, the negative feminine force is opposed by the positive masculine force, the positive feminine force of the Lady of the Lake in *Excalibur* having a much reduced role.

Concerning the sword, when it is lost immediately following Guenevere's betrayal, the realm becomes a wasteland because "Arthur is deprived not only of the power and authority associated with Excalibur, but also of the guidance provided by Merlin" (37), which Morgana is responsible for Arthur losing. Therefore, a woman is responsible for the loss of the sword (Guenevere causing him to become so angry he thrust it in between her and Lancelot due to their betrayal of him as discussed above), and Morgana is responsible for entrapping Merlin.

Morgana gains the power that men's armor represents during the lowest point of Arthur's masculine power through their sexual intercourse, which immediately follows his discovery of Lancelot and Guenevere. Guenevere has emasculated him, and Morgana steps in to dominate him sexually. This scene reverses the gender roles of the rape scene between Uther and Igrayne. Although Morgana's "armor" is the charm of making which she has stolen from Merlin, not only can she force sex upon Arthur (appearing as Guenevere, paralleling

Uther's appearance as Cornwall), but she also reinforces her dominance over Arthur by telling him after she has revealed her identity, "I could kill you now, Brother, but I want you to live to see our son be king!" Thus, she reinforces her power over Arthur's physical being and at the same time informs him that his power as king will one day be taken from him. If Guenevere represents Arthur's inadequacy as a husband (and ultimately his emasculation), Morgana represents Arthur's future impotency as a ruler. Lacy delineates the reasons for Arthur's loss of potency and the coming of the wasteland: "the crisis of the Arthurian world in Boorman's vision involves Arthur's ineffectiveness (and the later decline of his health and vigor), the lassitude and indolence of the knights, Lancelot and Guenevere's fall into adultery, Merlin's departure, Morgana's treachery, and Mordred's eventual treason" (35–7). Although some of these reasons are not phrased as though women had something to do with them, most are actually due to female interference. Certainly, Merlin did not simply "depart" but is entrapped by his own spell by Morgana, and Mordred does not plan treason on his own but has been controlled throughout his whole life by his mother Morgana. While the knights' "lassitude and indolence" may be partly their own faults, certainly the loss of the knights is due to their quest and then the gruesome murders of them by Morgana, as we see them hanging from trees and hanging in her fortress. In addition, Morgana and Guenevere cause the trouble that they do through the power of magic but also through using their physical attractiveness.

Morgana's symbols of power are mixed, however, since previous to this scene she appears youthful and beautiful and at the same time wears a feminine parody of the masculine armor. Morgana's "armor" barely covers much of her breasts and abdomen and is fashioned to emphasize her anatomical features. In the same way, Mordred's more practical golden armor is shaped to emphasize his highly masculine and virile anatomical features of the chest and abdomen. The feminine version of the armor, however, is a poor imitation of the male version since it does not actually protect the body as armor is meant to do. Morgana's armor, as well as her whole wielding of power in the movie, seems to imply that use of power by women is a poor imitation of the exercise of power by men, and is destructive rather than beneficial to society.

A similar theme pitting the feminine against the masculine is highlighted in the NBC miniseries from 1998 titled *Merlin* since Merlin's nemesis, as in so many of these films, is an evil female. However, the male aggression is toned down in this film, in favor of non-violence to solve problems. Although the role of female nemesis usually belongs to Morgan, in this case the evil female is Mab. Overall, the character of Mab is very much like that of Morgan le Fay in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* because they both share the qualities of ruthlessness, deceit, and enmity towards the main male characters. Nevertheless, even in Malory, Morgan is shown to care about two lovers, Accolon and Hemison, whereas Mab seems to care about no one but herself.

Both men and women can be magical in the film, but they use magic differently. Except for the Lady of the Lake, who is more positive, women use magic in more negative ways, with Mab being the foremost practitioner. The writers of the miniseries, David Stevens and Peter Barnes, attempted to give Mab an understandable motive in her opposition to Arthur and Merlin through her goal of preserving the “old ways,” which are conveniently vague (no need to worry about contradictions or complaints if there are no details). This motivation is similar to that of Morgaine in Bradley’s *The Mists of Avalon* on which the TNT miniseries is based, where the character represents an older culture than that of Christianity and the court of Camelot, represented by Gwenhwyfar. In *Mists* Morgaine’s culture is that of a pagan religion, which is demonized by the Christians. In contrast to the brief and vague references to the old ways in the miniseries *Merlin*, the novel develops the fading culture in rich detail. The novel presents the older culture as matriarchal or female-dominated while the newer, patriarchal, culture is replacing the matriarchal culture. The attitude in *Merlin* towards the old ways is also different than in *Mists*. In the case of *Merlin*, the forgetting of the old ways is deliberate in contrast to *Mists* where it appears to be more of a natural process, and in *Merlin* it is represented as the best choice whereas in *Mists* there is a sense of loss.

Even though Mab may have this reason of preserving the old ways for her practice of magic, all her uses of magic are negative and cruel, both when she uses it and when she withholds use of it. She “creates” Merlin in order to have a leader who will bring people back to the old ways, but when his mother is dying, refuses to use magic to save her because “she is no longer needed.” When Morgan is no longer needed, and also argues with her about taking Mordred from her, Mab causes her to fall down steep stairs and die. She puts Nimue in danger of being killed by a dragon in order to force Merlin to use his magic (actually planning for her to die in the process, at least that is what she tells Vortigern in order to convince him to release his prisoner to Mab). Mab tries to justify her cruelty by saying, “With evil all around me I can do nothing but evil to survive”; however, Nimue, to whom these words are spoken, rejects this excuse, saying, “That’s too easy.”

In contrast to Mab, Merlin cares about others. Merlin has a mortal mother and no father, which sets up the main conflict, requiring Merlin to choose between his more magical or his more human roots. This follows a similar conflict portrayed in the 13th century medieval texts the French *Prose Merlin* and the French *Suite du Merlin* in which Merlin has a mortal mother and a demon father and was created by the demons in order to oppose Christ. The medieval texts create a sympathetic and morally good mother for Merlin, which is what gives him the choice to be good, foiling the devil’s plan. As the medieval story’s devil’s plan fails, so does Mab’s plan in the movie. The fact that Mab “creates” Merlin in this film flips the creative power from masculine to feminine from the written versions in which the demons are all male. In this

situation, Merlin really is a fatherless child since no male appears to be involved at all, only Mab and a human mother. It also makes the same masculine to feminine creativity switch from the movie *Excalibur* which early in the movie has Merlin “create” Arthur through magic in bringing Uther and Igraine together. While Merlin does the same in this film, the initial creative energy is feminine in *Merlin* because of Mab while it is masculine in *Excalibur*. This establishes a potential for positive female energy in the movie that is lost almost immediately when Mab lets Merlin’s mother die.

In the medieval text, a choice is presented to Merlin between his demonic and his human self, or essentially between evil and good. A similar choice is presented in the film, although it bears no other resemblance to the literature. In the movie the essence of his non-human side is ambiguous, and he is not shown as being the son of a demon, but Merlin must choose whether to use magic and align himself with Mab or to resist the magic and fight against Mab (this is not necessarily portrayed as clearly good and evil). Upon the death of his foster mother, Merlin vows that he will use magic only to oppose Mab. When he does use magic, it is non-aggressive and non-violent. For example, when he saves Nimue from the dragon, he does it by trapping the dragon in mud and vines. The movie puts a high value on non-violence as when it shows Arthur winning over Lot, who was the last lord who opposed him, not through the war that was on the verge of beginning, but by putting himself in Lot’s power, by handing him Excalibur, and telling Lot to kill him if he really believes he deserves to be king instead of Arthur. The bold gesture wins the day, and the war is averted.

The only questionable act of magic that Merlin commits is to change Uther into Cornwall’s likeness to allow him to be with Igraine. Although the scene in this movie is not quite as violent as in *Excalibur*, it is still clear that Igraine is a loving and loyal wife to Cornwall, and Cornwall is killed during this time. Merlin comments in the narration that this is always something that he regrets. Significantly, it is the only time he says he uses magic because he believes the “end justifies the means,” which is a rationale that Mab had used not long before this scene. Therefore, this rationale has linked this use of Merlin’s magic to Mab’s kind of magic more than at any other time, and it is the time he regrets the most.

Besides Mab the old ways are also represented by the mysterious Lady of the Lake, who is positive, yet she has much less effect on the action and plot of the story. She appears several times as a mysterious presence in the lake who speaks to and guides Merlin, but does not actively take part in any action in the plot. Significantly, she is all white while Mab mostly wears black, has black hair, and black make-up around her eyes. The Lady says that her essence is water, and that it is in the nature of such things to flow away (in other words she “goes with the flow”?). While Mab says that she will fight the disappearance of the old ways, the Lady of the Lake disagrees with this attitude, and accepts the changes in the world. As discussed above, she differs markedly from her

medieval counterparts who were much more active. In helping to protect Arthur from the plots of Morgan le Fay, for example, Kaufman comments that, "Arthur's instant obedience to Nyneve's advice underscores her influence at his court, as well as the fact that Morgan's actions threaten to disrupt a social organization that Nyneve herself has helped to establish" (65). This is, of course, after she has replaced Merlin as Arthur's advisor, and no such replacement happens in the miniseries; since Merlin is the star character, he must be front and center through the whole action. In counseling Merlin, the Lady of the Lake tells Merlin that she and her sister Mab "don't get on." She can only provide hints to Merlin on what he should do, besides giving him Excalibur, and in at least one case Merlin misunderstands her advice. When she tells Merlin that the person who can guard the throne while Arthur is on quest is at Joyous Gard (Lancelot's castle), Merlin finds Lancelot and Galahad there. He thinks the person the Lady referred to is Lancelot, but it was really Galahad. Taking Lancelot to Camelot leads to the disastrous affair between him and Guinevere. Since the Lady of the Lake takes the passive role, and the old ways are disappearing, she gets weaker throughout the film until by the end she disappears.

Although Mab is the primary opponent of Merlin, the movie also includes the character of Morgan. She is called "Morgan le Fay" once in the film, but she is not the powerful magical figure recognizable from many written texts and films. She has little magic, only what tricks she has learned from Frick, Mab's assistant. In contrast to the powerful, if cruel, figure in *Excalibur*, this version of Morgan is a pathetic creature who acts childishly and sounds childish with a pronounced lisp. Using Morgan's superficiality to her advantage, Mab orders Frick to offer her the appearance of beauty (it is only an illusion) in order to get Morgan on Mab's side. While Morgan has a very intriguing line which shows some intelligence on the subject of beauty—"Beauty is always only an illusion, or didn't you know that, Merlin?"—this is the only flash of intelligence in an otherwise childish character. She does say early on that she desires power—immediately after Frick transforms her face to look more beautiful, she demands, "now get me the throne." Frick replies he cannot do that, but, "your son could be king." She agrees to this because (with her characteristic lisp), "I want the cwown." She proves she is capable of seduction, and it is interesting to note that both *Excalibur* and *Merlin* depict the seduction/intercourse scenes of Morgan and Arthur with Morgan on top, thus symbolizing feminine dominance of the male in a situation that is presented in a sinister manner. Generally, the character appears to have little power, some ambition, but no ideas about how to go about it on her own.

The climax of the movie is the showdown between Mab and Merlin. As has been the case throughout, Mab's magic is aggressive and violent while Merlin's is defensive. Mab shoots arrows and fire balls out of her fingers, and Merlin simply ducks to avoid them. Finally, he defeats her through the most non-violent

means of all—ignoring her. Acting upon a hint from the Lady of the Lake, he tells Mab, “We forget you Queen Mab,” and he and all the men (they are only men) in the court turn their backs on her as she stands alone behind the Round Table. Then Mab dissolves much like the Wicked Witch at the end of *The Wizard of Oz*. At the end of this movie, there is no female character who retains any power, positive or negative. Although the masculine presence has not been as overwhelmingly aggressive as in *Excalibur*; nevertheless, in *Merlin* the masculine is still opposed to feminine power, even if femininity is defeated by simply ignoring it.

Strongly contrasting these two depictions of masculine power, whether physical or magical, is the TNT adaptation of Marion Zimmer Bradley’s *The Mists of Avalon*, which finally presents a positive Morgaine, one who does not plot against Arthur or Merlin. The main conflict in the movie, as in the novel, is that between the pagan religion of the Goddess, represented by Morgaine and Viviane, and that of Christianity, represented by Gwenwhyfar. The religious conflict is much more developed than in *Merlin*, incorporating much of the religious material from Bradley’s novel. Women (the positive ones) in the telefilm version of *Mists* are outspoken about their ideas, believe in honor, believe in religion, and help each other. When the women become negative is when they abandon honor for selfish motives. The women also value love relationships with men and passion. However, Gavin Scott’s TNT adaptation makes some major alterations in the story, possibly to save time (an almost 900-page book was reduced to three hours), and in consequence ends up portraying a much weakened Morgaine.

Viviane is a strong woman but also is portrayed as manipulating people all through the film, as she does in the novel. However, she does this solely for the goal of preserving the Goddess religion and not for any personal gain. When Morgaine asks her if preserving Avalon means “sacrificing everyone you ever loved,” Viviane replies, “even if it means sacrificing my very soul.” Therefore, one sees that she is willing to sacrifice herself for a higher goal, rather than manipulate others merely for her own benefit. This is reinforced when Merlin is dying and Viviane is having doubts that her attempts to save Avalon were worth what she has done.

The one female character Scott depicts positively consistently in the film is Morgaine, which is not true in the novel. However, in deviating from the novel, where Viviane dies much earlier in the plot and Morgaine succeeds her as Lady of the Lake, the film has deprived Morgaine of any power. In the film Morgaine is positive, but passive. The only real decision she makes on her own is to keep her baby from Viviane and to avoid Avalon for a long time. She is tricked into marrying Uriens instead of his son Accolon (as in the novel). However, in the novel, she attempts to kill Uriens and has an affair with Accolon, which renews her life as a priestess and leads to her return to Avalon and to take up the mantle

of the Lady of the Lake. None of this happens in the shortened plot of the film, which keeps the character more sympathetic, but less active.

However, Morgaine does have a role, albeit more of an observer role, in the climactic scenes of the movie. The key climactic scene is between the women, primarily between the most powerful women, Viviane and Morgause, with Mordred and Morgaine watching. After Viviane kills Morgause, Mordred then kills Viviane. After these deaths, Morgaine gives the two women a proper funeral. Then she rushes onto the masculine domain of battle to watch Mordred die and to take Arthur to Avalon. Although taking Arthur to Avalon is traditional, being on the actual field of battle is not. She also is the one to throw Excalibur into the lake as Arthur lies dying, and while this role can be assigned to different characters in different versions, it is usually a knight's role. Lacy comments that "This role, incidentally, seems to be assignable to almost anyone" (42); however, in all other cases the characters are knights. Having Morgaine throw the sword in the lake shows the heightened emphasis in this version on the women's roles.

The film also emphasizes love relationships between women and men. Since in the movie the whole plotline of Morgaine's enmity towards Arthur and the attempted coup d'état through Accolon is completely eliminated, this intensifies the portrayal of the two as lovers, and contrasts to Arthur's difficult relationship with Gwenwhyfar. The movie adaptation, then, follows the motivation, as stated by Raymond Thompson, for the portrayal of the two as lovers in modern novels: "In the first place, the widespread sympathy for the figure of Arthur, who is often perceived as an undeserving victim of betrayal by his wife and best friend, encourages attempts to provide him with a true love" (342). This affection between Morgaine and Arthur is shown all through the film as Morgaine is portrayed as loving Arthur immediately when he is born, and continuing as they grow into children. When separated by Viviane as children, Morgaine as narrator says, "leaving my little brother was almost more than I could bear." This theme is expanded when Morgaine and Arthur have intercourse in the ritual known as the Great Marriage (planned by Viviane) but not knowing each other's identity. After Arthur becomes king, Morgaine continues her affection for him but conceals from him the fact that she was the one he was with in the Great Marriage to spare him guilt and embarrassment at their incest, even if done in ignorance. She also conceals the fact that a child resulted from this incident, again to protect her brother, allowing her aunt Morgause to raise the child. While this decision concerning the child Mordred has disastrous results for Arthur and Morgaine, her stay at Camelot does bring her closer to her brother.

Another theme in the film is the cooperation and community among women. The highest expression of this good will is the community at Avalon. Avalon is presented over and over as a motive for Viviane's actions, and at the end of the film when Morgaine says she had thought the Goddess and Avalon

had been lost, she says she found it in another form in the convent on Glastonbury (coexistent with Avalon) when looking at a statue of the Virgin Mary, who has assumed some of the functions of the Goddess. Other important examples of cooperation among women include Morgaine giving Gwenwhyfar a fertility charm, Igraine finding a wounded Morgaine and bringing her for treatment to the convent on Glastonbury, and Morgaine and Viviane confronting Morgause together in the climax. In a spirit that seems to pervade the film, after Gwenwhyfar has been found with Launcelot by Mordred and his followers, she goes to the convent for forgiveness and is met by Igraine and Morgaine. There Gwenwhyfar and Morgaine reconcile, and Gwenwhyfar tells Morgaine she should not have come between Arthur and his sister, and that he needs her now. She now has learned to put others' needs before her own, and to help other women instead of being jealous of them.

Although *Mists* appears to be much more positive in its presentation of female characters than *Excalibur* or *Merlin*, it has presented only a limited image of a positive and complex character. Clearly, Viviane is the strongest character in the film, and she is clearly more positive than Morgana in *Excalibur* or Queen Mab in *Merlin*. She is also presented as manipulative of others in order to achieve her goals and yet she is reassured by Merlin that these things were necessary for good reasons. Nevertheless, it appears that in order to make the Morgaine character more sympathetic, (or perhaps as the result of the drastic cutting of the plot in order to fit three hours running time) the screenwriter Gavin Scott has removed the parts of the plot from the novel in which she would have shown any active behaviors. In the novel the behaviors that complicate Morgaine's character are much more objectionable and more difficult to justify than those of Viviane, such as her attempt to kill her husband. Bradley did not shy away from these traditional features of the character in attempting to present a sympathetic portrayal in her novel. However, once translated into a miniseries, such behavior was cut in favor of a more positive, more passive character. From examining all three films, one finds that the more active the female character, the more negative she becomes. Thus, TNT's extremely passive Morgaine is extremely positive.

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Notes

¹ See Kevin Hart, "Cinema Arthuriana: An Overview" for a discussion of the corpus of Arthurian films.

² Names and spellings vary by source. I will be spelling the names according to their spelling in each source.

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BOOK REVIEWS

*Walt Whitman's Multitudes: Labor Reform
and Persona in Whitman's Journalism and
the First Leaves of Grass, 1840-1855*

Jason Stacy
Peter Lang, 2008

As is clear from the title, Jason Stacy's book is both a study of Whitman's literary and intellectual growth and a history of the period. While labor reform is dealt with in some detail, the real focus is on identifying the different personas Whitman employed in his writing and tying them together. The primary link between the personas is how Whitman's ideas about labor reform remained consistent. Stacy structures his discussion around the Artisan and Schoolmaster, the Editor, and the Bard personas as he moves chronologically through Whitman's writing. The book seeks to analyze Whitman's early ideas about labor and to identify the continuity of thought from the Artisan through the early Bard personas, both of which Stacy does successfully.

While tracing the early chronology of Whitman's life, Stacy interweaves the relevant social, political, and economic events that likely influenced Whitman's later writings. However, the text is not strictly limited to the years 1840 to 1855 as Stacy steps out of those years when necessary. The result is a balanced biographical sketch of Whitman and a broad look at the range of influences on Whitman's writing. This technique allows Stacy to draw connections between some of the varied themes that Whitman addressed between 1840 and 1855. Ultimately, the focus is on the texts, and not so much the change, but the continuity of ideas in Whitman's writing through his different personas.

Focusing on the three personas Whitman created in some of his earliest published writing, Stacy uses each of the personas to define the major sections of his book. Part one is dedicated to the Artisan and Schoolmaster, two personas that Stacy has wisely grouped together. This section is a good example of how Stacy combines biographical details of Whitman's life, including his early education and employment in print shops, with his later development of the voice or persona of the Artisan. Stacy identifies the variety of influences of the time that were impacting Whitman: the social and cultural influence of the Second Great Awakening's rhetoric; the economic upheaval of the Bank War; and, the Whig Party's political opposition to Jackson. Concluding this section with a look at the Schoolmaster persona, Stacy shows convincingly how Whitman began to develop an increasingly universal voice for the American citizen.

Whitman's career as a teacher was brief, and with his career shift came his new Editor persona. Combining elements from his earlier two personas, Whitman strove to achieve a more purely objective view. Among other topics, Stacy deals with Whitman's writings from the economic downturn of the 1840s,

a section with some particular relevance to today. It is also in this section where we get a good example of how such an approach as Stacy's can clarify our understanding of the author as it relates to Whitman's apparently anti-Irish editorials. Stacy presents a convincing argument for looking at these editorials as something more than anti-Irish but more of Whitman's full engagement in the intricacies of the New York public school system.

In the third section dealing with the Bard persona, Stacy pulls together earlier strains of his argument, in particular the years 1848 to 1855 where "a melding of Whitman's aesthetic theory and labor reform ideology in the new persona of the Bard" occurs (96). Stacy acknowledges it was a publicly slow and intermittent transformation, but a transformation nonetheless. This is also the section that is perhaps the most challenging for Stacy as he has to deal with clear breaks in details from Whitman's life, in particular his time with the *New Orleans Crescent*. Yet, this section sets the stage for Stacy's claim that the perceived sudden arrival of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 came from Whitman's lack of a consistent platform from which to express himself during this time. Stacy concludes the Bard is a democratic persona like the Editor, but more flexible. With the Bard, Stacy argues, Whitman is doing what he had earlier demanded of artists, speaking directly and unaffectedly.

Perhaps it is Stacy's convincing discussion of the continuity of ideas through Whitman's different personas, but there is not always a clear sense of what Whitman the man, free from his personas, actually thought. In his introduction, Stacy claims that Whitman "constructed public voices that were distinct from Walter Whitman, Jr." (2). This distinction is not necessarily made clear in a consistent way through the book. However, it is a secondary concern as what we consistently see is how Whitman's effective use of personas "sought to 'teach' Americans about their inherent equality and freedom" (2). Stacy's careful focus on Whitman's lesser known early writings provides a convincing analysis of the evolution of Whitman's use of personas and prepares a reader for a more informed reading of *Leaves of Grass*.

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