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From the Editor



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

Thank you all,
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From the Editor's Desk

Here, at last, is the final issue of our twenty-fourth year. It's hard to believe that the next issue will mark twenty-five years of *PCR*. The journal is a year younger than its parents, the Far West Popular and American Culture Associations, as we had to be sure we had a viable organization before we could start publishing.

We pride ourselves on variety and readability and this issue is a fine example. J.A. White's examination of slot machines and players' memories leads off, followed by Alexandra Reuber's correction of the falsified image of Creole Voodoo. Patricia and William Kirtley pay homage to Cortez' too often unsung interpreter, Malinche, while Ying Bao introduces us to the history and world of early Chinese comics. Kathy Merlock Jackson shows us that Mary Pickford called the shots, while Donald J. Newman gives cinematic representations of high school English teachers. In fiction, Brent Gibson looks at morality and ethics in the *Hunger Games*, asking whether Katness Everdeen could be considered a role model, while Joseph Serio tackles the "Man With No Name in Western Fiction." Patrick Osborne examines innovation as a response to social strains in *Breaking Bad*.

Enjoy these excellent articles, and please consider submitting your own critical efforts for a forthcoming issue. On a separate note, you are cordially invited to our 26th Annual Conference in Las Vegas from February 21 -23, 2014.

Felicia

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Errata

In our last issue, we inadvertently reversed the order of authors listed for "Nazi Uniform Fetish and Role Playing: a Subculture of Erotic Evil." David A. Lopez should have been listed as first author and Ellis Godard as second author. We sincerely apologize for any problems this error may have caused.



Slot Machines and Player's Memories: A Return to Eden

Slot machines are the most popular of all casino games, taking up roughly three quarters of a casino floor, and accounting for 70% to 80 % of all profit in a typical casino (Previtti). The house advantage, or predetermined profit margin, for slot machines is tremendous—table game players would consider it ridiculous—and yet people get on buses or planes daily and ride hundreds or even thousands of miles in order to play them. So why do so many people play? The answer is that slot machines offer players other than monetary rewards. Common wisdom holds that slots have traditionally been marketed to Baby Boomers; according to an article on Caesar's Entertainment at VegasInc.com, "Baby Boomers entering or exiting their peak spending years, including retirees with more time in which to spend their nest eggs, have long defined the growth and entertainment offerings along [the] Strip." At the same time, however, the rewards slot machines offer to players are unique in the expectations they produce in a gambler's mind. Many recently introduced games induce the 40-, 50-, or 60-something gambler to reach back into his memories for happier times, and then strive to keep him there.

Slot machine designers and marketers have come to depend upon images that predominated in the books, television shows and movies shown to children in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The machines present a dazzling array of characters and themes, from those associated with childhood board games, classic movies, and television shows to those based upon the kinds of educational experiences which fascinated children and adolescents in those decades.

There are actually two types of Boomer personalities to which designers appeal: first, the "average" Baby Boomer, whose "inner child" responds to those games, movies, and television shows and themes s/he recognizes from childhood and adolescence; and second, the Jungian *Puer Aeternus*, or "eternal boy," an archetypal personality construct, manifested in a chronological adult who has never completely grown up—who, according to Marie Louise von Franz, "remains too long in adolescent psychology"(1). The distinction between these two is important in that marketers appeal to both the adult keepers of compartmentalized childhood memories, which are usually pleasant and

offer a return to a worry-free, harmonious time, and those men (and the occasional woman)—“overgrown children” who have never left their adolescent passions and activities behind. No matter which “child” a slots marketer attracts, his casino floor has the machines needed to attract the subject’s attention and keep him or her playing for hours.

Middle-class American players raised on *Viewmaster* images and the *World Book Encyclopedia* learned early that ancient civilizations were fascinating. *Viewmaster* presented striking 3-D images of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World, including the Colossus of Rhodes—taller than the Statue of Liberty in a young student’s imagination—and the luxurious-looking, yet slightly disquieting Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The *World Book* also mesmerized young students, dazzling them with plate after plate of such Egyptian icons as the Pyramids and the golden statuary discovered in King Tutankhamen’s tomb. In school, students learned more about these and other places; they also learned to connect those places with timeless myths of gods and mortals. Eventually, some of us decided that we might be archaeologists, or explorers, or world travelers, when we grew up.

Most importantly, these images were appealing to the imagination, because all that remained were ruins, and it was up to the collective imagination of a family or class to imagine how the people who built these places had lived and died. Now, twenty or thirty years later, the average slots player finds that immersing him or herself in an engaging visual and aural experience, as opposed to the static visual experience of *Viewmaster* or *World Book*, kindles his imagination as well; but this time, he finds himself manipulated by these visuals, which have been purposely designed to induce him to play for as long as possible, remaining so captivated by the game that he does not mind losing money continuously over hours or even days.

Mythological, cowboy, outer space, and other favorite childhood themes and characters overwhelm the casino floor, in most places outnumbering the *Triple 7*, *Double Diamond*, and other traditional machines most non-players call to mind when they think about slot machines. Even when they could reference more adult and sophisticated memories, slots often use simplified images to draw in their users, no matter how complex their hardware and software have become. For example, there are a number of slot machines which have Roman, Greek, Egyptian, or Mayan civilization as themes. However, all these slots ignore the complexities of these civilizations about which Baby Boomers learned in high school and beyond. IGT’s *Cleopatra*, for example,

combines images of a scarab, the Sphinx, a feather quill, and a tablet of hieroglyphics with a desert palette; the queen herself greets the player as she opens a gaming session. Atronic's *Sphinx* includes images of coins, a jackal, the crossed symbols of kingship, and of course, a pyramid. WMS's *Zeus* iconic imagery includes a laurel wreath, a chariot, and a white bearded, elderly Zeus himself. These games have staying power, as they have been in play since around 2003, and a number of copycat versions, as well as sequels, have appeared through the years.

These games and their descendants are notable because the images are devoid of the more complex ideas introduced to us in high school and beyond. Cleopatra has no political existence, nor any connection with Marc Antony; the Sphinx is never shown as a carnivore; there are no images which reflect, for example, the single-branched trees of some royal families, or the fact that mummies are preserved human remains. The images seen are those which first captivated the player's imagination, the ones in his coloring books and in *World Book*, and they are meant to appeal to one's inner child.

More interesting, for purposes of this discussion, are games which originally spoke to complex themes, but which manufacturers updated to reflect kinder, gentler themes, as if controversy or critical thinking simply did not belong on the slots floor. One such example is Atronic's *Mayan Magic*, a disturbing yet highly entertaining game which first emerged around 2006, and frightened gamers until it was replaced in 2010 with a bright, bold, simply drawn version tamer than most G-rated games created for *Xbox*. *Mayan Magic* appealed directly to the *Viewmaster*-trained imagination of the typical Baby Boomer, presenting a mysterious atmosphere through its palette and use of mythological icons. Steeped in deep greens, blues, and maroons, a player "met" snakes and lizards, and "read" runic symbols which took him back in time, immersing him in a lost world. However, the horrors of the game were true horrors indeed: themes of conjuring and human sacrifice pervaded the bonus rounds, and the player was treated to the sights of a hellish heart bound in thorny vines and a desiccated shrunken head. There was also a literal ghost in the machine, a spirit who appeared like a wisp of smoke and then disappeared. *Mayan Magic* provided answers to the questions of what exactly happened in the great, ruined pyramids choked by lush foliage in the Mexican jungle. It was also a game one did not play in the middle of the night, after a few drinks, when one had to retire to one's room later, down a quiet, deserted hallway.

It also had to be replaced, lest the Boomer-player's imagination wander and ask too many more questions, such as the ones concerning the purpose and victims of the real sacrifices which allegedly took place centuries ago at the pyramids, or the relationship, if any, between the colonialist bent of the European conqueror and his definition of savagery when encountering such an event . . . if indeed the Europeans ever did encounter such an event. Or whether these acts were any more savage than contemporary acts which involve an electric chair, or lethal chemicals, and unfortunate men whom the state executes, only to find them innocent after the fact. In such ways a mind does turn, and such reality has no place in a palace of fantasy. It's not surprising that *Mayan Magic* had to be replaced.

Board games were also very popular in a Baby Boomer's life. Playing with family members, neighbors, or school mates provided a means of social bonding when outdoor sports were not available. In middle and high school and maybe beyond, we played *Yahtzee*, *Monopoly*, and *Battleship*. Sitting around a dining room table, or spread across the living room floor, a family or group of friends might have played for hours after dinner or during holiday gatherings, until someone's mother called to make him come home, or the grownups decided it was time to leave. Capitalizing on the wealth of pleasant memories associated with playing these games, slot designers have transformed every one of these into slot games. More importantly, WMS's *Monopoly* and IGT's *Battleship* have had staying power, their themes reappearing over the years with a host of changes in the sophistication of graphics and play. Here, also, the format is as important to their appeal as their images; both *Monopoly* and *Battleship* can be played in a "community" format, which means that up to four players play before a huge community screen which offers bonus games played by all players at once. As with the original board games, strangers become friends over hours of play, and people who are siblings, partners, or friends get to compete with each other in a comfortable environment. The brilliance of this format is that it allows players to associate the experience with their childhood experiences instead of the casino experience with which this experience would be most closely associated—the experience of playing table games.

Another element of a Baby Boomer's life, for most, was a growing dependency on television for entertainment. The typical Boomer watched any number of shows which may or may not have had a basis in reality; horror or spec fiction offered as pleasing an evening of

entertainment as comedies did. For example, for every *I Love Lucy*, there was a *Twilight Zone*; for every *Happy Days*, there was a *Star Trek*. Sometimes the two genres were combined, as with *My Favorite Martian* and *I Dream of Jeannie*. Every one of these television shows have been used as themes in slot machines.

What is notable, however, about the comedies is the extent to which they appealed to children as much or more than they appealed to adults. The *Beverly Hillbillies* had its satirical elements, playing off class differences and the mythology of the outsider; but what kids liked was the way Jethro spoke and dressed and the fact that Ellie Mae had as many pets as she could handle. Adolescents and pre-adolescents loved *The Monkees*, and little girls, and some boys, developed crushes on Micky, Peter, Mike, or Davy, and little boys, and some girls, asked for guitar or drum lessons after seeing and hearing *The Monkees* play.

The shows devoted to science fiction or speculative fiction tied into educational themes explored during school hours. *The Twilight Zone*, at first consideration, seems to be an adult show; but Rod Serling derived many of his ideas from much of what passed for current events in a Baby Boomer's elementary school classroom, and in particular, the things that fascinated and sometimes scared kids—the Mercury and Apollo programs and the idea of going to outer space, the possibility of life on other planets, robots and early versions of Artificial Intelligence, and early on, the drills during which children rehearsed “dodging” radiation during the Cold War by descending into the basement or hiding under their desks. To Baby Boomer children, *The Twilight Zone* was a contemporary version of one of Grimm's fairy tales, as discussed by Bruno Bettelheim—an entertaining show which allowed children to feel and express fear in a safe environment. It's not surprising that slot designers would turn to *The Twilight Zone* in asking the player's “inner child” to come out and play.

If these are the types of games which appeal to the inner child, what games then target the *Puer Aeternus*? The answer is, those games which either reduce recent historical or political events to cartoonish levels, deflecting the serious and sometimes tragic elements of a game in favor of ridiculous characters and humorous images—or target those elements of the player's personality which might be regarded as “arrested” in development. For example, in IGT's *Texas Tea*, the kind of activity that interests adults alone—oil drilling and acquisition—is given a decidedly immature treatment. Icons include boldly drawn cactus flowers; a cartoon bull, big, blue, and snorting whenever he gets a

chance; an animated armadillo who takes off his shell and “flashes” the player; and an animated version of a stereotypical oil tycoon, complete with ten gallon hat and big boots. Two of the great issues of this and the last century—the issues of who owns or controls means of energy and who deserves to do so—are reduced to a juvenile game in which players watch their cartoon oil wells spout, then count their profits afterwards. In the world of *Texas Tea*, Gulf oil spills never occur; instead, a loud, goofy oil tycoon and the animals on his ranch provide an escapist experience for the player.

The player has a similar experience playing *Bombs Away*. Whether s/he learned about the horrors of war either in the abstract in history class, or in their stark reality when parents or siblings lost lives or limbs in World War 2 or Vietnam, perhaps returning home with survivor’s stories—the player who sits before a *Bombs Away* slot machine sees the monstrous machines of war reduced to painless, amusing props for a comedic pantomime. Bombs of periwinkle blue or red float alongside a submarine with a shark-faced bow; occasionally, replicas of the “pinups” which kept GI’s warm at night unfold along the grid, and long-legged “pinup girls” convert each covered space to “Wild” and award extra points to a lucky player. One bonus even reenacts a flying mission, complete with sound effects and black-and-white footage or photos. It is an interesting choice of subject. The bombs, submarines, and planes all transport the player back to a scrubbed version of World War 2, which s/he, after all, is not likely to have experienced firsthand. What this does is to effect a remove from the tragedy that is war and transform *Bombs Away* into a device that triggers a remembrance of stories from the war. In other words, the game recalls the romanticized war experience as retold years later, not the horrendous experience as actually seen, heard, and felt. It provides the *puer aeternus* with a sanitized war experience.

The *Playboy* machines appeal to both types of players, as their PG-13 rated visuals suggest a time when one discovered the adult world and adult desires, through a father’s, older brother’s, or neighbor’s secret stash of what used to be called “girlie” magazines. Larry Flynt and his ilk had not yet invaded the adult magazine world, so the magazines, by today’s standards, were exceedingly tame. However, in a world where adults didn’t speak of sexuality, except to express disapproval at its potential results—the out of wedlock child or a sexually transmitted disease—these magazines introduced adult ideas about sexuality to heterosexual young men. Bally’s *Playboy* five-reel sports images of

pneumatically endowed women in relatively unrevealing costumes, providing eye candy to the player who sits down to play an otherwise unimaginative game; however, it also hearkens back to a time when a picture's importance for its male adolescent discoverer lay only in its existence as a picture of an adult woman—a picture which symbolized the world of adult heterosexual identity. The obvious fact that the game objectifies women is simply rendered irrelevant to the player.

While slot machine technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, their themes remain constant. When the “colossal reel” machine first took its place on the casino floor, for example, the compelling twin display reflected “the same old law” as Walt Whitman would say in *Song of Myself*: instead of the characters from the newest vampiric sensations, the *Twilight* series, there on the screen in beautifully rendered, highly detailed *faux* paintings, were the characters of *Van Helsing*, a name which hearkens back to the original vampire novel, *Dracula*. Instead of *Once Upon A Time*, the newest version of twisted children's tales retold for adults, there was *Lil' Red*, an adult update of “Little Red Riding Hood.” Greek and Roman cultural tropes were represented by an updating of Zeus' stories and the story of Spartacus. In sum, the idea is not to appeal to players in terms of what they are reading in the here and now, but in terms of what they absorbed as children from books, movies, and the storytellers in their lives—parents and teachers. There is a loud and persistent voice throughout the Internet positing that advertisers whet children's appetites for adult products such as cigarettes and alcohol by using cartoon characters and popular culture references; here, game manufacturers are doing the same thing, only they are whetting the gaming appetites of those who are already grown by appealing to the children within their psyches.

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Correction of a Falsified Image: Creole Voodoo

*Voodoo.
Depending on whom you talk to, it's a
venerable religion, a sinister cult,
entertainment, a unique slice of New Orleans
history, powerful magic or bunkum.
Ron Bodin*

What is Voodoo

Apart from what many people might believe, Voodoo is *not* a sinister cult. It has nothing to do with witchcraft or devil worship. It is nothing that should be feared! Voodoo is a religious faith that came to New Orleans as a result of the African slave trade in the early 18th century and the Haitian slave rebellion of 1791, a time during which many slaves escaped the island and fled to the Americas. Settling in New Orleans, slaves brought a foreign religion to a city and region whose French colonizers strictly followed the Catholic faith. In order to maintain and practice their own religion in a place where the *Code Noir* “regulated the status of slaves and free blacks,” the original form of Voodoo needed to adapt to the enforced regulations (*Louisiana's Code Noir* online). As a result, New Orleans Voodoo, also called Creole Voodoo, has become a unique blend of African and Haitian spiritual beliefs and enforced European Catholicism within the colonies. Creole Voodoo refers to an amalgamation of African ancestor worship, respect for the elderly and the spiritual life, African knowledge of herbs and charms, Haitian *lwa*,¹ and European elements of Catholicism.

Prior to being understood as a religion that has become part of New Orleans' culture, Voodoo was banned in the early 19th century as sinful and evil and “thoroughly suppressed by the legal system, public opinion, and Christianity” at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th centuries (Long, “Perceptions” 8). Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Voodoo was considered as fraudulent and perceived as “a threat to morality and public safety” (Long, “Perceptions” 8). Moreover, often confounded with hoodoo, Voodoo has not only been misunderstood, but also misused for commercial and entertainment purposes since the 1940s.

Despite all threats, Voodoo has survived. According to Voodoo Priestess Ava Kay Jones, Voodoo is still practiced by “as much as 15% of the population of New Orleans” (Jones, *Voodoo* online). The highest concentration of Voodoo followers can be found “in the [city’s] historically Creole Seventh Ward” (Tucker 52). In New Orleans, one can learn about Voodoo in the New Orleans Museum of Voodoo (724 Dumaine Street), experience and participate in some of the religion’s rituals in the Voodoo Spiritual Temple (828 North Rampart Street), and discuss the religion in one-on-one meetings with practicing Voodoo priestesses, among whom we find for example Mambo Sallie Ann Glassmann, Priestess Miriam Chamani, and Mambo Asogwe Mary Millan alias Bloody Mary, in addition to Priestess Ava Kay Jones. As an integral part of New Orleans’ culture, priestesses, historians, academics, and Voodoo followers believe in sharing the religion’s values with the public; thus, they try to fight against the religion’s unjustified bad reputation and false representation in for example fictional accounts such as, Robert Tallant’s *Voodoo in New Orleans* (1994³) and *The Voodoo Queen* (2000³), Francis Prose’s *Mary Laveau* (1977), or Jewell Parker Rhodes’ *Voodoo Dreams* (1993) and *Voodoo Season* (2005).

This falsified image of the religion gets even more distorted in Hollywood movies such as *White Zombie* (1932), *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1987), *Angel Heart* (1987), *The Believers* (1988), *Voodoo Dawn* (1998), *Voodoo Tailz* (2002), *The Skeleton Key* (2004), *Voodoo Moon* (2005), and *Hoodoo for Voodoo* (2006). In these films, Voodoo is compared to devil worship, witchcraft, hexing, conjure, and the like. Hollywood thus stresses and contributes to long-established misperceptions of the religion. This triggers two questions: First, what is the reason for this misrepresentation, and second, how does Hollywood depict the religion, and by doing so, contribute to the people’s misconstrued notion of Voodoo?

Via a thorough discussion of the religion and its representation in the two films *Angel Heart* (1987) and *The Skeleton Key* (2005), this article attempts to answer these two questions. As the article identifies and explains the films’ inaccurate representation of Voodoo rituals, of Voodoo charms and dolls, and of Voodoo priests and priestesses, readers will discover that neither one of these two films depicts the beauty and spiritual worship of the religion. The contrary is actually the case. *Angel Heart* and *The Skeleton Key* offer the viewer a representation of eclectic characteristics taken out of their cultural and religious context. By doing

so, the two films succeed in blending these characteristics with unsolicited ideas for the sake of dramatic effect. As a result, Hollywood, once again, marginalizes the religion and its followers as being sinister, secretive, evil, and fearful. It is, thus, the goal of this article to deconstruct Hollywood's falsified Voodoo construct and to contribute to a better understanding of this monotheistic faith.

Voodoo Rituals

Derived from the African Ewe and Fon people from the Benin region, Voodoo, which is sometimes spelled "vodou" or "vodoun" and translated into "god" or "spirit," is a religion of ancestor worship that incorporates many diverse rituals resembling those of the African people.

According to the Voodoo tradition, ancestors never cease to be connected to their relatives. Hence, the influence they had during their lifetime continues after their death. It is this linkage between the living and the dead that does not only "make up the very source of [the worshippers' or believers'] being," but that makes up the power of the religion (Osbey 9).

As Jeffrey E. Anderson states in his insightful monograph, *Hoodoo, Voodoo, and Conjure. A Handbook* (2008), Voodoo rituals combine ceremonies of worship and initiation, in which "offerings, dance, ritual drumming to summon the *lwa*, and the drawing of secret images, called *vèvè*" play an important role (Anderson, *Hoodoo* 40). Depending on regional customs, the honoring of Voodoo's supreme deity—the *Bondyé*—and of its spiritual helpers – the *lwa*²—can take different forms. However, drumming, dancing, chanting, and wheat meal or cornmeal drawings of *vèvè*³—symbolic representations of the *lwa* on the ground—are always part of any ceremony.

Honoring of the Gods and Spirits in a Voodoo Ceremony

In Chapter 14 of the film *Angel Heart*, Alan Parker presents the viewer a Voodoo ceremony, in which a small congregation unites in the deep swamps of Louisiana. In the dark, hidden behind oak trees covered in moss, Harry Angel, private detective from New York, observes Voodoo followers of different races and ages drumming, chanting, and dancing around a fire. In the inner circle, he detects a woman dressed in white moving to the rhythm of the drum, an instrument that according to Jean-Marie Salgado, ethnologist and researcher, "est devenu en quelque sorte le symbole même de vodou" (has become to some extent the symbol of Voodoo) (Salgado 36).⁴ It is Epiphany Proudfoot, descendent

of a Voodoo priestess and priestess herself. While performing what Salgado calls the “danse loa,”⁵ Epiphany sings, utters loud chants, moves, and lifts and lowers her white robe in order to address the spirits. As soon as she establishes connection with the spiritual world and becomes “the vessel through which the gods make their wishes known,” her body starts twisting to the extent that she loses control over herself and falls on to the ground (Bell 279).

Salgado describes such a spiritual possession as “crise-loa” a state of trance. Ethnologist Lilas Desquiron defines this state of trance in more detail. She understands it as “un mode de contact maîtrisé, voulu, nécessaire, [et] positif” (a form of controlled, wanted, necessary, [and] positive contact) (Desquiron 125). “Cette communication religieuse et bénéfique est” (This religious and beneficial communication is) between the medium—in our case, Epiphany Proudfoot—and the deities that speak in the language of her twisting body (Desquiron 125). To honor the *Bondyé* and the respective *lwa*, Epiphany ends the ceremony with the sacrifice of a chicken whose warm blood and flesh she first consumes then shares with the congregation.

Two things need to be noted: First, according to Brenda Marie Osbey, New Orleans native and writer in residence at Louisiana State University, New Orleans’ Voodoo “has never included public ritual or anything resembling group worship” as illustrated in Parker’s film (Osbey 4). Osbey also states that “whatever ritual takes place” it is held between “the seeker and nature” (4), between the seeker and what she calls “the mother,” to whom historians, folklorists, anthropologists, and Voodoo followers refer to as priestess or *mambo*. Second, even though animal sacrifice is a common custom to honor and to appease the Gods in Benign, Africa—the birthplace of the African religion—blood sacrifice, as visualized in *Angel Heart*, is “rarely seen or performed by the Westerners” and is not part of present-day Voodoo rituals in America (*Voodoo Rituals* 00:19:03). The “drunkenness [...], blood drinking, the devouring of live chickens” as shown in Parker’s film and also falsely declared in Robert Tallant’s book, *Voodoo in New Orleans* (1984) are fictional (Long, *New Orleans* xxxiv). Moreover, they misrepresent what African Voodoo followers understand as one of the religion’s most divine rituals, the appeasement of the ancestral spirits through animal sacrifice.

According to Osbey, misrepresentations of the Voodoo religion should be understood as the remains of “peculiar prejudices of the [French and Spanish] colonial mind” (5). I agree with Osbey in that

prejudices of the present can be traced back to those of the past and actually find explanation in the former aristocratic mindset and perception of the colony's indigenous and enslaved people as inferior, if not savage. To ensure order in a city that was populated by many different cultures and races, strict regulations were put into place by the 54 articles of *Louisiana's Code Noir* (1724). This document, which relied on the *Code Noir* that was originally created under Louis XIV in 1685, regulated all "relations between masters and slaves" and made it "imperative on masters to impart religious instruction to their slaves" (*Louisiana's Code Noir* online).

In relation to the practice but also the perception of Voodoo, two of the 57 articles are important. According to Article II of the *Code Noir*, all slaves had to be instructed "dans la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine et baptisés" (in the Catholic faith and baptized) (*Le Code Noir* online). According to Article III, "tous exercices d'autre religion que de la catholique, apostolique et romaine" (the practice of any other religion than the Catholic one) was forbidden (*Le Code Noir* online). The same article forbids slaves to assemble for any reason, an idea that found a more detailed outline in Article XIII of the Code. Here it is stated that all slaves were restrained "de s'attouper le jour ou la nuit, sous prétexte de noces ou autrement, soit chez l'un de leurs maîtres ou ailleurs, et encore moins dans les grands chemins ou lieux écartés" (to gather either by day or by night, under the pretext of a wedding or for any other reason, neither at the house of their masters nor somewhere else, and much less on busy streets or in secluded places) (*Le Code Noir* online).

Whereas secretive gatherings, during which enslaved Africans practiced their spiritual traditions, provided the oppressed with "a vital means of mental and emotional resistances to [their] bitter hardship," the same innocent gatherings, when detected, were perceived as a threat to order and social values by the French and Spanish colonizers (Bultman 148). Hence, they were suppressed. Disrespect of the articles led to corporal punishment that, in the case of reoccurring offences, could lead to the offenders being branded with the fleur-de-lys or being judged with capital punishment.

Even though the French colonizers had an enormous influence on the modern misconception of Voodoo as being secretive, evil, and an expression of opposition to established social norms, it seems as if Osbey omits the perception of Voodoo and its development after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Throughout the nineteenth century, many American settlers were suspicious of Voodoo, its secret but structured gatherings,

and its developing ties to and incorporation of hoodoo, “a form of African American folk magic that operates independent of the gods” (Anderson, *Hoodoo* 42). According to New Orleans’ folklore, this blending of Voodoo and hoodoo saw its heyday during the reign of New Orleans’ most famous Voodoo queen Marie Laveau (1801-1881) and lead to the term “New Orleans Voodoo Hoodoo.”

Despite the whites’ disapproval and skepticism, in 1817, the New Orleans Municipal Council passed a law that allowed slaves to gather on Sundays at Congo Square, the present Louis Armstrong Park. This given freedom for the slaves encouraged and attracted more and more white onlookers. According to Voodoo priestess Ava Kay Jones, the white scrutiny, however, soon turned into performance pieces, emphasizing drumming and music rather than the presentation of religious rituals (see Jones, *Voodoo* online). In this respect it is surprising to find out that in 1820, the local newspaper, the *Louisiana Gazette*, reports of several arrests of black (and later white) people for holding occult practices and the idolatrous worship of an African deity called *Vaudoo* (see *Louisiana Gazette*). In his book *New Orleans As It Was* (1895), Henry Castellanos, one of the city’s most prominent citizens in the late nineteenth century, relates similar scenarios of arrests especially in the 1860s, a time when more and more white people “were identified as attending a Voodoo ceremony” and seeking help from Marie Laveau (Castellanos 14). The eventual inhibition of these assemblies in public spaces led to nightly gatherings in remote locations as for example at the St. John Bayou. As a result, folkloric accounts “of Voodoo orgies and of whites being possessed by spirits” developed (Jones, *Voodoo* online). This fictionalized almost gothic-like setting entrenched in secrecy and looming danger has fueled the imagination of Hollywood’s moviemakers ever since, and is apparent in Alan Parker’s visualization of the mid-night Voodoo ceremony in the heart of the swamps.

Ancestor Worship

In addition to the worship of the ancestral and spiritual world during Voodoo ceremonies, Voodoo followers also build ancestor altars either at their temples or homes (see Picture 1).



Picture 1 (Personal photo; ancestor altar in Rosalie Alley, New Orleans, LA, March 2010)

This altar serves to honor our “biological ancestors, the universal archetypal ancestors, or both.”⁶ It holds pictures of the deceased, flowers, colored candles, and a bowl of blessed water. At the very top of the altar stands a white candle⁷ substituting for the *poteau-mitan* (the center-post of the holy space).

In contrast to the altar in Picture 1, the altar in Picture 2 does not hold any personal memories, pictures or artifacts. In being less personal but more universal than the first, it fulfills the function of remembrance and worship of the *guédé*, “the loas of the dead and of cemeteries” (Rigaud 58), among which Baron Samedi is seen as the “ultimate suave and sophisticated spirit of Death” (Alverado, *Voodoo Hoodoo* 27).



Picture 2 (Personal photo; ancestor altar in Rosalie Alley, New Orleans, LA, March 2010)

Influenced by the Haitian representation of these *lwa* in general and of Baron Samedi in particular, the *guédé* in New Orleans' Voodoo find representation in drawings of skeletons, banners with skulls, as well as purple and black candles. Whereas the purple-colored candles are placed on the altar to attract the *lwa* to ensure peace and psychic ability, the black-colored candles shall help “to repel negativity,” to protect against evil, and “to banish negative people from your life” (Alverado, *Voodoo Hoodoo* 57).

However, it needs to be noted that apart from these positive spiritualistic implications, purple and black have a more negative connotation when used in spell-work.⁸ As suggested in Parker's film *Angel Heart*, the two colors underline a world of secrecy and darkness; a world that takes an unnatural and fatal toll on Harry Angel as soon as he opens the multi-colored window in the back of Louis Cypher's meeting room (see Pictures 3 and 4).⁹

Picture 3 (Parker, *Angel Heart* 1987)Picture 4 (Parker, *Angel Heart* 1987)

Behind this window, the viewer discovers an altar that holds diverse items among which we find, for example, a pearl necklace, a set of eyes, a vase with flowers, a beetle,¹⁰ a sculpture of Peter Paul Rubens' praying hands, a set of dice, several lit purple-colored candles, and two Voodoo dolls. It, thus, combines artifacts representative for the Voodoo religion (objects dear to the deceased, the priest's or priestess' spiritual necklace representing the different astral realms and respective *lwa*, and the colors of the *guédé*) with those representative for the Christian faith (a cross and praying hands). By doing so, the film seems to allude to New Orleans' unique brand of Voodoo—Creole voodoo—that is characterized by the blending of the African religion with European Catholicism.¹¹

But what is the exact function of this altar? Due to its domineering colors of purple and black, it seems to be an altar to honor the *guédé*. However, a closer look shows that this is not the case. Pictures of the deceased or of Baron Samedi are missing. The altar does not hold food, even though food is always offered to the ancestral spirits “in order to nourish, to enliven or fortify, and to make contact with the invisible powers” (Rigaud 91). The use of the negative connotation of the colors throughout the film in combination with dice and Voodoo dolls on this altar rather hint at something very different, but something also typical for New Orleans: the use of hoodoo and its belief in the power of black magic, cursing, crossing, supernatural healing, “prophetic dreams, and various forms of fortunetelling” (Anderson, *Hoodoo* 42).

According to the etymological origin of the noun die, most likely derived from the old French noun *dé* and referring to proverbs such as *le dé en est jeté* (the die has been cast), or *coup de dés* (a strike of luck or bad luck), the dice on the altar refer to the notions of game, fate, destiny,

fortune, misfortune, and spiritual opportunities that in the case of Harry Angel have irrevocable consequences. The numbers of the two dice—six and two—reveal these notions.

The first die shows the number two, a number that signifies unity as well as its “movement away from unity” (Greer 494). Number two, thus, expresses dualism until its meaning of unity coincides with its opposing notion of separation. In this sense, number two can also be perceived as an antagonistic number as it can oppose its initial meaning. From a spiritual perspective, the antagonistic force of number two is number one, a number often linked to God the Father. Hence, “the Devil, “telling always no,” and the Evil which it personifies, have the number 2 for its symbol” (Desrosier, *Two* online). Consequently, number two represents the bad opposing the good, the spiritual opposing the secular, the virtuous opposing the evil, the honest opposing the deceitful. The allusion to duality, false appearances, and moments of separation play an important role in Parker’s film. Throughout the entire movie, Louis Cypher pretends to be nothing else than Harry Angel’s employer. Only too late does Angel realize that he has been fooled and that his own identity and unity of the self have been jeopardized by what initially seemed to be a professional engagement with Louis Cypher.

The symbolic articulation of the number six, which finds representation in the increasing manifestation of evil as the film progresses, supports the film’s domineering notions of deception, imperfection, sin, and evil (see Desrosier, *Six* online). Moreover, it is “the number of the test” that requires choices and decisions to be made by the person tested, in our case, Harry Angel (Desrosier, *Six* online). Adding the two numbers together, we obtain the number eight, the number symbolizing finality, “immutable eternity” and self-destruction (Desrosier, *Eight* online).

Here we can conclude that the individual dice as well as the combination of the two provide the viewer with inside knowledge about the exceptional and unique rules of a very peculiar game that Harry Angel is unable to win. It is a game in which evil, camouflaged by a business suit, wins over good and decides upon life. It is a game initiated and won by the Devil.

Voodoo Dolls and Magic: Voodoo Dolls in *Angel Heart*

The notion of game and play is also attached to dolls. They are playmates that often become a child’s companion, confidant, and talisman. They are lifeless beings that sometimes seem to acquire

somewhat of a supernatural power that easily plays with and might even control their owners if misused. Opening the window to the locked-away altar gives the viewer the feeling of discovering a secret passage into a secretive world that is gated by two Voodoo dolls serving as guardians of the crossroad into the unknown.

By placing the Voodoo dolls on top of the altar, Parker makes three mistakes. First, even though Voodoo dolls are traditionally perceived “as messengers to the spirit world,” in Creole Voodoo, dolls function predominantly as talisman and *gris-gris*¹³ (Alverado, *Voodoo Dolls* 11). They are charms, which were in high demand during the reign of Marie Laveau in the nineteenth century, and which nowadays are often purchased as souvenirs in New Orleans’ Voodoo shops, in order “to attract money and love, stop gossip, protect the home, maintain good health and achieve innumerable other ends” (Guiley 148). Hence, they are not necessarily placed on top of an altar serving a religious purpose.

Second, as *gris-gris*, Voodoo dolls can be used for good and bad work, that is to say, they can be used for crossing and uncrossing, for inflicting harm on someone, as well as for protecting and blessing yourself or a loved one. In *Angel Heart*, the two primitively constructed dolls represent the misuse of power. They are magical dolls that, in combination with the color spell, help Louis Cypher to hoodoo, that is to say, to cross Harry Angel and to turn him into a will-less and helpless man following instructions given to him. Thus, Alan Parker plays on the overall prevailing misperception of Voodoo dolls as “the harbinger of bad luck and malevolent practices that can easily attack your soul” (Reuber 17). He refers to the evil-spirited and demonic connotation that the colonizers of Louisiana attached to the dolls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,¹³ but disregards the fact that “approximately 90% of the use of Voodoo dolls in New Orleans is centered on healing, finding true love, [and] spiritual guidance” (Alvarado, *Voodoo Dolls* 4).

Third, he connects the overall perception of Voodoo dolls as agents of evil, as personifications of the black arts, and executioners of revenge with the religion. Considering the plot of the film, Parker even presents the Voodoo dolls as possible agents of Satan. As Louis Cypher’s helping hands, these magical dolls, in combination with the dice and the black and purple colored candles, contribute to forming and directing Harry Angel on his fatal path towards becoming a puppet-like being in an unethical game of deception and murder; a game whose ultimate goal is to pay off the Devil with one’s own soul.

Unfortunately, it is a game that Parker connects to Voodoo, a religion that is foreign to Harry Angel and to probably most of the viewers of the film. By linking Voodoo with devil worship and soul snatching, Alan Parker demonizes the religion and supports Hollywood's unjustified and misleading Voodoo construct. As a result, he misrepresents and undermines the work of any ethnologists researching Voodoo, as they "condamnent catégoriquement cette manière de voir dans le voodoo un culte du démon" (categorically condemn the perception of Voodoo as belonging to the cult of devil worship) (Montilus 111).

Magic, Conjure, and Voodoo Dolls in *The Skeleton Key*

The element of soul snatching also finds expression in Iain Softley's film *The Skeleton Key*. Here, Violet Devereaux, an elderly woman, pretends to be in need for Caroline Ellis, a young nurse from New Jersey, to take care of her husband Ben, who, after a stroke, has lost speech and leg movement. Violet, however, is not interested in curing her husband. Her only interest is in Caroline's soul and body, which, when the time is right, she desires to snatch away from her in a ceremony called "the conjure of sacrifice." Until then, Caroline shall remain on the property of the old plantation home under the false premise to be the caretaker of Violet's husband.

Interested in her patient and her new environment, Caroline explores the old house and its surroundings in order to find clues about what could have caused Ben's physical and linguistic paralysis. Similar to Harry Angel's discovery of the Voodoo altar behind a closed window, Caroline soon detects a locked-away room filled with jars, roots, animal skulls, and Voodoo dolls. Not being familiar with New Orleans' unique Voodoo Hoodoo tradition, she concludes that something mysterious and evil has caused Ben's disability to walk and talk. Her initial bewilderment turns fast into a growing suspicion of Violet's true intentions for having her reside at the plantation, and a personal quest to identify the real cause for Ben's disability.

Even though she is right assuming that Ben's condition is not of any physical nature, she is wrong determining Voodoo as its cause. As Carolyn Morrow Long points out in her article "Perceptions of New Orleans Voodoo" (2002), the goal of Voodoo is not to harm, but to establish "a balanced life characterized by harmony with the human community, the natural environment, the *lwa*, and the ancestral spirits" (Long, "Perceptions" 88). Nevertheless, to Caroline—and probably to

most of the viewers of the film as well—Voodoo, hoodoo, hexing, fixing, and conjure, etc. are synonyms. She is unaware, first, that Voodoo is a religion with elaborate rituals and ceremonies; second, that hoodoo is an African folk magic that includes the belief in and use of charms, roots, and fortunetelling and can be used “for both good and evil” (Malbrough 4); third, that the term conjure is often used interchangeably with the term Hoodoo, but *never* with the term Voodoo; fourth, that conjure implies “both magic and herbal medicine,” and fifth, that in New Orleans, Voodoo and Hoodoo complement each other (Anderson, *Conjure* xii). Peculiar to the crescent city, we find a Voodoo Hoodoo construct that dates back to the early nineteenth century when Marie Laveau added the magical component to the African-European blend of Voodoo and Catholicism.

Upon entering the attic, Caroline discovers a culture that is very foreign to her, and that she (probably) only “knows” through the eyes of Hollywood’s horror movies. Hence, it *must* be something frightening and dangerous. Even though no dolls are placed on any altar, the fear-inspiring notion of Voodoo dolls is apparent in the film’s Chapters 7 and 12. As unanimated objects affiliated with black magic that can harm body and soul, the Voodoo dolls in Softley’s film signify danger. In both film chapters, the Voodoo doll has Caroline’s body size and height, and almost looks like a mummification of her body, whose eyes and mouth are stitched together in order to silence and blind her. Whereas in Chapter 7, the Voodoo doll is an integral part of the attic, in Chapter 12, the same Voodoo doll is a projection of Caroline’s disturbed mind. Her sleep is interrupted by her vivid dream imagery that is enriched with “fear inspiring images of conjure, black magic, and the [unlimited] power of Voodoo dolls” (Reuber 17). In her dream, she sees the two former house servants, Papa Justify and Mama Cecile in the attic, wearing bone necklaces, singing and shaking. She sees two children sitting on the ground, surrounded by chalk drawings and a ring of white candles. While Papa Justify and Mama Cecile appear to experience spirit possession, the two children remain silent and calm.

According to the film, this ceremony goes back to the early nineteenth century, when Papa Justify and Mama Cecile were discovered in the attic crossing¹⁴ their employer’s children with the goal to take their young and innocent souls. Via this scene, Softley visualizes the once dominant white colonial mindset of the nineteenth century, namely that black slaves and servants were “naturally possessed of magical properties in their very persons” and attempted to (mis)use these

properties against their white employers whenever possible (Osbey 6). Without realizing that African Americans turned towards the supernatural for help mostly when “faced with hardship, whether in the form of cruel taskmasters, unrequited love, or simple bad luck,” both the nineteenth-century aristocrat and the twenty-first-century moviegoer react with fear towards this form of African magic (Anderson, *Conjure* 74). However, being able to steal a child’s soul with the help of magic is the making of Hollywood. It is not related to the original goals of conjure at all, among which we find spiritual and herbal healing as well as the appeal of supernatural forces through lucky charms. In this respect, Hollywood’s representation of conjure is as misleading as Parker’s misrepresentation of the Voodoo dolls. In illustrating conjure as a hexing practice with fatal outcomes, Softley strips this African folk magic of any possible positive connotation.

Caroline awakens from this nightmare as soon as the picture of the Voodoo doll in the attic takes the form and shape of her self. The dream imagery of having *her own* eyes and mouth sewn together illustrates Caroline’s tremendous fear of becoming or being “a lifeless object that is played with and used by” her employer (Reuber 17). Once again, Hollywood supports the falsified image of the Voodoo doll as a fear-inspiring object, regardless of the fact that, as stated by the Louisiana Voodoo Museum, “most Voodoo dolls are not used for evil practices, but for love, healing success, money, etc.”

Spiritual Baths

Caroline’s disturbing nightmare occurs after her attempt to uncross Ben with the help of a spiritual bath, for which she had obtained all necessary ingredients at a special store in New Orleans: a white candle shaped in form of a cross, rum to intensify the spiritual communication, and a variety of herbs.

Spiritual baths are an ancient practice in Voodoo. They have the function of cleansing oneself or the other of negative energy “or to bring good luck” (Alverado, *Voodoo Hoodoo* 10). It is upsetting to see that Softley suggests Caroline being able to conduct this ritual with the effect of uncrossing Ben for the following reasons: First, the execution of this ritual is reserved for initiated priests or priestesses. Far from being a priestess, Caroline does not even believe in Voodoo. Nevertheless, she executes this ancient ritual that serious “practitioners have always attached considerable importance to” (Rigaud 151). Second, the priestess performing the cleansing needs to undergo cleansing herself prior to

conducting a spiritual bath and serving “as a medium between the spiritual and mundane world” (Reuber 17). Caroline does not do so. Third, in order for the herbs to work as intended, the priestess using the herbs in the ritual must empower them first. At no point in the film does Caroline do so. She only pours them into the water and then sprinkles them on Ben. Fourth, prior to being able to connect with any *lwa*, the priestess needs to speak to the guarding of the crossroad, Papa Legba. Only after having done so, will the medium be able to address other spirits and conduct a proper cleansing of body and mind. In this sense, the priestess has to ensure that she serves “the appropriate offerings to the *lwa* for the success of these baths” (*International Voodoo* online); another important detail that Softley did not consider in his film.

By having Caroline take action in this unprofessional way, Softley strips the Voodoo religion of its profoundness and complexity. Moreover, it almost seems like as if Softley ridicules the religion in letting the viewer believe that everybody—even the non-believers—can easily connect with the spiritual world, summon the *lwa*, appease them with a white burning candle, intensify the interaction with the spirits by spitting rum on the candle, using herbs for freeing a body and mind from evil spirits, and uncrossing a previously crossed individual.

Priest and Priestesses as Soul Seekers

This leads to the last point of discussion: The representation of priest and priestesses in *Angel Heart* and *The Skeleton Key*. Due to the fact that Voodoo is compared to devil worship in *Angel Heart*, Parker does not address any possible function of a Voodoo priest. He only focuses on the portrayal of individual acts taken by the devil, alias Louis Cypher. Even though this is not quite the case in *The Skeleton Key*, Softley’s erroneous depiction of the Voodoo priestess requires correction.

Despite the fact that Violet Devereaux functions as the film’s main medium who connects to the spiritual world either through chants or chalk drawings, she is far from being a truthful representation of a Voodoo priestess for the following reasons: First, the work of a Voodoo priestess is always geared towards the reestablishment of harmony within nature, one’s family, and one’s self. Violet’s *only* concern, however, is the possession of her victim’s soul. She neither seeks to communicate with the spirits, nor provides her clients with positive energy in order to elevate their life and soul. Second, whereas New Orleans’ Voodoo priestess Bloody Mary, alias Mary Millan, is proud to share her work and

religious life with her followers, the community, and even with students of my folklore class in fall of 2010 and spring of 2011, Violet Devereaux only “practices” in the dark. The fact that she keeps quiet about her practices indicates that she has no good intention. Third, in contrast to Voodoo Priestesses Miriam Chamani—founder of New Orleans’ Voodoo temple—or Ava Kay Jones, who both contribute to New Orleans’ cultural heritage and the survival of its Voodoo religion by educating “the public in the true nature of the Voodoo religion” (Jones, *Yoruba Priestess* online) through “lectures, seminars, teachings, and [the] sharing [of the] spiritual knowledge” (Chamani online), the fictional character of Violet Devereaux has nothing to give to her husband, family, or community. On the contrary, she stains this religion with the horrifying notion of hexing and soul snatching. In this respect, Violet Devereaux can be compared to the Devil alias Louis Cypher in *Angel Heart*. Both Violet Devereaux and Louis Cypher are soul seekers and soul snatchers who do not have anything good in mind. They have no commonalities with a Voodoo priestess.

Conclusion

After examining the representation of the Voodoo religion in the two films *Angel Heart* and *The Skeleton Key*, we can conclude that the religion has once again been misrepresented in popular film. Both films fuel the erroneous notion that Voodoo is synonymous with hoodoo, conjure, and witchcraft, and that it comprises elements such as soul snatching, animal and human sacrifice, as well as murder. This being said, both films stigmatize the religion as a dangerous cult whose membership only finds termination through death. Hence, Alan Parker and Iain Softley consolidate the Voodoo hoodoo construct “that the film business has been creating since the early 1940s. It is a construct that turns a religion focused on ancestor worship and the establishment of harmony between the self and the surrounding (spiritual) world into a counterforce of malicious and evil intent. It is a construct that has nothing to do with reality” (Reuber 17). Without having the opportunity to experience and learn about Voodoo, the general public will, however, not be able to disentangle Hollywood’s carefully spun web of misrepresentations of the religion’s spiritual beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies. Thus, they will continue to “simply enjoy” Voodoo in the form of suspense thrillers.

Here we can only hope for two things: First, that readers of this and of similar critical contributions to this topic will pass the message

along to their friends and family members and, by doing so, help to promote a better understanding of the religion. Second, that tourists coming to New Orleans have the desire to learn more about “the only Afro-Catholic religion to [have emerged] in North America” (Long, *New Orleans* 93) through, for example, (self) guided visits of the Voodoo museum, an educational “Voodoo tour” offered by one of the city’s tour companies, or an appointment with one of New Orleans’ initiated Voodoo priestesses. No matter which of these options will be chosen, the outcome will be the same: the realization that “Hollywood Voodoo” aims at creating fear, but New Orleans’ Voodoo desires to establish harmony and peace within oneself and with the other through prayer and worship.

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Notes

¹ Derived from “the Yoruba word *l’awo*, meaning ‘mystery,’” the spelling of *lwa* differs greatly among voodoo followers and researchers (Anderson, *Hoodoo* 33). Consequently, different spellings will occur in this article depending on the sources used. The meaning and importance of *lwa* within the Voodoo tradition will find elaboration on page 4 and in endnote 8 of this article.

² *Lwa* are to be understood as lesser deities and spirits that serve as intermediaries between man and Voodoo’s supreme deity, the *Bondyé*.

³ The inclusion of *vèvè* in Voodoo ceremonies derived from African and Indian traditions, which, as Robert Montilus points out in his *Études sur le vodou* (1966), “ont été influencés par la magie européenne du Moyen âge” (were influenced by European magical beliefs of the Middle Ages) (Montilus 43).

⁴ All translations given in this work are my own if not indicated otherwise.

⁵ *La danse loa* is a sacred dance that is closely linked with Voodoo. According to Salgado “on pourrait presque définir le Vodou comme une religion dansée” (we could almost call Voodoo a dancing religion) (36).

⁶ Explanation on the “Ancestral Altar” has been provided by the *Virtual Voodoo Temple*. 2009-2012. <http://www.planetvoodoo.com/voodoo-temple/ancestral-altar.htm> (accessed August 30, 2102).

⁷ Color symbolism is of high importance in the Voodoo tradition. The color white, chosen for the candle at the top of the altar, has positive connotations and represents spiritual cleansing, healing, assisting others, and blessing (Alvarado, *Voodoo Hoodoo* 56). The blue candle on the left fulfills the function of putting the believer at peace, and of providing him with “strong and gentle energies” (Alvarado, *Voodoo Hoodoo* 57).

⁸ According to Denise Alvarado, “works using the color purple are typically concerned with power, psychic ability, commanding, compelling, controlling, or bending other’s to one’s will” (*Voodoo Hoodoo*, 56). Black can be used to send “inflicting harm or destruction” on someone (*Voodoo Hoodoo*, 57).

⁹ Pictures were taken from the film *Angel Heart*. Dir. Alan Parker. Lionsgate films, 1987. DVD.

¹⁰ Even though beetles do not play any role in the Voodoo religion, it should be noticed that according to old Egyptian beliefs, beetles symbolize rebirth of the deceased. Thus, they are a connection to the afterlife. Alan Parker might have decided to place the beetle on the altar simply to allude to Voodoo’s belief in the ancestors and the afterlife.

¹¹ In the Mississippi Valley and especially in New Orleans, le *Bondyé* can be compared to the Christian God, and the *lwa* to the Catholic Saints, for example: The *lwa* of Papa Legba, the gate keeper “who opens communication between humans and other *lwa*, corresponds to St. Peter, keeper of the keys to heaven” (Anderson, *Hoodoo* 34); Erzulie, “who is considered to be a mother goddess,” represents love and beauty and finds its counterpart in the Virgin Mary (Malbrough 19). Unique to New Orleans’ Voodoo, the *lwa* Ogun (warrior and blacksmith) represents Saint, St. Jude, and is honored and celebrated in “Our Lady of Guadalupe Church” on 411 North Rampart Street, New Orleans.

¹² *Gris-gris* often comes in form of small cloth bags that are filled with hair and nail clippings as well as herbs and graveyard dust. According to the Louisiana Voodoo museum, *gris-gris* is “made to affect the magical properties of Voodoo.”

¹³ For the colonizers, these dolls were more than just talismans holding *gris-gris*. As magical links to the underworld, they symbolized “a war waged against your very soul” (Alvarado *Voodoo Dolls*, 3).

¹⁴ While crossing “refers to spiritual works that cause harm or bad luck [...], uncrossing refers to works that reverse it” (Alvarado, *Voodoo Hoodoo* 6).

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Malinche: The Voice of a Nation

If you change the present enough, history will bend to accommodate it.

Barbara Kingsolver

Introduction

Malinche was the interpreter, intermediary and inamorata of Cortés. She determined the outcome of meetings, negotiations, and conversations yet she personifies ambiguity (Metcalf 8). This young, sixteenth century woman changed the history of the Americas by her gift of speech, yet left nothing of her own words.

She is part of America's 21st century multi-cultural heritage. She appears in artwork and murals as a hero and a whore. Black velvet paintings of her sexualized figure signify a male patriarchal interpretation of history (Esquibel 301). Malinche graces the walls of eponymous Mexican restaurants in Sarasota, Florida; Rahway, New Jersey; and Wauconda, Illinois. She decorates calendars and cigar boxes, appears in the 2012 Genzoman digital art cartoon, "Malinche," and embellishes 2013 "Aztec Art" tattoos by Jaime Gallegos. Her image adorns vans and low riders (Sandoval 179).

Her will to survive speaks to the powerless and marginalized. She inhabits the edge, the border, the periphery. She is the bridge, the connection, and the supreme mediator between two cultures. She is present when Anglo historians describe the success of the Conquistadors, when a Chicano looks at his heritage, when a Chicana develops her sense of identity.

This acceptance of divergent views of Malinche as revered, reviled, and a role model employs the ideas of three theorists. Scholar Peter Novik argues that every historian writes from his own perspective. British anthropologist Victor Turner states that paradigm shifts of a nation's founding mythology occur during times of stress. Chicana Gloria Anzaldua promotes a post-modern view that embraces ambiguous or contradictory concepts. These academics provide a multidisciplinary analysis of Malinche's contributions to modern culture.

The primary sources that give evidence of her historic role as interpreter come from those who knew her: Hernando Cortés, Francisco Lopez Gómara, and Bernal Díaz del Castillo. Their writings merged quickly into stories, folklore, and myth. They tell us more about the people who wrote them than the woman herself. Multiple interpretations

of Malinche are the result of the bias of those who wrote about her in the last five hundred years.

Malinche and the Chroniclers

I replied that if he wished to know the truth, he had only to ask the interpreter with whom he was speaking, Marina, whom I have always had with me.

Cortés, Letters from Mexico

The Chroniclers were advocates and propagandists. They presented Malinche as they wished her to be, rather than as she actually was. Peter Novik argued in *The Authority of Experts*, “We know that it (truth) won’t hold under the severest strain, but in high wind and shoal water, even a light anchor is superior to none at all” (x). The Chroniclers agreed on five “truths,” however flimsy their evidence or blatant their bias. Malinche was beautiful and intelligent. She acted as the interpreter, guide, and mistress of Cortés. She accepted Christianity and brought it to the indigenous people. She was the mother of the first mestizo and instrumental in the overthrow of the Aztec empire.

Cortés referred to his interpreter as the “tongue” (*la lengua*) “who is an Indian woman of this land” (72). He credited his success to God and Malinche (Lenchek 2). This young Mesoamerican woman advised Cortés to appear more like the incarnation of the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl. She muted the brash demeanor, abrasive speech, and cultural insensitivity of Cortés. Malinche convinced the indigenous people to join the Spanish and fight for their freedom from the choleric Aztec empire. The combined Spanish and native army of Cortés was ninety-five percent Amerindian (Saylor 2). She communicated the orders of Cortés to his allies on the battlefield.

Gómara, his biographer and secretary, exalted the Spanish leader in his *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (1552). He described Malinche as one of the women slaves that Cortés assigned to his officers to cook and satisfy their sexual needs (Perez-Lagunes 7). He pointed out her importance to Cortés as interpreter and secretary. He also related the story of her baptism and role in uncovering a plot to ambush the Spaniards.

Díaz, a Spanish foot soldier, fashioned Malinche as a central figure in his narrative, correcting what he considered Gómara’s errors. Díaz described her as a heroic, beautiful, and intelligent woman who served Cortés as an interpreter and trusted ally. Díaz noted that Father

Bartolome de Olmedo baptized her in 1519. She helped Christianize the indigenous people, and lived her life as an exemplary Christian. Díaz always referred to her respectfully as Doña Marina.

Bernardino Sahagún, a Franciscan friar, arrived in New Spain in 1529 and spent fifty years studying Aztec culture. He wrote *The War of Conquest: How It Was Waged Here in Mexico* based on oral interviews, codices, and pictographic books of the Aztecs. Sandra Messinger Cypess, professor of Latin American Literature at the University of Maryland, considers him the first ethnographer and anthropologist (*La Malinche* 15). Sahagún related this poignant observation: “Then word came which pierced Montezuma’s heart: that a woman of our own race was bringing the Spaniards toward Mexico, was interpreting for them, a woman named Marina” (20).

The illustrations in Sahagún’s account place Malinche in the center of the scene. Stylized tongues indicate she is the speaker. She wears her hair in the style of an upper class Aztec woman. Her ornamented *huipil* reinforces her status. The Aztec artists clearly depicted her role in the Conquest as one of leadership.

William Prescott, the English Historian, relied on the writings of the Chroniclers for his *History of Mexico* (1843). He depicted the consort of Cortés as charming and generous, a “lively genius” who learned Spanish in four days. He declared: “She learned it more readily, as it was the language of love” (296). His account stated that the Spaniards “always held her in grateful remembrance for her aid” and that the “natives appreciated the kindness and sympathy, she showed them in their misfortunes” (333). After this assertion, he dropped any discussion of Malinche in favor of a detailed analysis of the military prowess of Cortés.

Historians generally agree that Malinche was born around 1502. Her father was the cacique (chief) of a Nahuatl (Aztec) speaking village. She enjoyed a comfortable life and education befitting a member of the ruling class. This all changed when she was seven or eight years old. Her father died. Her mother remarried and had a son. Malinche’s mother sold her as a slave to the leader of Potonchan, a Mayan settlement, to clear the way for her new son’s inheritance.

Cortés landed in the Yucatan in 1519. He used flintlocks, crossbows, cannons and mounted horsemen to frighten and demoralize a much larger force of warriors from the city of Potonchan. In defeat, the indigenous people presented the Spaniards with food, gifts, and twenty women, among them seventeen-year-old Malinche.

Father Geronimo de Aguilar, marooned by a shipwreck in 1511, interpreted for Cortés. Aguilar learned to speak rudimentary Mayan while living among the Mesoamerican population. A story from Mexican popular culture relates that Cortés expressed annoyance at Aguilar's inability to communicate with Aztec emissaries. The leader of the Spanish expedition noticed one of the Native American woman slaves laughing at the situation and questioned her levity. He soon discovered Malinche spoke the languages of both the Mayans and Aztecs (Lizama). Cortés relied on a cumbersome process in which Aguilar translated from Spanish to Mayan and Malinche translated from Mayan to Nahuatl. The young slave girl quickly learned Spanish and eliminated the need of Aguilar. Cortés promised her freedom for her services.

Malinche served as translator when an ambassador from Montezuma arrived on Easter Saturday 1519. After the emissary gave Cortés gifts of gold, Cortés asked him if he had more. The envoy answered "yes," and asked why the Spanish craved gold. Cortés told his interpreter: "Tell him my men suffer from a disease of the heart that can only be cured by gold" (West and Gaff 17). Cortés had heard tales of vast amounts of gold in the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan, now called Mexico City. According to Díaz, he burned his ships, told his men that they had to rely on their "own good swords and stout hearts," and set out in search of these fabled riches (131).

The Spanish expedition met hostility when they encountered various tribal groups. However, Malinche soon convinced these indigenous peoples that they should ally with Cortés. The Aztecs built their empire on war and fear. They offered the lives of their captives to their gods as bloody oblations. Malinche convinced these tribes that a military alliance with the Spanish would defeat Aztec tyranny.

Cortés, like the Aztecs, used violence when it suited his purposes. When the Spaniards visited the city of Cholula, Malinche made friends with a Cholulan noblewoman. The woman told Malinche that the Aztec army was nearby and planned a surprise attack. Malinche reported this to Cortés, who questioned the Cholulan leaders and discovered there was a plot to ambush the Spanish. Cortés ordered the Cholulans to gather in the great square beside their temple to the deity Quetzalcoatl where Spanish forces slaughtered three thousand unsuspecting natives (Sahagún 23).

The Spanish reached Tenochtitlan in November of 1519. The Aztec Emperor met them on one of the causeways that led to the city. Malinche looked directly at Montezuma and spoke to him, taboo for a

woman in both the Spanish and Aztec cultures. She convinced him that the Spaniards would treat him with respect and intimated that Cortés was the reincarnation of the feathered serpent, Quetzalcoatl.

The Aztec leader invited the Spanish into the city and provided them with suitable accommodations. He took Cortés to the top of his great temple. Speaking through his young interpreter, Cortés asked the Emperor of the Aztecs if he would remove the pagan idols, so that the Spaniards could erect a cross and an image of Our Lady. Montezuma replied, "If I had known you were going to utter these insults I would not have shown you my gods" (Díaz 237). Eight days later Cortés took Montezuma prisoner. Cortés forced Montezuma to call his chief nobles to a special meeting. He demanded that the Aztecs come under the protection of the Spanish king and took hostages from noble families to ensure that they kept their word.

When Montezuma ordered his people to acquiesce to the demands of Cortés, a struggle broke out. In the ensuing melee, the Aztecs killed Montezuma. Cuitlahuac, his successor, continued the resistance. When the Aztecs prevailed, Cortés ordered his soldiers to fill the causeways with debris and led them out of the city at night, La Noche Triste. During this escape, Malinche separated from the main body of soldiers. When they reunited, Díaz commented, "how glad we were to see our Doña Marina" (302).

The Spanish lost the gold they had looted from Montezuma's treasure house, but escaped with their lives and took refuge with the tribal groups that opposed the Aztecs. Meanwhile, the indigenous people fell victim to small pox, a disease unknown in the Americas before the arrival of the Spaniards. According to Sahagún, the disease "spread over the people with great destruction of men" and weakened "the brave Mexican warriors" (64). The defense of Tenochtitlan crumbled. Spanish soldiers recaptured the capital in 1521.

Malinche and Cortés settled in Coyoacan, a village near Tenochtitlan, where she gave birth to the conquistador's son, Martín Cortés, in 1522. Most Mexicans regard Martín as the first mestizo. In actuality, Gonzalo Gurerrero, a shipwrecked sailor fathered several children before the birth of Malinche's son. In 1524, Malinche and Cortés journeyed to Honduras in pursuit of Spanish rebels. During this expedition, Malinche reunited with her mother and forgave her, according to Díaz (86).

After his Spanish wife arrived from Cuba, Cortés insisted Malinche marry one of his lieutenants. Díaz stated that Malinche

believed: “God had been very gracious to her in freeing her from the worship of idols and making her a Christian, and letting her bear a son by her lord and master, Cortés, and in marrying her to such a gentleman as Juan Jaramillo” (Díaz 86). Gómara noted that Jaramillo was intoxicated during the marriage ceremony and criticized Cortés for allowing it to take place (Cypess *La Malinche* 32).

Cortés took Malinche’s infant son, Martin, away from his mother and gave him to his cousin to raise. A few years later, he took the boy to Spain and petitioned the Pope to legitimize Martin and the Spanish Court invested the boy with honors. As an adult, Martin died fighting the Moors in the south of Spain.

Malinche gave birth to Jaramillo’s daughter, Maria, in 1526. Maria testified later that her mother died in 1530. Cortés, discouraged with his reception at the Spanish Court and rebuffed in his attempts to gain Charles V’s favor, died in Spain in 1547 (Sahagún 94).

Maria lived until 1569 (Lanyon 214). She claimed in court that she was entitled to part of her father’s estate. Her Spanish stepmother, Doña Beatriz de Andrada, argued that Malinche was not legally married to Jaramillo and accused Malinche of acting above her station in life. Maria solicited the testimony from a family servant who said: “I saw that she always went about in the manner of an honest woman, and in costume of the indigenous people of this land” (quoted by Lanyon 215).

The story of Malinche as told by the Chroniclers became what Turner called a root paradigm. She was the woman who helped Cortés save Mexico from bloodthirsty rulers and helped convert the indigenous people to Christianity. For a long time, this story was more tolerable than the truth. Spanish Conquistadors raped indigenous women, pillaged the Aztec empire, and killed thousands for selfish reasons. They introduced devastating diseases to the Americas that accounted for millions of deaths. They replaced the human sacrifices of the Aztec empire with the slavery of the *encomienda* (estate) system. The story of Malinche, the revered, persisted into modernity; however, a negative portrayal of Malinche emerged during the 19th century.

Independence, War, Revolution, and Reform

History can clarify the origins of many of our phantasms, but it cannot dissipate them. We must confront them ourselves.

Octavio Paz 73

Every September 16th the President of Mexico repeats the cry (grito) of Miguel Hidalgo, the father of Mexico, “¡Viva Mexicanos! ¡Viva Mexico!” The crowd on the Zocalo of Mexico City replies, “¡Viva Mexico Carbones!” (Long live Mexico, you bastards!). These words express the desire of Mexican men to think of themselves as tough, obstinate and aggressive. They shout, “¡Viva Mexico, hijos de la chingada!” (Long live Mexico, sons of the violated one!). Koronkiewicz noted in his essay, “La Malinche: From Harlot to Heroine” that those who gather in the Zocalo turn an insult into a badge of honor. They are Malinche’s bastards, the sons of a violated mother.

The term Malinchista is an epithet used by modern Mexicans to describe traitorous behavior, someone who assumes European dress and manners and turns their back on the customs of their indigenous ancestors. The picture of Malinche the reviled arose from four periods of Mexican history characterized by intense patriotism and nationalism: Independence (1810-1821), War with the US (1846-1848), Revolution (1910-1929), and Social reform (1920-1940). The truncated logic of nationalism insisted that the enemies of Mexico were Spanish. Malinche helped them. Therefore she was *vendepatrias*, the treacherous woman who sold out her country to the enemy.

Victor Turner called such periods liminal. They provide a threshold for the development of new myths, symbols, and paradigms (*Ritual* 41). Writers and artists reconceptualized Mexican history, especially the Conquest, after Mexico gained independence from Spain. They valorized the indigenous people and demonized the woman who betrayed them, reprised in the Mexican song, Maldicion Malinche, The Curse of Malinche (Maldicion de Malinche).

Historical novels played an important role in degrading and demonizing Malinche. William Staveland of Philadelphia published *Xicotencatl* (1826), by an anonymous author. The author vilified Malinche as an “unworthy prostitute,” a “very venomous serpent,” and a “traitor and temptress” (qtd. by Cypess *La Malinche*, 53). He blamed the Spanish. “This American could have been an admirable woman without the corruption which she mastered since associating with the Spaniards” (qtd. by Cypess, *La Malinche* 55). He insisted that Malinche sold her brothers and sisters into slavery, and blamed her for the destruction of the Aztec civilization.

Ignacio Ramirez, a well-known writer, poet, and orator, incited nationalist sentiment during the Mexican-American war. He reminded his listeners that the *barragana* (concubine) of Cortés, consorted with

foreigners, and that it was “One of the mysteries of fate that every Mexican owes his downfall to a woman” (quoted by Perez-Lagunes 25).

Ireneo Paz (1861-1924), a writer, journalist and intellectual, incorporated nationalism and Native American cultural contributions into Mexican identity in his historical novel *Amor y suplicio* (1873) and its sequel *Doña Marina* (1883). He rewrote the story of the Conquest in terms of an affair of passion. In Ireneo Paz’s novel, Malinche voices her love for Cortés: “[Cortés] is my life, and the other half of my soul, my adoration” (qtd. by Cypess, *La Malinche* 85). He charged that Malinche betrayed her people, but mitigated her actions on the grounds that she was the victim of her own destiny.

Heriberto Frias (1870-1925), author of the controversial novel *The Battle of Tomochic*, wrote a series of chapbooks for children in 1900. Each book was small (4 3/4” by 3 1/4”) and designed to convey the ideals of nationalism to the next generation. He described Cortés as “challenging and terrible,” in *Hernan Cortés y Sus Primeras Aventuras* (8). Frias portrayed Malinche as “intelligent” in *La Noche Triste*, as “ever faithful at the side of Cortés” (6). He noted that she “translated his (Cortés) speech instantly, as soon as she heard it” (7).

Jose Guadalupe Posada (1851-1913), an engraver who drew biting political cartoons for *La Patria Ilustrada*, a newspaper edited by Ireneo Paz, did most of the chapbook covers. The cover of *La Noche Triste* depicts a defeated and disgraced Cortés and Malinche mounted on horses leaving Tenochtitlan. The cover of *Hernan Cortés y Sus Primeras Aventuras* shows Cortés, sword in hand, framed by a wall of skulls labeled “Mexico.” The skulls are possibly reminders of the Aztec practice of human sacrifice or, more likely, they represent the thousands of indigenous people killed by the Spanish.

The Mexican Revolution extended nationality to marginalized races and classes. During the social revolution that followed the end of hostilities, the Mexican government expropriated foreign property and brought an end to the system of large landholdings that originated with the Spanish Conquest.

“Artists and intellectuals successfully wrote the savagery of revolutionary violence into a story of national redemption” (Lomnitz 347). Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and Jean Charlot paid homage to Posada as a key influence on their work. Their large-scale murals depicting human life and carrying social messages gave an entirely new dimension to Mexican art.

Rivera included Malinche in several of the murals he painted for the Mexican National Palace. In one mural she stands next to Cortés, illuminated by his fiery destiny. In another, she stands defiant, her white skirt lifted provocatively above her knees. In one striking mural, she looks out from behind Cortés, a blue-eyed baby slung upon her back. Whenever Malinche appears in the complex murals of Rivera, it is part of the larger story of the enslavement of the native population by the Spanish.

Human suffering fascinated José Clemente Orozco. He hid his brooding *Malinche y Cortés* (1926) in the shadows of the sloping underside of a staircase in the National Preparatory School. Cortés, naked, cold and pale, holds an arm in front of Malinche in a gesture of control or restraint. His companion, naked, enigmatic, and submissive sits passively at his side. The body of a Native American lies at their feet. A maguey plant below the corpse symbolizes new life. Orozco clearly intended the couple to represent Adam and Eve, as well as, the mother and father of the Mexican people.

Jean Charlot began his remarkable career as a muralist working with Rivera in Mexico and ended it painting murals in Hawaii and illustrating children's books. His engraving *Toy Fiesta* shows lively young girls in bright green, yellow, and blue dresses dancing a Matachines, a dance celebrating the contributions of Malinche and Cortés. They hold rattles and wooden swords. Charlot's commentary, written on the border of the engraving noted: "Women win every battle with sword or with rattle" (Charlot Library, University of Hawaii Manoa).

Charlot engraved two pictures of Malinche for a children's book, *The Boy Who Could Do Anything and other Mexican Folktales* by Anita Brenner. The story about Malinche describes her as "a person who could talk many languages. She was very lovely too." Brenner noted that the: "Spaniards were not satisfied with the gold and the presents. They never had enough. Everyone knows how they are" (135). Brenner conflates the story of Malinche with that of La Llorona (the weeping woman).

Internationally honored Chicano Studies professor Luis Leal maintained that La Llorona and La Malinche are two of the oldest archetypal women in Mexican oral tradition (134). They differ in that La Llorona, who murdered her children, was a pre-Hispanic myth derived from the ancient Mexican goddess, Cihuacoatl, who abandoned her son. La Malinche was a genuine sixteenth century historical figure. Cortés took her son away from her. Captivatingly illustrated by Charlot,

the tale combines the stories of two female folk characters. Malinche mourns forever those who died as a result of her assistance to the Spaniards.

Jesus Helguera's images of strong Aztec warriors and nubile princesses, and yes, Malinche, captured the imaginations of generations of Mexican families and became icons of Chicano popular culture. Engravers used Helguera's popular images in calendars and cigar boxes to disseminate nationalist history to the masses. One still finds his renditions in the parlor of the homes of many Mexican families. In *Cortés y la Malinche*, she rides a white charger seated in front of her lover. The paintings of Malinche, European in features and dress, express Helguera's classical artistic training in Spain.

For Ireneo Paz, the grandfather, Malinche is a positive character inspired by love and propelled by destiny. For Octavio Paz, the grandson, Malinche is negative and motivated by selfishness, the victim of her own poor choices. Nobel laureate Octavio believed that myths like Malinche die and are reborn again under new circumstances. His version of the Malinche myth emphasized her treachery, the betrayal of her people, the violence of the conquest, and the birth of the first mestizo. For Octavio, Malinche is the key to the Mexican soul.

Octavio Paz believed that women have an innate vulnerability that transforms them into *chingadas* (those who are violated). Malinche represents indigenous women fascinated with, and seduced by, the Spaniards. "She is the seed of shame that every Mexican, but especially every Mexican male, carries within him" (86). Octavio Paz argued that Cortés and La Malinche "are something more than historical figures, they are a secret conflict that we still have not resolved" (Paz 87).

Malinche appeared in historical novels and dramas long after the Mexican social revolution. Carlos Fuentes, the influential Mexican novelist and essayist wrote several plays, including the important *Todos Los Gatos Son Pardos* (1970; "All Cats Are Gray"), a performance about the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Malinche is the first to take the stage. She announces: "I was the midwife of this story because I was the first goddess who imagined it, then the lover who received its seed, and finally the mother who gave birth to it" (quoted by Cypess, *La Malinche* 118). Fuentes stressed Malinche's part in convincing Cortés to assume the role of Quetzalcoatl, the god of creation and social justice and thus protect the indigenous peoples from the abuses of the Spanish – "a project that failed" (Cypess, *La Malinche* 118).

The historians, writers, and artists that reviled Malinche saw

things from their own frame of reference. Their works affected the people of their time and those in the future. Pat Mora, a Hispanic author of children's books reminds us in her poem, "*Malinche's Tips: Pique from Mexico's Mother*" that children are not bastards, they are just children. "I hear your sticks-and-stones: whore, *tradora*, slut. What happened to Mother?" Mora argued that we "must desist in throwing stones at the indigenous mother and accept miscegenation as a reality of colonization" (Nevarez 82). Chicana writers, poets, artists, and commentators of today have done that.

Malinche Chicana Archetype

Damn! How it hurts to be Malinche!
Adaljiza Sosa-Riddell, "Como duele"

The Chicano movement began in the United States during the 1940's with the Mexican Civil Rights movement. The economic protests of the United Farm Workers organized by Cesar Chavez and his wife, Dolores Huerta, were the most notable. In the fight for civil rights, members of the movement sometimes ignored the rights of women. Feminist theory inspired Chicanas to challenge traditional roles and develop a more complete sense of identity. They appropriated the reviled Malinche into a symbol that implied strength, intelligence, and cultural multiplicity.

Gloria Anzaldua, a Chicana feminist theorist, articulated this post-modern acceptance of multiplicity in *Borderlands/La Frontería: The New Mestiza*. She suggested that there is something beyond the binary option of either/or. She felt that just as she was not one race or the other, that she possessed multi-sexuality. She called for the development of understanding and tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity in matters of race, class, and gender. She believed that such distinctions are intertwined. The end result of this connectedness is "knowing," the inner power that results from our underworld journeys into consciousness (Gaspar de Alba 55).

Tey Diana Rebolledo, Distinguished Professor of Spanish at the University of New Mexico, detailed four ways in which the Chicana movement considers Malinche one of their own. First, the Conquerors took her and raped her. Second, she is representative of the indigenous groups subjugated by the Europeans. Third, she is a language mediator. Fourth, she is a survivor (quoted by Romero 40).

Maria Herrera-Sobek, professor of Chicana studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, pointed out the measure of La Malinche's resilience. "She survived all the indignities of being a slave as a young child traded from one master to another. Later she survived as best she could the many years she served the Spaniards" (131).

The Chicana movement is inclusive, vibrant, and employs the services of a variety of muses: poetry, art, literature, and commentary. Chicana poets see Malinche as a woman who struggled to be heard in a male dominated world. Dr. Carmen Tafolla, poet laureate of San Antonio, in her poem "Malinche" (Women in World History website) starts with the declaration "Yo soy La Malinche" ("I am Malinche") (1). She continues:

But Chingada I Was not
 Not tricked, not screwed, not traitor.
 For I was not a traitor to myself —
 I saw a dream
 And I reached it
 Another world
 ...la raza
 La raaaaa-zaaaaa...
 (51-58)

Rosario Castellanos, the Mexican poet and author, spoke eloquently about issues of cultural and gender oppression using Malinche's point of view. "I was sold to the merchants, on my way as a slave, a nobody, an exile" (Castellanos). In her book, *El Eterno Femenino* (1975), Castellanos credits Malinche for telling Cortés to wear his armor because it gave him the aura of a god, and advising him to burn his ships to strengthen the resolve of his soldiers (Cypess, *La Malinche* 127).

Claribel Alegria, a Nicaraguan poet activist and winner of the prestigious Neustadt International Award for Literature, in her poem "Malinche" asks this question:

To whom must I render accounts?
 To whom?
 Tell me
 To whom? (38-41)

The answer is obvious, "only to yourself" (Romo 151). Artists ask and answer similar probing questions.

Santa Barraza, a Chicana artist from Texas, portrays a beautiful life-giving image of Malinche. It is small, 8" x 9", painted on metal, and

meant to evoke *ex-voto* devotional images from Mexico. Malinche appears as a beautiful young woman with a demure downcast gaze. Behind her appear representations of the conquest, the introduction of Christianity, and the violence of both. It does not deny the horrors of the Spanish conquest. Rather, it paints a world where beauty and violence co-exist.

Mexican author, Laura Esquivel, re-interpreted Malinche to reclaim positive cultural figures for women. Esquivel observed: "whoever controls information, whoever controls meaning, acquires power" (68). She described Malinche's belief that Cortés was the reincarnation of a forefather god of her tribe, detailed their passionate love affair, and discussed Malinche's growing realization that Cortés was willing to sacrifice anything, even their love, in his all too human lust for power.

According to Adelaida Del Castillo, Professor of Ethnic Studies at San Diego State, Chicana feminist discourse began with Malinche and "continues to be preoccupied with her signification" (*Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*). She wrote that anyone who slanders Malinche defames Chicana women. She chided Díaz, the chronicler, for making Malinche a goddess. She insisted that Malinche was a real person, an actual force in history. She rebuked Carlos Fuentes for misogynistic reasoning that portrays women as evil and thereby, justifiably in need of male domination. Del Castillo excoriated American Novelist Margaret Shedd for her novel *Malinche and Cortés*, a work that characterizes Malinche as a whore and nymphomaniac (Cypess *La Malinche* 142).

Rolando Romero and Amanda Harris in *Feminism, Nation and Myth, La Malinche*, note the plight of modern Chicanas "whose lives are characterized by poverty, racism, and sexism, not only in the dominant culture, but also within their own culture" (15). The Chicano movement too often assigns them limited roles. These roles include faithful follower, sexual partner, and nurturing mother. Traditionally Chicanos belonged to groups; Chicanas belonged to men (Romo 140). These limited roles are the results of stereotypes perpetuated by the heterosexual and patriarchal imagery in Mexican art and literature that start with Malinche.

Chicanas challenged the negative view of Malinche and constructed an alternative "herstory" of this important historical figure. Their Malinche "personifies intellect, ingenuity, adaptability and leadership" (Koronkiewicz 3). They cast off the title of traitor and see her as a figure of valor, an ambassador and strategist. They emphasized

that she had no choice in the matter, no agency, and that the notion of patria did not exist. They argued that Malinche is at the root of much of the disdain Mexican men display toward Mexican women; something expressed in the country's high rates of infidelity and domestic violence (Krauss 1).

Cypess said that once she conceived of the idea of Malinche as a displaced woman, exiled and disconnected from her own community; she has "not stopped thinking of her since" ("Mother Malinche" 14). Cypess declared that Malinche is a central figure in the Conquest, an emblem of Mexican national identity, and a symbol of all Latin American women. She is more than a national mother; she is the Eve, the mother of us all. Malinche transcended all gender constraints of both European and Aztec societies.

Malinche stands between two cultures. She is strong, adaptable, and a facilitator. Malinche's story is worth re-examining and re-interpreting because of her central position in Mexican history and mythology. Chicana poets, artists and writers play a unique role in the appropriation and revision of Malinche's image. They have changed conventional interpretations of Malinche, as well as, perceptions of Chicanas in contemporary American society.

Conclusion

The translator is the carrier of the human spirit.

Pushkin

Three different scholars provide insight to Malinche as revered, reviled and a role model. Peter Novick said that: "Every group has its own historian" (469). The chroniclers of the Spanish Conquest needed a counter-weight to the egoism, violence and unpredictability of Hernán Cortés. Malinche compensated for his weaknesses, taught him to adapt to a new and different culture, was his concubine and bore him a son. The Spanish wanted a simple and direct way to explain to the people of Mexico their origins in history. They found the answer in the story of Malinche, as a guide, interpreter, and Christian mother.

Victor Turner clarified the importance of liminal periods in the reinterpretation of the Malinche founding myth. Ireneo Paz, saw her as the embodiment of the stereotype of the love struck woman. Octavio Paz viewed her as the violated mother, *la chingada* (86). Octavio argues that only by retreating into solitudes, "the two-fold notion of withdrawal-and-return" can Mexicans understand the duality of their nature (212).

Gloria Anzaldua and other Chicanas know what it is like to be dishonored by the charge that they were the betrayers. They see Malinche as an avatar, a person who bridges cultures. Deena Gonzalez, Dean of Chicano/a studies at Marymount University, notes: "She had a tongue and used it, had space and occupied it, had knowledge and applied it" (12). Gonzalez argues that Chicanas should recast Malinche as the first feminist of the Americas (12). In assuming these roles, Malinche becomes not only a Chicana archetype, but also a symbol of Mexico as a whole.

No one knows the exact dates of Malinche's birth and death, her tribal affiliation, or the exact nature of her relationship with Cortés. Yet, throughout history, many have put words into her mouth. Malinche spoke only the words of others, leaving none of her own. Historians call her a mother, martyr, and manipulator, kind and generous, sly and cruel. Frightened and desperate, she took advantage of people and events to survive. She had no choice. In the last five hundred years, she has become a potent symbol of the anxiety, anger, and aspirations of the generations that followed her.

Malinche plays an important part in the Matachines ritual dance performed at Christmas by Native Americans in Mexico and the American Southwest. Stanna Quiver, a Tiwa speaking member of the Pueris Pueblo in New Mexico, described the Malinche role of a young girl between six and twelve years old, dressed in a white First Holy Communion dress. (Rodriguez 77). She symbolizes the purity and simplicity of life before the conquest, a state of nature typified by the "noble savage" of romantic primitivism. The story of Malinche comes full circle to a time of innocence.

Malinche's contribution lies in her ability to mediate between two divergent cultures. All communication between the Aztec and Spanish worlds passed through her. Literary Scholar Stephen Greenblatt, in his book *Marvelous Possessions*, represents Malinche as "the figure in whom all communication between the two opposed cultures was concentrated" (qtd in Metcalf 9). She was Cortes' tongue and ears—the key to his hope of survival and success.

Malinche continues to delight, astonish, and transform society. Novelists record her sorrows and struggles. She frequents songs, plays, films and opera. Modern day intermediaries mirror her munificent role in practical ways. She epitomizes those who frequent banks, business offices and schools to help their brothers and sisters cope with the

language and customs of a new culture. Her heart beats in every woman who seeks fairness, respect, and equality.

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The Coming of Age of Chinese Comics: Manhua, “Mr. Wang,” and Shanghai Sketch

Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that the term *manhua*, the Chinese rendition of comics and cartoons, is a loan word borrowed from Japanese manga in 1925 when Zheng Zhenduo first used it to refer to Feng Zikai’s cartoons in *Wenxue Zhoubao* (Literature Weekly).¹ Some art historians (Lent, 1994: 281; Li, 1978; Bi and Huang, 1986) argue for the predated practices of manhua in grotesque drawings, serial story pictures, New Year’s pictures, and wall paintings in pre-modern Chinese art. Sarcasm and humor can be found as an integrated part in many forms of traditional Chinese arts, such as the paintings by Zhu Da (1626-1705?) and Luo Liangfeng (1733-1799). By the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), various terms like “fengcihua” (satirical picture), “yuyihua” (allegorical picture), “xiehua” (humorous picture), “xiaohua” (burlesque picture), or “huajihua” (farcical picture) had been in use, referring to pictures with exaggerated images and satirical or humorous connotations. However, it is a modern phenomenon that illustrated humor becomes the defining characteristic of an independent genre of art. The popularization of manhua in the forms of single-panel cartoons, comic strips, and comic books is only made possible with the development of the mass printing industry and, as Kuiyi Shen (2001, p. 109) has pointed out, the emergence of a “quickly rising middle-class of consumers in Shanghai.”

Ye Qianyu’s (1907-2005) “Wang xiansheng” (Mr. Wang) series is China’s first and one of the longest running comic strips with continuing characters. The creation of the images of petty urbanites² in Shanghai showed an observable departure from the strong nationalist and political concerns in earlier Chinese comic works. The appearance of this long comic strip, first serialized in *Shanghai Sketch* from 1928 to 1930, marked the point at which *manhua* had fully grown into an effective graphic narrative tool of social humor and matured as an independent genre of Chinese art. Focusing on “Mr. Wang” and *Shanghai Sketch*, this paper explores the dynamics between Chinese modernity and comic arts and how Chinese artists localize Western visual forms to construct a modern identity for urbanites in the metropolitan Shanghai.

The paper presents a case study on the content and context of China’s first serial comic strip with continuing characters—Ye Qianyu’s (1907-1995) *Wang xiansheng* (Mr. Wang)—when it was serialized in *Shanghai manhua* (*Shanghai Sketch*) from 1928 to 1930. By situating this

comic strip in the context of Shanghai modern (to borrow Leo Ou-fan Lee's term), I will elaborate on how the Western-influenced visual forms were localized in *manhua*, which was shaped and, at the same time, was shaping the modern sensibility of urbanites in metropolitan Shanghai. Together with a wide variety of cultural manifestations of mass-produced, mass-mediated, and mass-consumed modernity, such as motion pictures, photography, fashion, modern architecture, interior decoration, advertising, etc., *manhua* played a significant role in constructing a modern urban identity through comic narrative. The appearance of "Mr. Wang" marked the point at which *manhua* had fully grown into an effective graphic narrative tool of social humor and matured as an independent genre of Chinese art.

The Cartoon Society and *Shanghai Sketch*

The institutionalized position of *manhua* was signified by the establishment of China's first cartoonist society, *Manhua hui* (the Cartoon Society), in Shanghai about 1926 or 1927.³ The Cartoon Society, as John Lent (1994, p. 286) puts it, was "an important rallying force for the profession, providing an esprit de corps and establishing a standard name (*manhua*) for their craft, even though other names (especially *katun* [sic]) were used well into the late 1930s." Most of the members in the society were commercial artists who had no academic training in art but shared a common interest in integrating art into contemporary social life. They were less confined to Chinese art conventions but open to new expressions of urban life in Shanghai. By organizing the Cartoon Society, they tried to promote the neologism and new form of *manhua* as a resistance to the orthodox art forms in China (Bi and Huang, 1986, p. 85). The society organized seminars to discuss the social functions and techniques of *manhua*, introduce foreign comic works, and to exchange artistic ideas between members. At least three collections of works of members—Huang Wennong's (?-1934) *Wennong fengci huaji* and *Chu yi zhi huaji*, and Lu Shaofei's (1903-) *Beiyou manhua*—were published by the society in 1927 and 1928.⁴ But their most influential effort of cultivating the field was the publication of *Shanghai Sketch*, a weekly pictorial of "photography and comics" (*shaying manhua zhoubao*),⁵ under the name Zhongguo meishu kanxing she (The Publishing House of Chinese Fine Arts).

As Bi and Huang label it, *Shanghai Sketch* started out as a veritable "tongren kanwu" (1986, p. 88), which we may define as a journal published by "a group of friends, associates or otherwise kindred spirits."⁶ According to Ye Qianyu's (1907-1995) memoir, the manager and editor-in-chief of the journal was Zhang Guangyu (1900-1964). The vice manager and business director was Zhang's brother Zhang Zhengyu (1904-1976). And the editor of the comic page was Ye Qianyu (see Ye, 1992, p. 26). Because photography

was emerging as a new fad at the time, they cooperated with three photographers—Lang Jingshan, Hu Boxu, and Zhang Zhenhou—to enhance the coverage of photographs of news, celebrities, landscapes, and paintings, etc., so to increase the attraction of the pictorial. From April 21, 1928 to June 7, 1930, when it was eventually merged into the newly published *Shidai huabao* (*Modern Miscellany*),⁷ the journal released a total 110 issues with a by-then pretty large circulation of about 3,000 copies per issue (Bi and Huang, 1986, p. 86; Ye, 1996, p. 1). Each issue was lithographed on eight pages of octavo paper, four of which were process printing dedicated to *manhua*. The regular contributors of *manhua* included Ye Qianyu, Zhang Guangyu, Zhang Zhengyu, Huang Wennong, and Lu Shaofei. Later they were joined by Cao Hanmei, Lu Zhiyang, Zheng Guanghan, Hu Tongguang, and some young authors trained by the Correspondent Department of the journal.⁸

Like many other journals published in Shanghai at the time, the cover of each issue bore both its Chinese title *Shanghai manhua* and English title *Shanghai Sketch*.⁹ The choice of “sketch” as its English rendition and its diverse content, which included essays, photographs, portraits, paintings, and fashion designs in addition to cartoons and comic strips, seem to suggest a rather broad usage of the term *manhua*. In some early advertisements of the journal’s solicitation for contribution, the editors listed under the category of “pictorial work” (*huagao*), these descriptive words for the pictures being solicited: *fengcide* (satirical), *xinzhuangde* (new fashion), *huajide* (humouristic), *tu’ande* (graphic), *miaoxie shenghua de* (depicting real life), *fahui yishu de* (artistic). Later the grouping was simplified to cover design (*fengmian*), humoristic (*huaji*), decorative (*zhuangshi*), satirical (*fengci*) four categories.¹⁰ The thematic diversity of what was covered under the umbrella term *manhua* also suggests that the genre *manhua* was identified in terms of formal and material characteristics, but its sub-categorization still retained the same logic as the categorization of traditional Chinese ink painting (*guohua*) according to its subject matter (i.e., figure, landscape, or flower and bird). Noticeably, compared to the strong nationalist sentiments featuring the political cartoons in the forerunner of Chinese comic magazine—Shen Bochen’s *Shanghai Puck* (*Bochen huaji huabao*, 1918), which were produced in the eve of the May Fourth Movement, *Shanghai Sketch* was a product of de-politicization and ambiguity of social concerns in the heyday of commercialism in Shanghai, when material comfort and public entertainment became more prominent in defining modernity.

But, nevertheless, the promotion of “satirical picture” (*fengcihua*) and “humouristic picture” (*huajihua*) as most important subgenres of *manhua* was one of the major contributions of *Shanghai Sketch* to the field of

manhua. As mentioned above, the first correspondent department of comics directed by Lu Shaofei indicated that they were recruiting students of *huajihua* and *fengcihua*. The blurb alleged:

Spending one hour each day in practicing, using the cheapest pen and ink, can enable you to achieve an important undertaking. With a piece of blank paper, a bottle of ink, and a pen, you can succeed in becoming a great artist. The position and reputation of artists of “satirical picture” and “humoristic picture” in the modern times can be seen: (a) There have already been over two or three thousands newspapers all over China in need of talents in this field; (b) There are tens of thousands journals all over China in need of talents in this field; (c) To win great honor internationally all over the world, our nation needs talents in this field. Our agency is the right organization particularly dedicated to training talents in this field. You can do it within the scope of your own life and profession. (*Shanghai Sketch* 59, 5)

The emphasis on the market for comic works and the attempt of linking the mass media-based art to the national honor display the complex motivation of promoting comic art in China. It was at once commercial and ideological. The flourishing printing industry provided the demand and market for the art in a practical way, while nationalist discourse offered a loftier cause to legitimize its position in official culture. The implication of the amateur nature of the genre—any one can make it through practice—also showed a more democratic attitude toward art, which tried to de-mystify the hierarchy of art and to bridge art with contemporary social life. Art in the form of *manhua* can be an integral part of everybody’s life.

It was initially in *Shanghai Sketch* that two of the most famous comic characters in China—Mr. Wang and Xiao Chen—were created by Ye Qianyu. The comic strip series *Wang xiansheng* (Mr. Wang) may be the first Chinese comic strip with continuing characters and consistent graphic narrative with embedded text. *Mr. Wang* was also one of longest running and most influential comic strips. It ran from the first issue to the last of *Shanghai Sketch* almost never interrupted. After *Shanghai Sketch* was merged into *Modern Miscellany*, it was continued in *Modern Miscellany*, and later expanded to various journals, such as *Shanghai huabao* (Shanghai Pictorial), *Liangyou* (Young Companion), *Tuhua chenbao* (Picture Morning News), etc., until the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japan in 1937 (Bi and Huang, 1986, p. 119-120; Shen, 2001, p. 113-14). The *Mr.*

Wang strip was such an instant hit that *Shanghai Sketch* published the collections of the comic strip while the series were still running. Not only were there were nine volumes of four kinds of collections of the Mr. Wang serial published in the 1930s,¹¹ but also there were a total of eleven film comedies adapted from the Mr. Wang comic strips from the 1930s to the 1940s,¹² and one in 1993.¹³ The popularity of the comic figures, as I am going to elaborate in the rest of my paper, provides an interesting case of how Chinese artists localize Western visual forms to construct a modern identity for the metropolitan Shanghai. And the appearance of this long comic strip marked the point at which *manhua* had fully grown into an effective graphic narrative tool of social humor.

Ye Qianyu and *Mr. Wang*

The creator of *Mr. Wang* is the comic editor of the journal, *Shanghai Sketch*, Ye Qianyu. Originally named Ye Lunqi, Ye was born into a merchant family in Tonglu, Zhejiang. He never received any formal training in art, but taught himself painting and drawing by copying from lithographic models published in Shanghai. He started his career in Shanghai at age eighteen as a self-taught commercial artist who painted advertising billboards, stage settings, textbook illustrations, fashion design, etc. These practices, according to Ye himself, cultivated his ability of modeling (*zaoxing*).¹⁴ Inspired by the flourishing print culture in Shanghai, he started drawing cartoons. His first cartoon work, "Liangmaoqian bao yanfu" (To Feast Your Eye with Twenty Cents) was published in *Sanri huakan* (Three Day Pictorial), which was edited by cartoonist Zhang Guangyu who encouraged Ye to contribute to the pictorial. Because of this connection, Ye got to know other active cartoonists at the time, such as Huang Wennong, Wang Dunqing, and Lu Shaofei. Since then, he started frequently contributing to newspapers and popular magazines and devoted himself to the editing of the comic pages of *Shanghai Sketch* when the journal was published.

The creation of Mr. Wang demonstrated both the influence of American comic strips and the distinctive quotidian life of petty urbanites in Shanghai. According to Ye, the idea of launching a comic strip in *Shanghai Sketch* was inspired by an American comic strip, *Bringing Up Father*, serialized in the Sunday supplement of an English newspaper¹⁵ in Shanghai at the time. Because the strip was very popular, the founders of *Shanghai Sketch* planned to model it after that strip to produce a Chinese comic strip for their forthcoming journal. Ye was assigned to this job as he was young, energetic, and had the most free time so he could focus on this work.

American comic strip *Bringing Up Father* was first created by George McManus (1884-1954) for the Hearst organization. It first appeared

in the dailies in 1913 and became established in 1916.¹⁶ It was one of the few comic strips that enjoyed worldwide reputation. As late as 1924, Ye had seen this strip in his school library in Hangzhou (Ye, 1992, p. 86). The strip centered around the story of a henpecked Irish American, Jiggs, a former mason, and his wife Maggie, an ex-washerwoman. The couple achieved sudden wealth by winning the Irish Sweepstakes. While the snobbish wife and their fashionmonger daughter constantly try to “bring up” the husband to his new social position, Jiggs would only want to meet his old buddies at Dinty Moore’s tavern for a dish of corned beef and cabbage. Most of the strip’s hilarious events derive from this basic situation (Horn, 1999: 154).

When Ye Qianyu first took the job, he was initially thinking about naming his strip as *Shanghai ren* (Shanghainese), but another cartoonist Wang Dunqing thought that it was too narrow and inauspicious because it had already been used in their failed earlier attempt of *Shanghai manhua*.¹⁷ Wang suggested changing the title to a more general and flexible name “Mr. Wang,” the most common surname in China. He also helped Ye design the physical appearance of the main characters. Mr. Wang was a skinny man with a pointed nose and moustache, looking like a rural moneybags who had been living in Shanghai for a long time. He had a tubby wife and a fashionmonger daughter. His friend Xiao Chen was a rich heir having a shrewish wife. Each of the five main characters had a distinctive personality and interacted with each other in delicate manners. The comedies would be generated by the complex relationships between these five characters.

The first *Mr. Wang* episode [see Figure 1] appeared in the first issue of *Shanghai Sketch* (April 21, 1928) and was a story about how Mr. Wang dealt with his newly graduated daughter’s request for a music studio. The episode had six panels, which occupied two third of the whole octavo page, with advertisements underneath. Drawn in simple and smooth lines—presumably by pen instead of traditional writing brush—and then colored in the process of printing. The graphic style of the strip showed a different aesthetic from early Chinese cartoons, which used traditional writing brush and often heavy colors. Using word balloons, Ye gave his characters distinctive voices, and one could imagine that they were actually speaking in a Shanghai dialect as indicated in certain dialectical words that occurred in their speech. Ye also used sound effect symbols to indicate what had been previously unseen in visual art, such as music and emotions. The setting of the story—sofa, desk, armchair, piano, and Western-style door—instantly delivered an unmistakably Westernized modern life style. Although Mr. Wang and his wife were still dressing in Chinese style robes, their daughter and the pianist the next door were dressing in reformed short *qipao* and Western suit respectively. These symbols of new values—dwelling, clothing, luxury goods like piano, and the idea of having a music studio at

home—indicated Chinese society undergoing substantial changes. Visually representing the modern life style through mass media no doubt further reinforced Shanghai urbanites' imagination of and identification with Western modernity.



Figure 1: The first episode of “Mr. Wang” in *Shanghai Sketch* 1 (April 21, 1928).

The creation of the images of petty urbanites in Shanghai showed an observable departure from the strong nationalist and political concerns in earlier Chinese comic works. Although Ye Qianyu was also active during the North Expedition and participated in the propagandist activities of the Nationalist army before he took over the position in *Shanghai Sketch*, he was one of the first major Chinese cartoonists who concentrated on social or nonpolitical humor in the *manhua* genre. And without doubt, he was very self-conscious about the rules of commercialism in Shanghai. Starting from the first episode, the strip claimed to have copyright protection from being copied. Ye claimed that he “was not conscious about exposing something or satirizing something” when he created the two crowns Mr. Wang and Xiao Chen.¹⁸ Limited by the scope of the life experiences of a 21 year old as Ye was when the series was launched, the whole set of a hundred episodes of *Mr. Wang* series in *Shanghai Sketch* mainly focused on the light humor that emerged from the domestic conflicts between husbands and wives in their quotidian life, such as how the pleasure-seeking men struggled for any chances of escaping their wives' control to go out for fun, how Xiao Chen tried to pursue Mr. Wang's pretty daughter but was always sabotaged by his

shrewish wife, how Wang and Chen made unsuccessful attempts of doing some business, and how they poked fun at each other. But in this early work, Ye had already shown a remarkable ability of characterizing the absurdities of modern life through graphic narrative, and in many episodes, he displayed a highly self-reflective and innovative use of comic art as a response to social reality. In these hundred episodes, various aspects of Shanghai leisure culture and commercial life were displayed. Oftentimes, we see the characters riding in a convertible car to go to a theater, to a dance hall, to a public park, to a race court, to a department store, or taking a train to Hangzhou and taking a ship to the beach. Outside the domestic space, Mr. Wang and Xiao Chen became unsuccessful businessmen attempting to open a restaurant, to publish a tabloid newspaper, or even to form a nominal stock company to raise funds.

In addition to the commercial life represented in the strip, the images of the comic figures Mr. Wang and Xiao Chen underwent the commodification of themselves. Starting from Issue 29, Mr. Wang and Xiao Chen appeared in advertisements for products like Yantai Beer, Bianli Flashlight, or the announcement from the editors. This is remarkable because it shows that comic characters could be removed from their figurative setting in a comic strip and used to market other products, which featured a full-fledged visual culture of mass consumption.

The creative use of comic figures to declare its power in popular culture may also be exemplified in the 40th episode of Mr. Wang in *Shanghai Sketch* (Issue 41. See Figure 2). In this episode, with a sense of satirical humor, Ye blurred the demarcation of the figurative world and reality: Mr. Wang and Xiao Chen found that their stories appeared in *Shanghai Sketch* and got very mad. So they brought a group of thugs to the editorial department of *Shanghai Sketch* to demand an apology. They were pacified by a smiling editor, who looked like Zhang Guangyu, if not Ye Qianyu. When the two characters got home, they received a copy of the new issue of *Shanghai Sketch*, publicizing a photo of Wang, Chen and the group of thugs. And the caption said: "The Mr. Wang strip published in our journal has been very well received among readers. But to our surprise, someone who claimed himself to be Mr. Wang gathered a bunch of thugs and came to our office, asserting that we smeared his reputation. And above is the picture..."¹⁹ The self-referentiality to the publisher of *Mr. Wang—Shanghai Sketch*—may imply a realistic scenario underlying the Mr. Wang stories, but most importantly, it suggests an affirmation of the mediated community that engage both the creator and readers of the comic strip. Comic figures in mass media can be so real that they have become an essential part of both author's and reader's cultural experience. This episode highlighted the

relationship between the comic strip and readers by enabling its readers to read multiple levels of meaning.

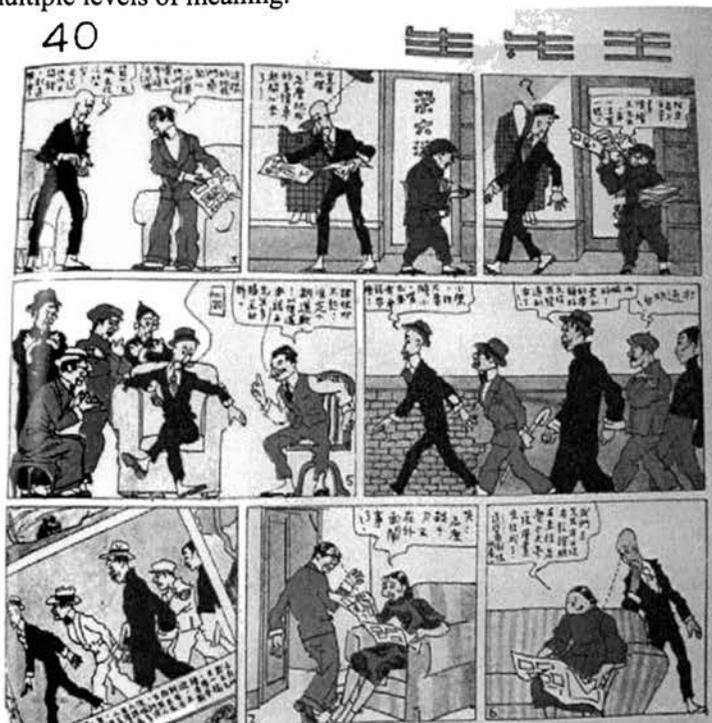


Figure 2: the 40th episode of Mr. Wang in *Shanghai Sketch* 41 (Jan. 26, 1929).

In the special issue celebrating the publication of the hundredth issue of *Shanghai Sketch*, Ye wrote an article summarizing the personalities of Mr. Wang and Xiao Chen: Against the backdrop of the “laudable and cursed Shanghai,”

Mr. Wang, just like all Shanghainese, lives in a rented house about 30 *chi* wide (*sankaijian*). He is a bored person in this world—living a leisure life, thinking about all kinds of entertainment at all times, occasionally thinking about doing some decent business. But restrained by the whole environment, he could not gain happiness but run into snags and is foiled everywhere. Fortunately he doesn’t have a very smart brain, so he seems that doesn’t care much when he encounters troubles. He will still act in his mistakenly clever manner to make us laugh. (Ye, 1930: 3)

As for his dull friend, Xiao Chen, a young master of a rich family in Shanghai, he is a weak person trapped in unhappy marriage, but “although he has yielded to the unfeeling family, his heart is bubbled up with warm blood pursuing love.” On these two characters, Ye (1930, p. 3) remarked, “‘fate’ plays its extreme power to stage grotesque comedies. I know that deep in their heart they feel sorrow and bitterness, but they are generous and don’t feel weary . . . They will be forevermore trapped to the wheel of fate and perform lots of comedies!”

The rather sympathetic tone toward the imperfect life of Shanghai urbanites showed the ambiguity and complexity of the artist’s attitude toward his creation. As Episode 40 and the statement pronounce, the recognizable human traits and human foibles displayed in Mr. Wang are actually something that everyone could identify with, or at least understand, to a certain extent. Ye even went as far as claiming that, “Mr. Wang is me; I am Mr. Wang” (Ye, 1992, p. 29). Because Ye’s ability of characterizing petty urbanites in graphic narrative, Mr. Wang became “a character type, a true comic strip hero, the first and one of the most original of this kind in China” (Shen, 2001, p. 113).

Conclusion

On the one hand, new technologies and modes of communication first appeared in Shanghai, the most important treaty port since the last several decades of the nineteenth century, and therefore brought in massive production and craft de-skilling, which partly contributed to the decline of traditional literati painting and the rise of commercial art and popular culture. On the other hand, the flourishing of commercial life in Shanghai stimulated the growth of urban leisure culture, which provides demand, inspiration, and the market for consumption of new inventions of artistic expression.

This paper briefly analyzes the institutional dimension and individual effort in promoting *manhua* as an established art in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s. It is clear that the development of Chinese comic art had been closely associated with the booming commercialism in Shanghai during this time. The popularization of *manhua* was made possible in this period of rapid growth in new technology, commercial publishing, and the modern life style. In return, the visual representations of the immediate reality in *manhua* also contributed to nurturing a self-consciousness of the new urban identity, with all its glamour and evils. *Manhua* became one of the cultural institution in which modern sensibility was enforced and circulated.

The significance of the Cartoon Society, *Shanghai Sketch*, and *Mr. Wang*, as Bi and Huang have rightly pointed out, lies in that they were

“avant-garde” in modern Chinese comics and filled up the space of comic publication in the 1920s, which foresaw the coming of Chinese comics’ golden age in the 1930s and 1940s.

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Notes:

¹See Shen 2001, 110; Bi and Huang 1986, 72. According to Feng Zikai, the definition of manhua is very vague: “actually, it is still questionable if my drawings are manhua or not, because there was no such term in China before...There is neither a clear definition of the so-called manga in Japan. But as far as I know, Japanese manga covers Chinese jijiu hua (hasty painting), jixing hua (improvising painting), and Western cartoon and caricature.” See Feng Zikai, “Manhua chuanguo ershi nian,” cited in Bi and Huang, 1986: 72.

² The term, “petty urbanites” is a common translation of the Chinese “xiao shimin,” a term that has been in use since the early twentieth century, referring to a broadly and vaguely defined urban class who were non-elite, non-traditional, nonagrarian, modestly educated and marginally well-off—such as small merchants, clerks, students, housewives, and middle-lower-class men and women in general.

³ Bi Keguan and Huang Yuanlin’s *Zhongguo manhua shi* (History of Chinese Comics) (1986: 83) dates that the Cartoon Society was established in the autumn of 1927 and had eleven members. However, Huang Ke’s *Shanghai meishushi zhaji* (Reading notes of the history of art in Shanghai) (2000: 54-55) suggests that the eleven-member organization was established in December 1926. Huang Ke’s article also notes that it was in July 1926 that the Cartoon Society published the first book of the “*Manhuahui congshu*” (the Cartoon Society Series)—Huang Wennong’s *Wennong fengcihua ji* (Collection of Wennong’s satirical pictures). One of the initial members of the society—Ye Qianyu—touches slightly upon the event in his memoir. He vaguely recalled that it was shortly after the publication of *Shanghai Sketch* and there were only seven persons. This could be one of the many inaccurate records in his memoir. See Ye, 1992, p. 82.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 84-85.

⁵ The journal claimed that they were the only weekly of photograph and comics in modern China (*Zhongguo jindai weiyi zhi sheying manhua zhoubao*) in their advertisement for the publication of their ten-issue collections. See *Shanghai Sketch*, 71: 6.

⁶ Here I borrow Michel Hockx’s explanation of “tongren.” See Michel Hockx, “Creation by Association and by Dissociation,” available at <http://mlc.osu.edu/rc/pubs/institutions/hockx.htm>.

⁷ After June 7, 1930, *Shanghai Sketch* was merged into the biweekly pictorial *Shidai huabao* (Modern Miscellany), and the regular comic strips in *Shanghai Sketch*—Ye Qianyu's *Wang xiansheng* (Mr. Wang) and Lu Shaofei's *Daxiaozhi* (Big Boy)—were continued in *Modern Miscellany*.

⁸ There were regular advertisements of recruiting students for the Correspondent Department of *fengcihua* and *huajihua* from Zhongguo diyi huashe in the journal from Issue 59 on. The earliest advertisement indicated that the director of the department was Lu Shaofei and the manager was Ji Xiaobo of Zhongguo diyi huashe (The No.1 artist society of China). From January 1, 1930 on, the department was merged into the publisher of *Shanghai Sketch*—Zhongguo meishu kanxing she—and changed the name to “Zhongguo meishu kanxing she hanshou bu.” See *Shanghai Sketch* 89, 7. This should be the first correspondent department of Chinese comics that Bi and Huang identify as being associated with *Time Miscellany*.

⁹ For this reason, I don't follow the English translation of the title as *Shanghai Cartoons* in Lent 1994).

¹⁰ The former advertisement first appeared in *Shanghai Sketch*, Issue 3. It regularly appeared throughout the first year, but from Issue 50 on, the call for picture contribution started listing only four categories.

¹¹ Wei Shaochang, “Wang xiansheng yu mifeng xiaojie” (Mr. Wang and Miss Bee), in *Lao manhua* 1: 1.

¹² Wei Shaochang, “Ye Qianyu bixia de Wang xiansheng,” cited in Ye Qianyu, 1992, p. 60.

¹³ The film title is *Wang xiansheng zhi yuhuo fenshen* (Mr. Wang's Burning Desire), directed by Zhang Jianya.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 18.

¹⁵ In his memoir, Ye claims that the English title of the newspaper was *China Daily* and the Chinese title was *Dalu bao*. However, Ye's memory may serve him wrong, because *Dalu bao*'s English title would be *China Press* and I couldn't find any information about the existence of *China Daily* in the Republican period. I suspect that Ye was talking about *China Press*, which was one of the few newspapers published by Americans in Shanghai on August 29, 1911 and was pretty popular in the Republican period.

¹⁶ The information about *Bringing Up Father* mainly comes from Horn's *The World Encyclopedia of Comics*, 154.

¹⁷ Before the formal publication of *Shanghai Sketch*, Ye Qianyu, Wang Dunqing, and Huang Wennong had already compiled an issue of *Shanghai manhua* on January 20, 1928. But it was rejected by the distributors and ended up in a recycling station. See Ye Qianyu, 1992: 24-25.

¹⁸ Ye's self preface to *Sanshi niandai dao sishi niandai—Ye Qianyu manhua ji*, cited in Bi and Huang (1986), 118.

¹⁹ *Shanghai Sketch* 41, 8.

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The Good, the Bad, the Ugly: Cinematic Representations of High School English Teachers

The Blackboard Jungle, released in 1955, is a film that chronicles the struggle of first-semester English teacher Richard Dadier to teach basic language skills to a group of students hostile to education in general and him in particular. This film, says the trailer's announcer, addresses the problem of juvenile delinquency, the "modern savagery" of "teenage terror in the schools." This film is considered the first to discuss problems in America's schools, and it also appears to be the first American film to have an English teacher as a protagonist.¹

Since the appearance of *The Blackboard Jungle*, a good number of films have been made that chronicle the struggles of high school English teachers, typically novices, to convince resistant students that English class has something valuable to offer. While the education themes in these films have attracted some attention, little has been paid to the portrayal of the English teachers in them. As a first step toward remedying this state of affairs, I offer a few observations on the cinematic representations of English teachers in films where they are protagonists or major characters and point to a problem with these representations.

Most of the storylines in these films, be they comedies or dramas, are essentially the same: they dramatize the struggles of inexperienced teachers who are thrust into less-than-optimal teaching conditions to engage at-risk students in English. This set of circumstances would seem contraindicated where student learning is the objective, but despite their inexperience—and sometimes questionable credentials—these teachers are all successful for essentially the same reason: they care deeply (or in the case of the comedies, come to care deeply) about their students, and they are willing to make whatever personal sacrifices are necessary to engage them. With one exception, all the teachers in these movies are outsiders, and because they are, neither their motivations nor methods are obstructed by the negative attitudes toward the students that impair the efforts of their more experienced but less successful colleagues. In these films, experience is a liability; inexperience an asset.

The English teacher protagonists can be divided neatly into two

groups: those who are teaching English by choice and those who are not. I begin the discussion with the second group, people who would rather be doing something other than teaching English. My discussion of this group focuses on three films: *Renaissance Man*, *Summer School*, and *Shackles*. The teachers in these films have a number of things in common. All are coerced into teaching English. Bill Rago, the protagonist of *Renaissance Man*, is an out-of-work advertising executive who is teaching English to klutzy recruits on an army base because the Michigan unemployment office will take away his unemployment benefits if he doesn't. Freddy Shoop, the protagonist of *Summer School*, is a high school gym teacher who won't get tenure unless he teaches a summer course in remedial English to students who have failed the school's annual English proficiency exam. Ben Cross, the protagonist of *Shackles*, is a high school math teacher who destroyed his teaching career three years previously to the film's opening when he beat a student bully into a coma. He is offered a job teaching in an experimental program that is intended to reduce recidivism among offenders in the juvenile unit of the fictional Shackleton Prison. He won't get the job unless he also teaches English, which he reluctantly agrees to do in the hope that he can re-establish himself as a teacher. As if these circumstances were not enough to doom the teachers to failure, they all are teaching at-risk students in conditions not conducive to learning. Rago's students must attend class after a day of rigorous basic training, and he gets no support from drill sergeants who think his class is time wasted on trivial matters. Shoop's students, whose dismal performance on the proficiency exam has demonstrated their lack of interest, are being forced to attend summer school when they would rather be doing other things. Cross's students are inmates awaiting trial on criminal charges, and they must be escorted back and forth to class by prison guards. He even has to keep his pen locked up because it can be used as a weapon.

And all these teachers are the same sort of losers as their students appear to be. Rago is, like his recruits, a screw-up. He wrecked his career through negligence, he ruined his marriage, and he is on the verge of ruining his relationship with his daughter. Shoop has never grown up. He is as unmotivated and irresponsible as his students—and barely distinguishable from them. On the first day of class he shows up dressed for the beach: flowered shirt; shorts; red plastic sunglasses; and sandals. Cross, like his students in Shackleton Prison, still has a dangerous anger-management problem that, also like his students, makes it difficult for him to take responsibility for his actions.

The first two films are comedies, and *Shackles* is a gritty prison drama not for the faint of heart. In all three films, teaching English becomes a journey of self-discovery for the teachers. *Renaissance Man* offers a compelling example of how these characters discover themselves and a talent for teaching they didn't realize they had. Rago does not think of himself as a teacher, let alone an English teacher. When he is told about the job, his first reaction is to emphasize that he's never taught before. "I can't do this," he tells the clerk. But as far as the Michigan Unemployment Office is concerned, a master's degree from Princeton is all that he needs to be a teacher. When he arrives at his new post, he finds himself teaching a small class of recruits who are performing poorly in their regular training program. Their drill sergeants have concluded that the recruits are un-teachable because they "have sawdust for brains." However, a special program has been implemented by the base's commanding officer, who believes that if the recruits can be helped "in the brain department," i.e., if they learn to think better, they will perform better in their training. Rago's job, his immediate superior tells him, is to "get'em to think a little better on their feet." This is their last chance for a stint in the army: if they cannot complete the course successfully, they will be discharged.

When he first confronts his class, Rago, as is typical of the protagonists in these films, has no idea what to do. When the lone female student in the class asks him what he intends to teach them, Rago replies, "That's a good question. Anybody got any ideas?" At this point, he does not really care about his students, a rowdy bunch that cannot sit quietly. When a fight almost breaks out moments after the class begins, he sternly tells them: "You don't wanna to be here and I don't wanna to be here, so let's just make the best of this, okay?" But he has difficulty following his own advice. After a couple of days he tries to get out of his new job by calling a former advertising colleague and vows that he will do anything, even write school papers for his friend's children, to escape.

Rago fumbles around for a few days, and it is not long before he figures, as the Army does, that the students in his class are too dense to learn anything. But he suddenly has a small success. He gives them an in-class reading assignment after which they are to talk about what they have read. One of them is reading a comic book. While they are reading, he reads *Hamlet*, and when they ask him about what he's reading, he sees an opportunity to reel them in with reverse psychology. He pretends to be reluctant to discuss the play with them. "I guess we're not smart enough, huh," one student says. He lets them convince him to talk about

it, and the discussion leads to a lesson on simile, metaphor, and oxymoron. After the students leave Rago muses with some wonder: "I'm teachin' Shakespeare."

His success encourages him to make a serious effort at teaching, and because the students come to believe he is really interested in their success, instruction progresses fairly well. But, as typically happens, things fall apart when the students suddenly think he does not care about them, a set piece in these films. He is late for class one afternoon and apologizes by confessing that he had to attend a job interview. They are surprised and disheartened because they thought teaching them was his job.

"That's okay, Bill," says one. "We're used to it," i.e., not being important.

"We're part time, like a paper route," says another.

"Hey, what do ya want from me?" he asks in irritation.

"Not much, I guess," one replies

"Let's get out of here. Who needs him?"

"We ain't nothin' but a hobby to you," another says as the group leaves the classroom. "Last time I come to this class."

The incident is a turning point for Rago. Their disappointment and his realization that he has let them down makes him angry with himself, and he realizes that he is about to fail again. This realization causes him to admit to himself that he has come to care about teaching them. "If I lose 'em now, I'll never get 'em back." The class walked out fifteen minutes before class was over, so Rago decides to demonstrate that he does care about them by confronting them on a rappeling tower to get the fifteen minutes back. Seeing him do the same thing they are being asked to do impresses them enough they return to class, and eventually they volunteer to take a final exam which they are not required to take even though they will be discharged if they fail it, which none of them do. At the graduation ceremony, his students salute him as they pass in review, and Rago sticks around for the next batch of recruits that has sawdust for brains.

Teaching English changed Rago. He began his teaching career a cynic who valued only money. Although he could afford it, he refuses to buy his daughter, an aspiring astronomer, an airline ticket to Mexico where her science class is going on a field trip to observe an eclipse; he doesn't see her dream as a career choice for grown-ups, which he defines as one that will lead to the "big bucks." She sees his criticism as evidence that he does not care about her. But his success as a teacher

makes him realize there is more to life than earning big money. He sells an advertising trophy he earned early in his career and uses the money not only to buy the airline ticket for his daughter's trip but also an expensive telescope. With the remainder he buys tickets so his students can attend a performance of *Henry V*. More important, Rago realizes he has a talent for teaching, demonstrated by his interest in staying on and assisting the next batch of recruits who will need his help.

The same dramatic structure charting self-discovery organizes the plots of the other two films. When he starts teaching, Shoop of *Summer School* also has no idea what to do and, like Rago, asks his students for ideas. In *Shackles*, Cross fumbles around until he buys a copy of Alan Ginsberg's *Howl* from a street vendor. The poem inspires him to help his students gain control of their lives by teaching them to write poems about their experiences. Both these teachers experience the same sort of crisis Rago does. In *Summer School* Shoop is forced to accede to student demands if he wants their cooperation, but he comes to think he is wasting his time when they add further demands in exchange for their continued cooperation. He storms out of the classroom in disgust and anger. Cross's students lose their faith in him when they think he has been angling for another job at a local high school. The scene of their discovery is reminiscent of *Renaissance Man*, though nastier. During a math class, Cross's most talented poet, a teenager named Gabriel, becomes angry because he thinks that Cross is letting his students down. "You don't care about us," Gabriel shouts at him. "You're just as much a loser as the rest of us."

Like Rago, both teachers weather the crisis and grow as a result of it. In learning how to teach English, Shoop realizes he can teach, and the newly acquired knowledge prompts him to grow up. Cross's story ends tragically, but not before he learns what it means to be a teacher. He tells his ex-wife: "I always thought that being a good teacher was about good scores, but it's not about the scores. It's about those kids. It's about connecting with them. Maybe even inspiring them." He later tells a television reporter that he has learned what teaching is all about. "Can one teacher change the world, one student at a time? A while ago I thought that wasn't possible. But here at Shackleton, these children have taught me what it is to be a teacher, to connect and make a difference."

The films in which the protagonists are English teachers by choice appear to be different, but they have much in common with the protagonists in the above films. They are inexperienced teachers in trying circumstances entrusted with motivating at-risk students to take their

education seriously, so they have essentially the same plot structure as the others. But there is one significant difference: these films are intended to point up problems in America's schools, an intent that has motivated them from the beginning. But they go further. Between 1955 and 1990, they begin to redefine just what a *good* English teacher is.

The beginning of this shift registers in the first two films about the challenges faced by high school English teachers, *The Blackboard Jungle* and *Up the Down Staircase*. *Up the Down Staircase* tells the story of Sylvia Barrett, who also teaches in a New York City high school. This film seems to address the problem of high school dropouts, and she, like Dadier, works to motivate her students, a generally amiable but unfocused group of teens who have little interest in English class and haven't benefited much from their education so far. The teaching of Dadier and Barrett seems to reflect the pedagogy of their day, for they believe they can best help their students by improving their basic English language skills. Because their mission is traditional, their curricula are traditional; they focus on basic language proficiencies. Dadier tries to help his students learn correct usage, correct pronunciation, and understand the abbreviations in classified ads. On her first day of class, Miss Barrett intends to give a little inspirational speech on first impressions, and from that she hopes to "make a good case for diction, correct usage and self-expression."

As new teachers facing classrooms full of under-achievers, they both face the same problem: getting the students interested enough in the lessons to improve their language competence, and the films focus on their struggles to engage students. Dadier is ultimately successful when, in a lesson intended to inspire his students to do their own thinking, he shows a cartoon version of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Because they so often feel misunderstood, his students see the giant as also misunderstood and reinterpret the story to cast the giant as a sympathetic character and Jack as a criminal. The lesson excites his students, and he uses their interpretation to make a point about the dangers of not thinking for themselves. As one cynical colleague notes, Dadier "got through" to them. Miss Barrett gets through to her students in a lesson on Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. In her introduction to the novel, Barrett triggers a spirited class discussion when she gets the students to apply Dickens's opening line, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," to their own time, which they do in such a spirited way that a vice-principal bursts into the room and demands to know why she allowed her class to behave in such an "unruly fashion" in front of the

principal, who happened to be observing her that day.

Because the lessons are traditional, both teachers use texts in traditional ways. Although he inspires his students to engage in a discussion, Dadier never encourages them to use the lesson on *Jack and the Beanstalk* to reflect on their own lives, their values, or the problems of their society. His lessons are not designed to prepare his students for college or help them understand the nature of juvenile delinquency or the impact of World War II on their lives. It is intended to help them land jobs as mechanics, electricians, and plumbers.

The same is true of Barrett. In getting her students to connect a text from the previous century to their own times, she has moved a step closer to contemporary pedagogy; her introduction to the novel offers, in Robert Probst's pedagogy, invitations to dialogue and intellectual inquiry, but she fails to take the next step. There is no hint the students will move to an exploration of the best and worst of their own times and the impact these advances and problems are having on their own lives and values. Rather, Miss Barrett's discussion is intended to help students better understand the novel they will read. As she tells them at the end of class, be alert to differences between their times and Dickens's "because that will make us understand why this book still can be exciting and interesting after being written one hundred years ago."

Despite their devotion to their calling, both teachers are, like the teachers in the first films we discussed, eventually overwhelmed by the difficulties they face and give up. Dadier is beaten up by his students so badly that he is off work for a week. Thus he is already on the verge of quitting when one student who has been trying to get rid of him starts a mail and phone campaign to convince Dadier's pregnant wife that her husband is having an affair with another teacher. The stress causes the baby to be born dangerously premature, and that prompts Dadier to quit. But he decides to try again when his wife wants him to keep trying. After facing down a knife-wielding student and earning the respect of his students, he decides to stay on.

Two incidents lead to Barrett's resignation. A female student in her class named Alice attempts suicide, and Barrett feels that she could have saved Alice because the young women had tried to talk with her before school. But Barrett didn't have time. Shortly afterward Barrett is nearly attacked by the juvenile delinquent in her class who has misinterpreted her efforts to help him as sexual overtures. She feels she has failed the students who need a teacher most and resigns. "A teacher should be able to get through to her students," she explains to the

principal, who reassures her that she is a “born teacher.” She agrees to stay until the end of the term, but at the end of a mock trial on *Silas Marner* she changes her mind about quitting when a student expresses his regret that she is leaving and tells her: “I think your English this term was the greatest subject I ever had.”

There is one significant difference between these two teachers, however, and it is in this difference that we see the definition of a good English teacher begin to change. Despite her similarities to Dadier, Barrett is a new kind of teacher. She wants to have a more personal relationship with her students, something Dadier, the first and last of the traditional teachers to show up in films, never really tries to do. Like Dadier the problem she thinks she faces is a lack of communication with her students. She had hoped in her opening talk to move from traditional English teacher concerns to “communication between student and teacher, and finally, mutual respect and even love.” Dadier expresses no such concern. When this mutual respect and love does not happen, she takes steps to make it happen: she puts a suggestion box in her classroom in the hope anonymity will encourage the students to communicate with her. Most of the slips she finds are facetious, but one reads: “I am not a good penman, but I must tell someone. I put this in the suggestion box for the record. Today is my birthday. Happy Birthday to me. Signed, Me.”

After reading this note aloud to a colleague, Barrett responds to the expression of loneliness and isolation in motherly fashion. “I just want to do something for that child,” she tells her colleague. (“Pupil” is the usual way the rest of the teachers and administrators at this school refer to students.) Like a mother, she wants to make the child’s hurt go away. But she has clearly connected with the student. She later receives another slip from “me” who wants to know if she’ll be teaching creative writing next term. “You showed me that writing clearly, means thinking clearly.” This is the student who eventually tells her that her class was the best one he’s ever had.

Despite their dedication, however, neither ever considers inserting him or herself into the personal lives of their students to help them cope with the problems outside the classroom that are creating obstacles to learning. Dadier does visit a student at work to encourage him to continue in school, and Barrett, in the hope that she can bring him around, does try to cultivate a personal relationship with the juvenile delinquent in her class. It is clear that many of the problems Barrett’s students have are rooted in situations at home, but the only effort she

makes to deal with these problems is to try to discuss them with parents on Parents Night. It never occurs to these two teachers to insert themselves into the personal lives of their students; the classroom is a boundary line. A new theme emerges in this film. Miss Barrett wants to rescue her potential dropouts from the life she believes they will lead if they don't earn their diploma, "me" from loneliness, and the juvenile delinquent from the streets. Thus this film marks the beginning of a theme that has come to dominate most later films that have high school English teachers as protagonists: the English teacher as rescuer.

The rescue theme becomes more explicit in *Dead Poets Society*. This film is about an English teacher working at an exclusive New England prep school in the late 1950s. The school, an all-boys school named Welton, is rigidly traditional and expects the protagonist, Mr. Keating, to prepare his students for college entrance exams and university English courses. But Mr. Keating, the only protagonist in these films with some teaching experience, believes this educational objective endangers his students, so he tries to rescue them from the demands and expectations of the privileged lives they were born into that he believes will stifle their individuality to the extent that it will impair the quality of their lives. He holds up Walt Whitman and the Romantic poets as examples of how life should be lived. He successfully encourages several boys to act on their desires, but the school's headmaster interprets their independence as rebellion. While Keating does not directly insert himself into the personal lives of his students, he does try to help one student cope with a domineering father who wants his son focused only on his studies. The situation ends in tragedy when the student, in utter despair of ever being free from parental demands, commits suicide. Mr. Keating is held responsible and fired. We are supposed to see him as a victim of education's tradition.

By 1995, however, good English teachers have moved beyond being merely rescuers; they have become saviors who "offer salvation to students lost in a culture of poverty and despair" (Bulman 257). This change is evident in two relatively recent films, *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers*. In these films, the extraordinary English teachers are willing to make whatever personal sacrifices are necessary to save their students from the personal problems and social ills that threaten to destroy their futures. In these classrooms, the students' problems are also the teacher's problems, and the classroom has become a staging area rather than a boundary.

These two films have essentially the same dramatic structure as

the films I've discussed, but the protagonists in these two films, Luanne Johnson in *Dangerous Minds* and Erin Gruell in *Freedom Writers*, think that their mission demands they insert themselves into the personal lives of their students to save them from being doomed by the problems obstructing their education. Johnson takes time outside the classroom to visit parents and guardians. In an effort to save one student from a death in the streets, she has him spend a night at her house. Gruell suddenly realizes that the violence permeating her students' lives is fueled by a vicious cycle of ethnic prejudice, hate, and rage. She believes she can break that cycle by helping her students understand the nature of these feelings and the dangers they pose, so she has them read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. To emphasize the dangers of ethnic prejudice, she takes them on a field trip to a Holocaust museum and arranges dinner with survivors of the Nazi death camps, all of which she pays for. The students become so engaged with the lesson that they raise enough money to bring the woman who hid Anne Frank's family to Long Beach, California.

The teachers in these last three films are self-sacrificing to a degree not seen in the previous films. Keating has abandoned the love of his life in London so he can teach 3,000 miles away because, as he explains to a student, he wants to teach. Johnson, who is getting divorced during the period the film covers, spends much of her paycheck on her students. She buys candy bars to give as rewards for good classroom performance, and at one point intends to pay for a day's field trip to an amusement park. She offers to buy dinner at an expensive restaurant for the students who do well in an academic contest she has created, and she offers to pay for an expensive leather jacket one student bought on the black market if he graduates.

Gruell gives up a personal life altogether. She takes two part-time jobs to support her teaching, and as a consequence she neglects her husband to such an extent he complains that if she had to choose between him or her students, she would choose them. When she finally has to make the choice, he turns out to be right. Even Shoop makes sacrifices. Although he has decided to take his responsibility seriously, the students have not yet responded in kind, and he feels let down. "For the past four weeks," he tells them, "I've given up all of my free time, had my body used for a tackling dummy, my house trashed, my couch set on fire, my goldfish murdered, my butt thrown in jail, and my car wrecked."

In one respect, however, the teachers in these last two dramas are problematic. Whether intentional or not, they are depicted as teachers

who are not driven so much by their desire to share their love of literature and language; rather, they are driven by the need to save their students. The stories of Johnson and Gruell are based on the women's actual careers, and if these films are accurate, their inability or unwillingness to balance their professional and personal lives and their willingness to sacrifice so much in an obsessive pursuit of success would raise serious questions about their emotional health. Despite their personal issues, however, the English teachers in all the films I've discussed are creative and functional to a high degree, and in these latest films, they are more selfless than it is reasonable to expect a teacher to be.

The films in which English teachers are foils or major characters dramatize what a good English teacher is not. These are the bad and ugly teachers, teachers who take out their personal frustrations on their students. There are a number of them and selecting the most pathetic is, as Samuel Johnson noted when asked to make a similar choice between two politicians: "There is no settling the point of precedency [sic] between a louse and a flea." Unlike the good English teachers, the personal issues and deficits of the bad and ugly teachers seriously impair their ability to connect with their students because they are compelled to use their students as emotional punching bags. These are the ugly teachers. Perhaps the most painful of these representations is Paul Barringer, a failed novelist in *Up the Down Staircase*. His heartless cruelty—thinly disguised as teaching—is dramatized by the manner in which he responds to a love letter he received from Alice, the infatuated student. With her at his desk—and the door closed—he corrects her writing. I'll just offer the tenor of this scene. He reads from the letter: *Dear Mr. Barringer.*

"There's nothing wrong in using circles to dot I's," he says to her, "but it's considered an affectation...
I hope you don't mind the presumption...

Look up the spelling of presumption—and no dots.
I thought I saw you in the window, and my heart was throbbing with this love I bear for you ...

No dots, please, and 'throbbing' is pretty cheap." The interview continues in this vein. Alice expresses no emotion, but it is she who the next morning tries to commit suicide by jumping from the window of Barringer's third-story classroom. But he has stiff competition. John Griffin of *Killing Mr. Griffin* harbors so much repressed rage stemming from his marital problems that he verbally

abuses his students in an obvious attempt to destroy their self-esteem. When the students try to teach him a lesson, they accidentally kill him. Mr. Auster, the AP teacher-protagonist in *Blue Car*, assuages his personal grief over the death of a son and problems with his drunken wife by sexually exploiting a female student who evidences some poetic talent and whose own life is full of heartache and tragedy.

John Trimbur hints at the nature of the change reflected in the films' trajectory. In his musings on changes that have taken place in the composition classroom, a specifically English teacher domain, he observes that teachers have become "surrogate" (192) parents, and classrooms have become "domestic space[s]" (188) that offer "the intimacy of home" (194). The teacher's language, he says, has become "inflected by the aspirations of middle-class parents seeking to realize their children's potential, to capitalize on their futures" (194). Although he is talking about writing classrooms, his observations seem to apply to English classrooms in general. Like good parents, good English teachers now are expected to be nurturing individuals who create classroom environments that provide, in Trimbur's words, "some of the comforts of home, a haven in what many students find to be an otherwise alien or hostile environment" (194). The teachers in the films I have discussed, like good parents, are willing to make whatever personal sacrifices are necessary to help their students secure lives and futures.

Why the change registered in the films occurred is difficult to determine. It would appear that since the 1950s, education theorists have come to acknowledge the extent to which the obstacles to learning erected by problems outside the classroom are impeding student progress, and this acknowledgment has had a corresponding effect on theories of pedagogy that in turn, as we see in the films, redefined the role of the English teacher.

These films are inspirational, but they are also problematic, and interestingly, most of them raise the same issues about inept administrations and poor teachers. But they then dismiss these concerns by putting them into the mouths of bad teachers who lack the heroic qualities and the savior impulses of the protagonists. These are the bad teachers, and putting legitimate concerns in their mouths makes the concerns seem the product of self-interested, resentful people. Mrs. Campbell, the English Department chair in Gruell's school, is a good example. She does not want Gruell to give district books to her low-achieving students because the books will disappear or, if they do get returned, they will be damaged.

“I don’t have the budget to buy new books every year,” she says.

Meanwhile, the books sit on storeroom shelves. Inadequate funding of education’s mission is a legitimate cause for concern, but Campbell’s complaint about the budget loses much of its force when made by a teacher who seems to care more about books than students. Another colleague of Gruell’s, Mr. Gelford, objects to the problems the school is having, which he believes are the result of mandatory busing. A high school that was once among the best in the state is now having all kinds of problems, he complains. This kind of disruption also seems a legitimate concern if the problems are not adequately addressed in a timely and effective manner. But his lack of concern for students whose need for education is the most desperate—he sees no point in educating them as they will soon be in jail anyway—makes his complaints about busing seem stupid, selfish, and ill-natured.

The problem with these films is pointed up by Steven R. Thomsen, who has plausibly argued that the constant exposure to mass media messages about teachers and teaching, negative and positive, contributes to or reinforces “what people believe is actually true regarding teachers and the profession,” however un-realistic (23). What these films are encouraging audiences to believe is that the real reason American schools are failing is not because politicians are setting the education system’s objectives and priorities, not because schools are inadequately funded, not because teachers are poorly trained, but because the schools lack selfless teachers who, like the teachers in these films, don’t let family responsibilities, bills, or teaching circumstances impinge on their professional lives. Extraordinary teachers who care enough, audiences are led to believe, can make the obstacles to learning created by poverty, dysfunctional families, street influences, and the effects of bad teaching simply disappear. If we want to improve our schools, these films argue convincingly, we need to get more teachers like Rago, Shoop, Johnson and Gruell into the classrooms.

And this argument has entered the public discourse on education. Arne Duncan, our Secretary of Education, reportedly told reporter Andrea Mitchell that he thought spending billions to reduce class size was a bad idea, given that many countries with high education achievement also have large classes. “The best thing you can do,” he reportedly said, “is get children in front of an extraordinary teacher” (Herman). Public school teachers in Chicago recently went on strike to get wage increases that will keep pace with increases in the cost of living and an adequate peer evaluation program, a legitimate concern in an age

when many think standardized testing is antithetical to teaching. Because these teachers were demanding that their needs be addressed, they were criticized as bad teachers who cared more about themselves than their students. At the end of July 2011, the *Los Angeles Times* published an op-ed piece titled “The Myth of the Extraordinary Teacher.” It was written by a Los Angeles public school teacher who points up a problem in the school system: we are demanding “teachers be excellent in conditions that preclude excellence.” All the children in our schools, she said, “deserve to have not only an extraordinary teacher but a teacher who has time to read their work, to listen, to understand why they’re crying or sleeping or not doing homework.” Her article elicited public responses.

Placing all responsibility for student failures on the shoulders of their teachers makes it difficult if not impossible to identify and address the real causes of school failures. The public willingly accepts the simple solutions offered in these English teacher films and the other films about successful educators that make the same point because, I would suggest, if it learns what the real problems are, it will be faced with a distressing choice: address the problems or consciously ignore them, and it is loath to do either.

It would appear that the most recent film with an English teacher protagonist, Tony Kaye’s *Detachment*, realizes the difficulties in starting a realistic public discussion of problems in our schools, for it is clearly an antidote to the saccharine sentimentalizing of English teachers and their students in the previous films. This film is shot documentary style in which an experienced substitute teacher at an inner-city high school, location unspecified, reflects on his failure to prevent an emotionally suffering girl from committing suicide. This film is an unflinching look at inner-city schools and finds plenty of blame to go around. It spares no one, not the administrators (who usually aren’t spared), the teachers, the parents, and, atypically, the students themselves. If we are to have a productive dialogue about the problems in our nation’s schools, perhaps we should start with a realistic view of administrators, teachers, and students, not cinematic representations of them.

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Note

1 The protagonist in “Our Miss Brooks,” a television sitcom that ran from 1952–1956, is an English teacher, but it is impossible now to see

enough episodes to enable a discussion of the show.

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Katniss Everdeen, Role Model? Morality and Ethics in the *Hunger Games* Trilogy

Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist of the *Hunger Games* trilogy, is one of the most popular female characters to come out of young adult fiction in a long time. Young women have latched onto this teenage character, who has fulfilled a powerful need for strong, young, female role models. Girls want to be Katniss, as they have proclaimed on Facebook and through their choice of Halloween costumes. Sales of archery equipment and archery lessons have spiked since the first installment of the movie came out.¹ There is indeed much to like about Katniss: strong, brave, independent, talented, self-reliant, protector of the weak, and rebel against tyrants, while maintaining, at times, an endearing vulnerability. And yet as I read the books, I had some reservations about Katniss as a role model. These reservations nagged at me throughout the trilogy but finally came to a head in the third book, when Katniss makes a seemingly shocking decision. She votes to hold another hunger games, only this time with the children of the Capitol as tributes. President Coin has just announced that many of the rebels do not think that executing “hundreds” of high-ranking officials in the Capitol is repayment enough for seventy-five years’ worth of hunger games.² So as a way to quench the bloodlust of the people, some of whom want to kill everyone with Capitol citizenship, she has proposed a seventy-sixth Hunger Games, with capitol children as tributes. It will be up to the seven remaining former victors to decide on the plan. Katniss votes yes for the plan.

Soon after the book came out, chat rooms, blogs, and online threads began humming with debate about the ending of *Mockingjay*. Why would Katniss vote to continue the hunger games? The thread on Amazon.com was typical. It was entitled, “Did Katniss really want the Hunger Games to continue or did she have ulterior motives when she agreed?”³ The question set the tone for the debate with people arguing about what Katniss’s vote really meant. The plain surface meaning, that Katniss wanted another hunger games, was not an option for most people. It seemed too out of character for a protagonist that many had grown to love. And so the debate divided along three basic lines—all of which saw Katniss’s character in a similar way.

One line of reasoning held that the choice was, for Katniss, the lesser of two evils. Since the choice had been presented to her as either

kill all the people in the Capitol or have a hunger games and just kill a few, she chose the hunger games because it was the way she felt would mean the least amount of bloodshed. This reading had fewer followers than the others, and it mainly had to do with how readers saw the character of Katniss. A typical reaction was “Katniss would never have wanted another hunger games.”⁴

The second reading held that Katniss did want another hunger games but that this decision was so out of character for her (given how she had acted in the rest of the trilogy) that the only explanation for this was “bad writing.”⁵ This interpretation, like the first, also holds that wanting to have another hunger games is out of character for Katniss. Since she would “never do this,” but she in fact does do it, it must be “bad writing” on the part of the author.

The third and by far the most popular interpretation was that Katniss voted to hold a seventy-sixth hunger games, but only did so as a subterfuge. She only did it, goes this line of reasoning, because she had a hidden agenda. She voted for the plan to hold another hunger games because she had already decided to assassinate President Coin. She voted for the plan, which was Coin’s idea, to make Coin think that she was on her side, so that Coin would not suspect that Katniss was about to attempt to assassinate her. Those who hold to this interpretation also use Katniss’s character as revealed throughout the rest of the trilogy as evidence. Since Katniss is not the kind of person who would want another hunger games, her vote must have had an underlying meaning. This is also the assumption made by at least two of the contributors to *The Girl Who Was on Fire*, a recent collection of articles on the *Hunger Games* trilogy.⁶

My purpose at this point is not to argue the relative merits of the above interpretations (that would be another project) as much as to note their similarities—they all see Katniss as someone whose character is such that she would never want another hunger games held. And while, as stated above, there are indeed many positive attributes to Katniss’s character, I want to propose a fourth option, one that is also based on Katniss’s character, but from the opposite point of view. What if Katniss did want there to be another hunger games and what if this is consistent with her character? What if there is evidence that Katniss may indeed have been the kind of person who was capable of voting for another hunger games? I want to take a look at this evidence, the evidence that had been nagging in the back of my mind, for a darker portrayal of Katniss Everdeen.

It begins on page one of the very first book when we are told that she tries to drown a kitten that her sister had brought home, and the only reason she didn't is because her sister got her to stop by begging and crying. Right off the bat, Collins is letting us know that there is a cold-blooded side to Katniss. A friend of mine argued that, to relatives of hers that lived on a farm, drowning a sick or unwanted kitten would not have been seen as cruel or cold-blooded. I would argue, however, that pragmatic Midwestern farmers were not the primary audience of this book. The book's largest and most passionate following are teenaged females who generally tend to have a different view of drowning kittens. Collins is most likely aware of how her audience will read this action by Katniss.

Quite aside from the drowning kitten incident, however, I think the key to understanding the dark side of Katniss's character has to do with the way she views relationships, which in turn heavily influences her moral and ethical choices. She sees relationships fundamentally in terms of debt, owing, and repayment. She uses the language of debt, owing, and payment twenty-two times in the trilogy. Jennifer Culver has also noted this trait of Katniss in her article, "'So Here I Am in His Debt Again': Katniss, Gifts, and Invisible Strings." She says, "Katniss evaluates the world through a lens of debts and reciprocity."⁷ Culver notes that Katniss's orientation toward relationships is consistent with what Marcel Mauss calls a gift culture.⁸ According to Mauss, in these cultures "gifting" was a "state of mind" so much so that everything in the culture existed "for passing on and for balancing accounts."⁹

Culver is correct about this, but there are three things that I would like to add to Culver's discussion. First of all, to use another financial metaphor, Katniss's viewing relationships in this way leads to an opportunity cost. Seeing relationships in terms of debt and repayment means that she does not view them in terms of love, grace, and forgiveness. Seeing them in terms of debt seems to lead to a diminished capacity for love in Katniss. In contrast to the twenty-two times she mentions relationships in terms of debt, owing, and repayment, she only mentions the words love and forgiveness ten times, and in nine of these ten cases, the reference is a negative one discussing her inability to love or forgive, or her diminished capacity for doing so. For instance, the first time she mentions love is very early in *The Hunger Games* when she says, "Prim . . . is the only person in the world I'm certain I love."¹⁰ This seems somewhat amazing. She does not include her mother or her best friend, Gale. She has lived in the same small town her entire life;

everyone knows her and she knows everyone; she has gone to the same school with the same classmates, and yet she has no one that she loves. In fact in *Mockingjay* when she reflects on her school days, she notes, “I had next to no friends because I wasn’t friendly.”¹¹ When she is chosen for the reaping, she is surprised that the crowd makes the three-fingered gesture that means “goodbye to someone you love.”¹² She is surprised because she does not generally view those relationships in terms of love: “I don’t think of District 12 as a place that cares about me.”¹³ She has only seen District 12 as a place where she hunts and barter, in other words, makes economic transactions. The second time she mentions the word love is when she, in an attempt to describe her own character, says, “I don’t go around loving everybody I meet.”¹⁴ For brevity’s sake, I will not mention every single example, but the final time she uses the word love in the first book, she characteristically pairs it with a term of economic transaction: “I’ll never be able to afford the kind of love that leads to a family, to children.”¹⁵ Not only do we again have a negative depiction of her ability to love, it is tied to economic language which is her standard way of viewing relationships. Right up to the very end of the first book, she continues to ask Peeta why he gave her the bread; she does not understand the action because it was an act motivated by love, which is why Haymitch tells Peeta that he will have a hard time convincing Katniss that he loves her; Katniss for the most part does not see relationships in terms of love.

Katniss’s diminished capacity for love is reflected throughout all three books, and rather than multiply examples, I would like to focus on one other reflection of Katniss’s that is highly revealing. In *Catching Fire* she tells herself that the key to understanding who she is, is her action with the berries at the end of the first hunger games:

“I realize the answer to who I am lies in that handful of poisonous fruit. If I held them out to save Peeta because I knew I would be shunned if I came back without him, then I am despicable. If I held them out to him because I loved him, I am still self-centered, although forgivable. But if I held them out to defy the Capitol, I am someone of worth.”¹⁶

This line of thinking, in which an act of defiance is considered of higher value than an act of love, only makes sense if one views relationships as Katniss does. To her, love is simply not as important as the repayment of debt.

Katniss's view of relationships not only leads to a diminished capacity to love, it also negatively affects her ability to forgive. She mentions on multiple occasions that she is not a forgiving person. For instance in the first book, in speaking of her mother she says, "I try to forgive her for my father's sake. But to be honest, I'm not the forgiving type."¹⁷ In *Catching Fire*, she mentions that the pose she and Peeta will adopt in the procession of chariots will be "unforgiving. And I love it. Getting to be myself at last."¹⁸ At the end of *Mockingjay*, she wants to tell Gale that she will "Forgive him. But since I can't, I'll just have to deal with the pain."¹⁹ Gale doesn't even try to argue his case, because he also knows that Katniss is an unforgiving person.

Another thing that Culver fails to mention in her article on Katniss and the gift culture is that in this kind of culture, it is not only gifts that must be repaid, it is injuries as well. The creators of the Mosaic Law in the Jewish Pentateuch well understood this when they laid down the eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth law. Ironically this kind of law was intended to mitigate the escalation of violence that is often inherent in these types of transactions. If I knock out your tooth, you are not allowed to take my arm in return; you are only allowed a tooth. In these types of cultures, an injury demands its own repayment in kind just as gifts do. But viewing relationships in this way often leads to an ever-increasing cycle of vengeance with the repayment for an injury often outdoing the original offense. For instance in *The Hunger Games*, when Rue is killed, Katniss immediately kills the boy who killed Rue. However she does not see this as settling the debt. She says, "I'd kill anyone I met on sight . . . My hatred of the Capitol has not lessened my hatred of my competitors in the least . . . They, at least, can be made to pay for Rue's death."²⁰ We see not only the language of payment but also the escalation—death does not pay for death; there must be more payment. Katniss's desire to repay injuries is also seen in the demand that she be allowed to kill Snow as one of the conditions she sets for acting as the Mockingjay.²¹ It is also seen in the fact that she understands the character Tigris in *Mockingjay* because she seems to be motivated by revenge. As Katniss notes, "A need for revenge can burn long and hot."²² This aspect of Katniss's personality is noted in a post on www.bookriot.com in which several female characters from young adult fiction are compared.²³ We are led through a series of algorithms to find out what a character would do in a given situation. No matter what the situation and no matter whether the answer is yes or no, Katniss's character always comes back to the block that says "vengeance!"

Although this is a parody, it does give us some insight into how the character of Katniss is popularly understood.

Finally, we see that Katniss's view of relationships diminishes her ability to show grace. Grace is initiative; it gives without thought of repayment. Debt is reactive; its only thought is of repayment. Grace is Peeta's gift with the bread; and this is why Katniss never understands it and feels that she can never repay it. It is an initiative act motivated by love. Her inability to understand grace is also why she pleads with Gale not to let her family starve as she is leaving for the hunger games in book one. She knows that she will not be able to repay him, and she is unsure if he will act out of love for them.²⁴ Katniss does not initiate relationships; every one that she has is initiated by someone else—Peeta, Rue, Haymitch, Finnick. Most of the time Katniss would rather just be left alone. Another relationship just means another person to owe.

What does all of this have to do with Katniss's vote at the end of *Mockingjay*? We have seen that Katniss has a cold-blooded, even vengeful side to her, and that repayment of debts is her fundamental way of interacting with the world. At the time of the victors meeting, someone, and she is not at that point sure who it was, has killed her sister. Someone owes her an enormous debt. If indeed the repayment of violence tends to escalate the violence, then it would not be out of the realm of possibility, if she thinks that the Capitol is responsible for Prim's death, that she would vote to hold another hunger games as an act of retribution. At some point, and again it is not clearly specified in the story, she becomes convinced that Coin was responsible for Prim's death. And she assassinates Coin instead. This would seem to be a repayment of death for death, but for Katniss this is not the only fallout from Prim's death. She actually tries to kill herself as well, in part to evade the punishment and torture she thinks is coming her way, but also in part to punish herself for failing to protect Prim. In addition, even after she survives, as mentioned above, her relationship with Gale is collateral damage to Prim's death since he had the idea for the bomb that was used to kill Prim. Katniss knows she will never be able to separate her feelings for Gale from the death of her sister. And knowing herself as an unforgiving person, she knows her relationship with Gale is over.

A one-for-one repayment is never enough when relationships are viewed this way. Only the virtues of love, grace, and forgiveness can end the cycle of violence as they eventually do when Katniss is let off the hook for killing Coin, and she goes back to District 12 to rebuild her life. Initially she thinks she has no life, but when Peeta arrives, she eventually

does rebuild it with the virtues that he gradually teaches her. Did Katniss initially want another hunger games? The narrative is ambiguous, but given the dark side of Katniss and the way she views relationships, it is indeed possible. And for me, that makes me pause when holding her up as a role model. I have two daughters, ages nine and eleven, and when and if they decide they want to read *The Hunger Games*, I hope they understand what is truly admirable in this character and what is not.

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Notes

1. Janice Podsada, "The Hunger Games Sparks Sales at Archery, Toy, Book and Specialty Stores," *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, CT), Apr. 15, 2012, via www.Baltimoresun.com. May 4, 2012.
2. Suzanne Collins, *Mockingjay* (New York: Scholastic, 2010), 368.
3. The title of the thread seems to have slanted the debate on this site toward an assumption of ulterior motives, although there were dissenting views.
4. Jennifer L. Miller, "Did Katniss really want the Hunger Games to continue or did she have ulterior motives when she agreed?" Posted on Sept. 10, 2010, Customer Discussions, http://www.amazon.com/Mockingjay-The-Hunger-Games-Book/dp/0439023513/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336663516&sr=1-1#
5. Robert Sherman, "Did Katniss really want the Hunger Games to continue or did she have ulterior motives when she agreed?" Posted on Oct. 19, 2011, Customer Discussions, http://www.amazon.com/Mockingjay-The-Hunger-Games-Book/dp/0439023513/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1336663516&sr=1-1#
6. See Mary Borsellino, "Your Heart Is a Weapon the Size of Your Fist: Love as a Political Act in *The Hunger Games*," in *The Girl Who Was on Fire*, ed. Leah Wilson (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2010), 37, and Sarah Rees Brennan, "Why So Hungry For *The Hunger Games*?" in *The Girl Who Was on Fire*, ed. Leah Wilson (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2010), 6-7.
7. Jennifer Culver, "'So Here I Am in His Debt Again': Katniss, Gifts, and Invisible Strings," in *The Hunger Games and Philosophy: A Critique of Pure Treason*, ed. George A. Dunn and Nicolas Michaud (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2012), 94.

8. Ibid., 90.
9. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), 14.
10. Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (New York: Scholastic, 2008), 10.
11. Collins, *Mockingjay*, 188.
12. Collins, *Hunger Games*, 24.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid., 122.
15. Ibid., 373
16. Suzanne Collins, *Catching Fire* (New York: Scholastic, 2009), 118.
17. Collins, *Hunger Games*, 8.
18. Collins, *Catching Fire*, 212.
19. Collins, *Mockingjay*, 367.
20. Collins, *Hunger Games*, 238.
21. Collins, *Mockingjay*, 38.
22. Ibid., 320.
23. Brenna Clark Gray, "Best of Book Riot: What Would 'Insert YA Heroine Here' Do?" *Book Riot*, April 3, 2012, <http://bookriot.com/2012/04/03/best-of-book-riot-what-would-insert-ya-heroine-here-do/>
24. Collins, *Hunger Games*, 40.

Mary Pickford: The Little Girl Who Called the Shots

In 1920, twenty-seven year old Mary Pickford played the title role of a child in two films, *Pollyanna* and *Suds*, both released by her own production company, United Artists. At the time, she was the most famous actress in the world, affectionately dubbed “America’s Sweetheart,” not by a public relations firm but by her fans. She was the highest-paid woman on earth, and she had already been married, divorced, and married again, first to actor Owen Moore and then, following a passionate extramarital affair, to the dashing swashbuckler star, Douglas Fairbanks, with whom she lived at their fabulous Pickfair mansion. Still, on screen she acted the child. The *New York Times*, in its review of *Pollyanna*, raised the issue of Pickford’s little-girl persona, saying, “Why doesn’t Mary Pickford grow up?” The question is answered at the Rivoli this week. It is evident that Miss Pickford doesn’t grow up because she makes more people laugh and cry, can win her way into more hearts, and even protesting heads, as a rampant, resilient little girl than as anything else. She can no more grow up than Peter Pan. When she stops being a child on the screen, she’ll probably just stop . . . But that time is a long way off” (quoted in Basinger 38). Although Pickford played a variety of mature roles in her long and distinguished career, she is best known for her cheeky-without-being-treacly child or adolescent performances in films such as *Cinderella* (1915), *Little Pal* (1915), *Rags* (1915), *The Poor Little Rich Girl* (1917), *The Little American* (1917), *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1917), *A Little Princess* (1917), *M’Liss* (1918), *Daddy Long Legs* (1919), *Heart O’ the Hills* (1919), *Pollyanna* (1920), *Suds* (1920), *Through the Back Door* (1921), *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1921), *Tess of the Storm Country* (1922), *Little Annie Rooney* (1925), and *Sparrows* (1926). As Raymond Lee notes in *The Films of Mary Pickford*, she played “a child most of her reel life” (20).

It seems curious today that the most powerful actress in the world—beautiful, talented, sexy, and highly paid—would continue to play child roles well into her thirties and that her audience would demand that she do so. Certainly, one can attribute this to regressive gender roles and attitudes in what Edward Wagenknecht called “The Age of Innocence.” However, another explanation for the popularity of

Pickford's little-girl persona hinges on the complicated relationship that Americans in the early twentieth century had with the phenomenon of time. Themes involving time—urgency, the desire to control or stop time, and the need to make the most of time—characterize Pickford's life and the social milieu of her day. Pickford's "little Mary" character figures prominently in both.

In *Stop the Clocks! Time and Narrative in Cinema*, Helen Powell notes that "[t]here have been two major periods in our history where our relationship to time and our experience of it has [sic] been radically reworked" (26). The most recent has been since the 1980s as human perception has been altered by digital technology, rendering time and place obsolete; however, "[t]he first occurred in the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the outbreak of World War I, a time noted . . . for its vast range of inventions that permeated everyday life. It was of course within this period that cinema was born" (Powell 26). It was also the time when Mary Pickford was born, entered movies, and achieved unprecedented stardom. In the early years of the twentieth century, people's relationship to time was affected by the massive cultural changes caused by industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. Caught up in a technological revolution, Americans were overwhelmed by the dizzying speed at which life was moving, creating a desire to slow down or stop time. As Jeffrey Nealon and Susan Searls Giroux observe, "Without question, we experience time in individual, often idiosyncratic ways, but these experiences are also shaped by larger social processes" (122). The new invention of movies, which made Mary Pickford an international celebrity, had the ability to capture images, freezing time. It is not inaccurate to say that movies subtly made audiences think about time. They fell in love with the good but plucky little girl on the screen and didn't want her to grow up. Pickford, in turn, developed savvy and sensitivity in her own understanding of the passage of time. Pickford's perception of time and the temporal qualities of the silent screen contribute to the development of her early twentieth-century celebrity.

Mary Pickford began her film career in April 1909. The impoverished young actress, who had trained for the stage with the renowned director David Belasco, was seventeen and needed money. Since her father's death when she was almost six, she had been the sole means of support for her mother Charlotte, and two younger siblings, sister Lottie and brother Jack. At the insistence of her mother, Pickford reluctantly presented herself to filmmaker D.W. Griffith at the Biograph Studio to ask for temporary work in the fledgling movie industry until

she could secure a more prestigious position on Broadway. Griffith took one look at her and said, "You're too little and too fat, but I may give you a chance" (Eyman 37). Seeing possibility in the tiny woman with a pleasant face, long golden curls, and a fiery personality, he offered her five dollars a day, but she demanded ten, with a guarantee of twenty-five dollars a week. They struck a deal, and Griffith later recalled that he hired Pickford "on her own terms" (Eyman 40). When Griffith was directing her, she refused to look at him saying, "If I look at you, I'll imitate you, and I want to be myself" (*Mary Pickford: Muse of the Movies*). Taken with her talent, naturalistic style of acting, and exquisite comic timing, Griffith began moving the camera closer to her face to capture her expressions, ushering in a new style of filmmaking. Together, they pioneered the close-up, a way of freezing time.

Over the next two years, Pickford went on to make many approximately eighty shorts for Griffith, generating nearly a film a week, and Americans fell in love with the diminutive actress who frequently played the role of a feisty young girl who had lost her family. Throughout her movie career, which spanned twenty-three years, one hundred twenty-five shorts, and fifty two feature-length films, Pickford always drove a hard bargain, becoming the first actress to earn a million dollars a year. Studio head Adolph Zukor once told her, "Mary, sweetheart, I don't have to diet. Every time I talk over a contract with you and your mother I lose ten pounds" (Windeler 92), and Samuel Goldwyn quipped, "It took longer to make Mary's contracts than it did to make her pictures" (Windeler 92). Pickford was Hollywood's first major celebrity, already making \$2,000 a week when Chaplin was still doing slapstick shorts for Mack Sennett (Lee 20). Neither she nor anyone else knew much about stardom, but she did get one thing right: fame is fleeting. "I've always been scared to death," she said. "I've always felt that everything was luck and that every year was my last so that I'd better make good" (Windeler 166). Pickford negotiated her deals with rigor, urgency, and an anxiety that her career was only for the moment.

In other ways, Pickford sought to control time and recover a childhood she never had. As biographer Scott Eyman reports, Pickford was a driven actor and perfectionist, and her life was very regimented: she "usually rose at 6:30, had breakfast at 7:00, was at the studio from 8:00 A.M. to 7:30 P.M. Dinner would be at 9:00 or 9:30 and then to bed, usually before 10:30 P.M." (Eyman 158). "My pictures were my whole life, outside of my family," she said. "I never went any place. I never went to cafes, restaurants, never went dancing, I had no social life

whatsoever. My whole life was wrapped up in the creative. The career is a very exciting thing. In fact, it's a monster. It possesses you, body and soul" (Eyman 158). Because Pickford began acting in plays and movies at such a young age in order to support her family, she never had a real childhood, and her career offered her little leisure time. Thus, she immersed herself in her little-girl movie roles, which gave her the opportunity to go back in time and experience on screen a childhood and carefree life she never had. There she could run, get dirty in the mud, ride ponies, play games, tussle with boys, flirt a little, act tough, and let off steam. Her approach to filmmaking exemplified the intensity of trying to pack everything in, which resonated with early film audiences. As Powell theorizes, the emerging modern society was obsessed with a temporal paradox: "we require less time to travel, communicate, to produce and consume, but then this time 'saved' is countered by the quest to pack in ever more things to each temporally charged moment because we can" (Powell 26-27).

Even in the great romance of Mary Pickford's life, time imagery played a major role. In late 1916, while Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks were strongly attracted to one another but still married to their first spouses, Fairbanks's estranged mother, Ella Fairbanks, died suddenly. At the funeral, Fairbanks showed no emotion, but a few days later, as he and Pickford were driving through Central Park, he began to weep uncontrollably. As Pickford tried to comfort him, she noticed that the clock on the car's dashboard had stopped at the precise hour of Ella Fairbanks's death. According to Pickford biographer Scott Eyman, Mary and Douglas, who used the pet names "Hipper" and "Duber" for one another, "took this as a sign from beyond, a justification and sanctification of their growing love for each other. In years to come, whenever their love needed to be stressed to one another, either verbally or in letters or telegrams, they would say 'by the clock'" (112). They exchanged this phrase regularly, even after Pickford filed for divorce in 1934 and they subsequently married other people. Their divorce became final on January 10, 1936, and when Fairbanks suffered a fatal heart in December 1939, he was still using it: he told his brother Robert, "If anything happens to me, I want you to give Mary a message. Tell her *By the Clock*" (251). Robert Fairbanks delivered it the next day. In later years, Pickford would suggest that she could stop time in her mind. She said of the vibrant Fairbanks, "He was a little boy, always . . . He was just in life as he was on the screen" (Whitfield 162).

If time seemed to define Pickford off-screen, it played an even more important role in her on-screen image. Pickford turned back time by playing the child, and in order to do so skillfully and convincingly, she had to act and appear the part. Physically, she had the right look. Biographer Eileen Whitfield paints her as one “whose face seemed to move from round good humor to unsettling beauty. Her hazel eyes held a melancholy sweetness. Her bones were fine, her build small. Her back fairly dripped with springing curls. She stood up proudly on size-five shoes; the longest finger on her hand was two and a half inches. Yet she spoke with the aim of a torpedo” (Whitfield 75). Pickford internalized a child’s movements, once revealing her process to *Vogue* magazine: “relax the brow and corners of the mouth, point toes inward, loosen legs” (Whitfield 154). In the role of Gwen in *Poor Little Rich Girl*, Pickford embraces childlike movements as she pulls back and slams on the brakes while holding an adult’s hand as she goes down the stairs, clutches her teddy bear by its leg, skips flat-footed, and dances dreamily as though there is nothing else in the world to occupy her mind (Whitfield 154). She changes emotions on a dime, going from tears to anger to boredom to joy, just like a child whose unbridled feelings know no restraint (Whitfield 155). Pickford attributes her ability to her own lost childhood as she worked to support her family. “That phase of my life,” she recalled, “was unlived”; [my childhood] was “walled up inside of me . . . I had to express it” (Whitfield 154-155). Pickford radiated energy, spunk, and tenderness, drawing people to her and enabling them to relive their own childhoods or see in her their own children or grandchildren.

Pickford realized that her most loyal fans loved her child roles best so she continued to play them, developing new ways of appearing youthful. To appear smaller, she often acted with tall co-stars and large props, such as furniture fashioned two-thirds larger than normal (Whitfield 155). She even pioneered new ways of stopping the effects of time on her face. One morning while putting on her makeup Pickford saw that when one of her mirrors caught the morning sunlight, its reflection on her face made her look much younger, and she convinced her *Poor Little Rich Girl* director, Maurice Tourneur, to experiment (Beauchamp 67). Tourneur balked at first, until Pickford persuaded him to “Take my close-up as you usually do, then would you get me a little spot, and put it on a soapbox or something, and direct it at my face? Then you can see it in the darkroom and choose” (Beauchamp 68). Tourneur saw that Pickford was right, and the baby-spot technique became a mainstay in *Poor Little Rich Girl* and all her films that followed. Charles

Rosher, who shot every Pickford picture from 1918 to 1925, took great pains to erase evidence of the star's aging. For *Little Annie* Rooney, he made her look twelve when she was really thirty-three. According to one critic, in the 1920s, "A grown woman playing a little girl warmed hearts" (*Mary Pickford*). Americans, it seemed, had a fixation with the past and childhood.

Pickford's long golden hair was her trademark, her most distinguishing childhood feature, accounting for the nickname "Little Mary, the girl with the curls." According to Pickford biographer Eileen Whitfield, "once an adult, a woman always, *always*, wore her hair up. In public, Mary obeyed the custom. But onscreen, the tresses inevitably came loose, forming a rampant Pre-Raphaelite mass or the modest, miraculously curling ringlets, arranged like a bouquet around her face. This made her both childlike and erotic" (128). Pickford often thought about cutting her precious locks, but to please her public, she did not—until the death of her mother, which changed everything. Charlotte Pickford died at the age of fifty-five on March 21, 1928, just as sound was transforming the movie industry forever. Mary Pickford exploded in a rage, throwing herself toward a plate-glass window and striking husband Douglas Fairbanks in the mouth when he tried to catch her. She secluded herself in a room for hours, grieving, as the clock that she gave her mother struck twelve; she claimed she could never look at that clock again. Exactly three months later, to the day, Pickford entered the Charles Bock salon on East 57th Street in New York, and a stylist gave her the first haircut of her life, bobbing the hair that reached halfway down her back. According to Pickford, "I wanted to be free of the shackles of playing little girls with curls . . . I thought [cutting my hair] was one step toward it. I got the most indignant, insulting letters. I thought, 'If that's all it is, after a lifetime in the theater and motion pictures, if all it is is eighteen curls keeping me in pictures, it's about time I retired'" (Eyman 187-188). With her mother gone and talkies taking over the movies, Pickford made the decision to bury the little girl with the curls, look older and more stylish and, as Scott Eyman writes, "[mark] the end of a time that had already past" (185). Pickford never played a child again. Years later, in an autobiographical work, she speculates, "I knew I was living in a remarkable age when the world was making greater progress in thought and invention than it had in the fifty centuries preceding it. But it was not until sorrow came my way and I ached for reassurance that I began to appreciate the infinite secrets that

are being solved about ourselves and the universe around us. There is no time or space, I learned" (Pickford, *My Rendezvous* 1).

In his classic book, *Movies in an Age of Innocence*, Edward Wagenknecht assesses Pickford's importance. "I have often said," he writes, "that I do not believe anybody can understand America in the years during and after the First World War who does not understand the vogue of Mary Pickford" (Wagenknecht 11). Her narratives, which she often wrote herself, along with best friend Frances Marion, enabled audiences to turn back time, to remember what it was like to be young, alone, and searching for a sense of belonging. The little girl's stories resonated, especially, with new immigrants seeking to find their place in an urban, industrialized America. With grit, pluck, playfulness, and good will, the Pickford persona forged forward when all appeared dim, winning people's sympathy. This is the Mary Pickford that first captivated viewers, the starting image that they embraced. If films are frozen in time, silent film audiences wanted their stars to be too, for no one had quite figured out stardom yet, how to mature on the screen. In an often quoted homage, Cecil B. DeMille recalls Pickford's celebrity: "Somewhere, sometime, a phrase was born: 'America's Sweetheart.' Thousands of such phrases are born daily in Hollywood. Most of them, mercifully, die young. About once in a generation such a phrase lives, because it is more than a phrase: it is a fact. I do not know who first called Mary Pickford 'America's Sweetheart,' but whoever he was, he put into words the most remarkable personal achievement of its kind in the history of motion pictures. There have been hundreds of stars. There have been scores of fine actresses in motion pictures. There has only been one Mary Pickford" (qtd. in Lee 17). On screen, in her own life, and in the culture of America, her timing was impeccable.

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Becoming the One Who Knocks: Innovations as a Response to Social Strains in AMC's *Breaking Bad*

Following Hank Schrader's brief comparison of cockroaches and criminals at a family barbeque, Walter White asks his brother-in-law the pivotal question presented throughout five seasons of AMC's *Breaking Bad*: "Where do they come from? Criminals like the one you . . . I mean, what do you think makes them who they are?" ("Breakage"). As a show delineating a cancer-stricken chemistry teacher's transformation into New Mexico's largest methamphetamine manufacturer, *Breaking Bad* provides its viewers a unique (and often humorous) commentary on criminality in America that analyzes the motivations behind lawless action throughout many of its episodes. The pilot opens by presenting Walter as a man with little to no autonomy in his life: his family is controlled by his overbearing wife, Skyler; he works two jobs in which he is consistently disrespected; he is burdened by his financial situation; and he has been recently diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. Emasculated and oppressed by a capitalistic society, Walter is a socially strained archetype: an everyman for the recessionary twenty-first century. As David R. Koepsell and Robert Arp suggest, "*Breaking Bad* emerged on the airwaves at a critical time in American history. Deep in a never-end[ing] recession, losing confidence with our technical and innovative prowess worldwide, outpaced by competitors, and nervous about the future and what we leave the next generation, we are all Walter White" (vii). However, unlike many individuals negotiating difficult economic times, Walter refuses to continue living his life feeling that he lacks free will; as a result, he turns to a life of crime in an effort to cope with his painful situation. His journey throughout five seasons of *Breaking Bad* consists of circumventing arduous social structures in an effort to provide for his family and discover a sense of freedom in a highly commercial society. As Walter suggests, to be successful in America an individual must "get out in the real world and . . . kick that bastard as hard as you can right in the teeth" ("Better Call Saul"). Unable to do so conventionally, Walter achieves this aim by cooking methamphetamine, becoming a successful drug lord, and giving Albuquerque, New Mexico, a serious case of meth mouth.

Towards the conclusion of the pilot episode, Jesse Pinkman and Walter have a brief discussion concerning the chemistry teacher's atypical decision to begin a criminal lifestyle:

JESSE. Tell me why you're doing this. Seriously.

WALTER. Why do you do it?

JESSE. Money, mainly.

WALTER. There you go.

JESSE. Nah, come on man. Some straight like you, giant stick up his ass all of a sudden, at age sixty is just gonna break bad? [...]

WALTER. I am awake. ("Pilot")

Breaking Bad, at its very core, is a show about socialization and society's views of success. Achieving hegemonic masculinity through economic productivity serves as a focal point for plot and character development in the series, as the corrupting influence of the American Dream pressures Walter to only think in terms of financial success (Stephenson 211). Because he fails to meet criteria required by society's aspirational references (i.e., the culturally defined goals and interests of a particular population), the need for financial stability becomes an alienating social construct that forces Walter into a socially strained existence. Summing up this experience, Walter bemoans,

my wife is seven months pregnant with a baby we didn't intend. My fifteen-year old son has cerebral palsy. I am an extremely overqualified high school teacher. When I can work I make \$43,700 per year. I have watched all of my colleagues and friends surpass me in every way imaginable, and within eighteen months I will be dead. ("Bit By a Dead Bee")

Throughout the show's five seasons, wealth becomes analogous to freedom and financial stability becomes a crucial factor for keeping Walter alive following his diagnosis of terminal lung cancer. Desperately desiring autonomy, Walter awakens from his socially induced intolerable situation by circumventing the institutionalized means for obtaining economic security through deviant channels.

Robert K. Merton, in his seminal work "Social Structure and Anomie," provides a theoretical framework for understanding both the life Walter desires and the social strain he endures on a daily basis:

It is only when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain *common* symbols of success *for the population at large* while its social structure rigorously restricts or completely eliminates access to approved modes of acquiring these symbols *for a considerable part of the same population*, that antisocial behavior ensues on a considerable scale . . . [because] frustration and thwarted aspiration lead to the search for avenues of escape from a culturally induced intolerable situation. (680, Merton's emphasis)

Walter is socialized to desire an opulent lifestyle; however, he does not have the proper means to obtain it as a high school chemistry teacher and a carwash clerk. His aspirations greatly exceed his agency, and because he has been inculcated with ideologies of material success inherent in the American Dream, he remains dissatisfied with his position in society because he believes he has "nowhere to go but up" ("Full Measure"). He is forced to work a menial job in which he feels consistently emasculated by his boss, and he cannot find satisfaction as a high school teacher because he is overqualified; fails to reach his students; and is often disrespected. As a result, Walter becomes socially strained and is induced to adjust to his painful existence by finding alternative means to fulfill his desires.

Merton delineates five coping strategies individuals use to alleviate social strain: conformity, innovation, ritualism, rebellion, and retreatism. Conformity occurs when an individual accepts both the cultural goals and the institutionalized means for acquiring the society's aspirational references; this is the most common and widely diffused class. Walter begins the series as a conformist by working two jobs in order to provide for his family and procure financial stability. However, *Breaking Bad* ultimately presents conformity as inadequate because it fails to provide Walter the affluence he desires and challenges his conceptions of masculinity in both the home and workplace. Therefore, Walter chooses to innovate. Innovators, the prime interest of criminologists, accept wealth as an ultimate goal but find the conventional means of procurement either inadequate or unavailable. The innovator commits crimes to acquire society's aspirational references because "unrelieved ambition may eventuate in illicit attempts to acquire the dominant values" (Merton 680). Typically, ritualists do not have proper avenues for achieving the cultural ideals of society;

however, they maintain the institutionalized norms, and painstakingly work toward unachievable goals. Rebels abjure the dominant notions of success and, in turn, substitute new goals and standards in its place. Finally, retreatists—because they perceive society’s goals as unachievable—reject both the cultural aspirations and the institutionalized means by completely dropping out of society. Such individuals constitute the clientele of Walter’s illegal enterprise: i.e., the addicts that use methamphetamine as a means to escape their world of strife.

By focusing the plot of *Breaking Bad* on Walter’s impeded pursuit of financial security, Vince Gilligan presents his decision to cook methamphetamine as the product of social strain. Socialized to strive for the symbols that equate wealth and status in American society but unable to achieve them through conventional channels, Walter turns to crime as an avenue for obtaining the financial stability he so greatly desires. In this sense, *Breaking Bad* justifies the criminal actions of Walter by presenting the social world he navigates as a catalyst for strain that motivates his criminal innovation. He becomes an anti-hero for Americans struggling financially during the great recession as he successfully circumvents an arduous social structure that impedes his success (Koespall and Arp ix). His strain is indicative of a noxious value system produced by America’s unbridled commitments to the American Dream: a frame of reference that forces many individuals to cope with criminality (Stephenson 211).

As an alienating social construct, the American Dream establishes two major pieces of a rigid social structure individuals must negotiate in an attempt to find prosperity. First, the symbols that equate wealth and status in the United States instill an aspirational reference within the population at large: i.e., its ideology socially constructs common goals, interests, and purposes for all Americans. As a result, the mythos of the American Dream constructs lofty aspirations within the populace that are economically unattainable to most Americans. In order to acquire these symbols of success, Americans must negotiate the second element of the social structure: the permissible means for acquiring wealth and success within a particular society. Because the aspirational references perpetuated by the mythos of the American Dream are by definition inaccessible to many, the regulatory norms that dictate their realization (e.g. adequate paying jobs) ostracize a large segment of the population and ultimately perpetuate social strain.

Unhappy with a social structure that impedes his needs and desires, Walter alleviates his social strain in *Breaking Bad* through innovation and gains autonomy throughout the show's five seasons by embracing his deviant alter-ego: Heisenberg.

Walter's social strain derives from two primary channels: his anxiety concerning his family's economic stability in the wake of his recent diagnosis and various insecurities stemming from his conceptions of hegemonic masculinity in both the home and workplace. After learning that he has terminal lung cancer, Walter estimates that he must earn \$737,000 dollars to secure his family's financial well being in the case of his untimely death ("Seven Thirty-Seven"). In addition to money for "college tuition . . . health insurance for [Skyler] and the kids . . . gas, birthdays, and graduations," Walter's medical bills create a large burden on him and his family ("I.T.F"). In "Cancer Man," Walter suggests that he has to pay his doctors "\$5,000 to tell [him] what [he] already know[s]," and his health insurance fails to cover much of the cost for adequate treatments for his condition. Economic hardship resulting from medical expenses is a persistent theme in *Breaking Bad*—and rightfully so—as "the rapid growth of health expenditures is one of the most important economic trends in the United States in the post-World War II era" (Fuchs 973). Americans have many reasons to be dissatisfied with the current health care system: one-sixth of the population lacks health insurance, costs are 150 to 200 percent of those in other economically advanced nations, and these additional costs fail to improve the quality of care (Menzel 582). As a result, out-of-pocket (OOP) medical expenditures are creating greater economic strains on families in America; 12 percent of adults with insurance tend to see OOP expenditures that exceed 10 percent of their income (Yu and Dick 2025).

Breaking Bad presents the burden of OOP expenditures as the primary stressor in Walter's life that encourages him to cope through criminal channels. He quickly learns that his health plan is not absolutely optimal for covering the best cancer treatments and that many patients go bankrupt waiting to be reimbursed for medical expenses. These financial struggles are consistent with current research evaluating health care expenditures for patients diagnosed with cancer. Chastek, et. al. suggest that "cancer in the United States has been identified as the second most costly medical condition after heart disease. As a result of the dramatic increase in cost and extent of care, annual direct cancer costs are projected to rise from \$104 billion in 2006 to \$173 billion in 2020 and

beyond" (75). Within six months before death, a typical cancer patient can incur a mean of \$74,212 OOP expenses via both inpatient and outpatient services (Chastek et. al. 77). These findings are congruent with the social strain illustrated in *Breaking Bad*. Walter receives his first medical bill in the mail for "\$13,000 and counting" three days after his first treatment, and he quickly estimates that he will eventually accrue \$90,000 OOP expenditures as a result of his recent diagnosis ("Breakage").

Walter's terminal cancer and OOP expenditures ultimately give him a grim outlook towards his future and foster negative emotions towards the social structure. In a pivotal scene in the series, Walter waits at Oncology Partners New Mexico as a receptionist prints out his extensive bill. Walter, seemingly shocked by the cost of his treatment, questions whether his cash payment discounts have been applied. Emasculated and ashamed, he is quickly told by the receptionist that they indeed have and that various payment plans are available to reduce the financial burden of treatment. As Walter walks away in disbelief, the receptionist hands him a button with the phrase, "Hope is the best medicine" written across its face. Walter subsequently leaves his oncologist, looks down at the message, smirks, and tosses the button in the trash ("Breakage"). This scene is interesting, because *Breaking Bad* presents a society depleted of any hope for conventionally achieving an individual's basic needs. Instead, a socially strained individual—as presented in the series—must cope through criminal channels in an effort to maintain financial stability.

In addition to economic strain, Walter's debilitating cancer treatments greatly contend with his conceptions of hegemonic masculinity. As a consequence of his condition, he perceives his life as a series of cruel choices that he has not been permitted to make and worries that the emaciated cancer patient will be the man his family remembers following his death—a man "too sick to work, enjoy a meal, make love" ("Gray Matter"). L.M. Wenger argues that there are many intersections between gender strain and illness, and that many male cancer patients struggle with the transition from independence to a subordinate role: a man that strives to present himself "as one who is independent, unrestrained, and strong, as one who does *for* others (as opposed to *with* others) contrasts with performance standards associated with subordinate masculinities and idealized femininities including passiveness, dependence, compliance, connectedness, and vulnerability" (397). Walter's poor health, in combination with his financial struggles,

exacerbates his social strain and influences him to cope through criminality. John Stogner and Chris L. Gibson suggest that,

problems caused by poor health can lead to all three types of strain described by [General Strain Theory] . . . When access to health care is blocked or a condition cannot be ameliorated, individuals are forced to cope with these strains in some other way . . . Health related strains can lead individuals to cope in unproductive ways such as lashing out in anger, committing property offences to obtain the financial resources needed for care, using substances that mask pain, and becoming depressed. (1151)

In reaction to his health related strain, Walter copes through innovation. He teams up with his ex-student, Jesse, and begins cooking and distributing methamphetamine in an effort to secure his family's financial stability and pay his OOP medical expenses. Although Walter is forced into adhering to society's aspirational references, he quickly finds the institutionalized means, conventional labor, as substandard. Selling one pound of methamphetamine provides Walter \$35,000—almost his yearly income as a chemistry teacher. He estimates that a mere eleven drug deals can provide his family financial security for ten years after his death following his first sell to Tuco (“Seven Thirty-Five”). Furthermore, crime allows Walter to feel virile and alleviate many undesired ramifications of his chemotherapy. In “A No-Rough-Stuff-Type of Deal,” for example, Walter's impotence is seemingly cured by his deviant actions. Following sexual intercourse in the back of their car, Skyler asks Walter “where did that come from and why was it so good?” Walter, impassioned by his criminal behavior, quickly responds: “because it was illegal.” In this sense, innovation allows Walter to achieve his desire for success and reclaim his lost masculinity.

The manufacturing of methamphetamine is thus presented as the only adequate method for Walter's financial success, whereas conformity is often presented as an emasculating experience throughout the series. Because a gendered division of labor constituted the social construction of masculinity as a full time laborer that acts as a sole breadwinner for his family, any deviation from this ideology constitutes gender role strain (Messerschmidt, *Masculinities* 67). Although Walter's friends offer to help pay his bills, he ultimately refuses their aid; labeling the charity “face-saving bullshit” that he will have no part in (“Gray Matter”).

Because Walter maintains socialized gender norms, he rejects the help of others and perceives innovation as the only appropriate avenue for his success. Crime allows Walter to become the sole breadwinner of his household and he enters into the drug trade with this notion in mind. As he is told by Gustavo Fring, "What does a man do? A man provides for his family ...he does it even when he's not appreciated or respected or even loved. He simply bears up and he does it. Because he's a man" ("Mas").

Prior to his emergence as Heisenberg, Walter feels inadequate as a male defined by hegemonic masculinity: he fails as a successful breadwinner and he lacks an aggressive disposition associated with manhood. His own son calls him a "pussy," and looks to Walter's brother-in-law, Hank, as a role model ("Gray Matter"). Hank, a successful DEA agent, embodies the hegemonic masculinity Walter desires and often emasculates his brother-in-law in front of his family. In the pilot, for example, Hank teases Walter for his ineptitude of handling a firearm: "Hey, it's not gonna bite you . . . it's like Keith Richards with a glass of warm milk" ("Pilot"). Ray Bossert adds,

the entire first episode runs Walt through a gauntlet of effeminizing experiences. He is forced to wash the luxury sports car of a student who disrespects him in class . . . [and] Walt's guests ignore him at his own party to watch a television news segment on Hank's heroic drug bust. Walt's left alone with his thoughts, apart from the guests, feeling inferior to his brazen, boorish, hypermasculinized relative. (71)

Walter's only redeeming masculine quality, as suggested by Hank, is that he has a "brain the size of Wisconsin" ("Pilot"). However, Walter's peers consistently challenge Walter's intelligence and he fails to demonstrate his intellectual value as an overqualified high school teacher.

The episode, "Gray Matter," provides insight into Walter's previous aspirations through flashbacks. Prior to the events depicted throughout the show's five seasons, Walter was an influential chemist working alongside Elliot Schwartz and formed a successful pharmaceutical company called Gray Matter. However, for reasons not disclosed in the series, Walter was pushed out of the company. He was thus forced to see his colleague surpass him as "scientific man of the year" and gain all of the attribution he wanted as a chemistry student. Patrick F. Parnaby and Vincent F. Sacco argue,

the desirability of fame and celebrity status is extremely widespread and thus approximates, in a Mertonian sense, a universal success goal. Secondly, the means to achieve fame and celebrity status are unequally distributed across the social structure. By implication, this disjuncture between on the one hand, the pressure to achieve fame and personal celebration and, on the other hand, the lack of structural opportunities to do so, creates strain for those seeking a reconciliation of this means/goals gap. (3)

Although Walter desires veneration as a response to his labor, he ultimately fails to achieve this aim as a high school teacher and a poorly paid carwash clerk; therefore, feelings of inadequacy in the workplace greatly exacerbate his social strain.

Menial labor is consistently presented as an emasculating experience throughout the series, and, as a result, entices Walter to cope through criminal channels. The pilot begins by delineating Walter's typical workday. After a full day of teaching uninterested high school students, Walter is forced to work overtime at his second job, and, as a result, is late to his own birthday party. After an employee suddenly quits the carwash, Walter's boss, Bodgan, asks Walter to wipe down cars outsides. Walter, indubitably embarrassed by this demeaning job, begs his boss to let him remain running the register: "Bodgan no, we talked about this" ("Pilot"). Bodgan, however, refuses Walter's request and forces him to wipe down the Corvette of a student that previously disrespected him in class. The workplace often denies certain hegemonic masculine ideals, such as, independence, control and dominance. Many working class men find this work experience humiliating, because they are forced to engage in work relations that threaten their internalized notions of masculinity (Messerschmidt, *Masculinities* 127). The humiliation inherent in the Walter's work experience is amplified by Gilligan's use of irony via the Corvette, as Walter's teenage student displays a higher status than him through his acquisition of an exorbitant sports car.

Not willing to succumb to the degradation of wiping down his students' cars, Walter decides to begin cooking methamphetamine. As a teacher and a carwash clerk, Walter perceives himself as a "dead man . . . artificially alive. Just marking time" ("Gray Matter"). However, Walter believes he can transform his life through chemistry: "Chemistry is the

study of matter, but I prefer to see it as the study of change” (“Pilot”). After seeing how much money methamphetamine production earns, Walter enters the drug trade with the intention of gaining status and respect. Although Walter continues to desire the aspirational reference of society, money, he perceives the institutionalized means, conventional labor, as inadequate because it denies him his conceptions of masculinity. As a result, Walter quits his job as a carwash clerk by yelling, “fuck you and your eyebrows,” grabbing his genitals, and demands that his boss “wipe down this” (“Pilot”). With this act of defiance, Walter reclaims his masculinity by refusing to succumb to the humiliation inherent in menial labor. As a result of the Walter’s attraction to crime and his lack of faith in society’s institutions, *Breaking Bad* presents conformity as an inappropriate means for acquiring life’s necessities and romanticizes innovation.

Consistent emasculation, as aforementioned, furthers Walter’s social strain and he copes through deviant channels. Because Walter fails to achieve his internalized ideal of masculinity, he experiences gender role strain and desires to reassert his masculinity through criminal channels. Crime and delinquency often result from adverse situations that are disliked by an individual and, as a result, some individuals “may become angry and strike out in rage at the source of aversion or a related target” (Agnew 156). Walter’s decision to cook methamphetamine not only stems from financial necessity, but also serves as an attempt to assert his masculinity over the men he feels have surpassed him in every way imaginable. This notion is evinced by Walter’s relationship with his brother-in-law. Hank—a perfect model of conformity—works for the DEA, is consistently promoted throughout *Breaking Bad*’s five seasons, and conventionally achieves financial prosperity and admiration. In response to Hank’s success, Walter constructs Heisenberg: a deviant alter ego that acts as a foil to his brother-in-law’s model of conformity. Messerschmidt argues that “for many men, crime may serve as a suitable resource for ‘doing gender’—for separating themselves from the feminine . . . [as] particular types of crime can provide an alternative resource for accomplishing gender and, therefore, affirming a particular type of masculinity” (*Masculinities* 84). Although Walter understands that his illegal actions are wrong and damaging to society, he justifies his criminal lifestyle by suggesting he is cooking methamphetamine for a good reason. He perceives his horrific actions as an avenue for providing for his family and successfully doing gender, as deviant activities may

correct a previous subordinating social situation (Messerschmidt, *Nine Lives* 13).

For many men that feel disenfranchised by their position in society, criminality may provide an outlet for reclaiming power and status. Individuals that engage in criminal activities, especially those associated with street culture, are inculcated with “a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behavior, particularly violence [;]” a socializing process Elijah Anderson defines as the “code of the street” (33). Anderson argues that “at the heart of the code is the issue of respect—loosely defined as being treated ‘right’ or being granted one’s ‘props’ (or proper dues) or the deference one deserves” (33). Many individuals that are prohibited from the veneration they desire circumvent the institutionalized means for conventional success and appropriate respect and status through violence. In this sense, the code of the street is implemented as a methodology for alleviating strain and alienation effectuated by various social structures that impede an individual’s ambition. The drug trade indubitably reinforces the code of the street and constructs a deviant masculinity authenticated by aggression. Fiona Hutton suggests that drug dealing “can be considered as located within a distinct subcultural world of meaning and interactions, underpinned by the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’” (546). These illegal activities, Hutton argues, invent a masculine ideal “stressing toughness, machismo, aggression and smartness. In the cultural setting of drug dealing, this is the accepted masculine ideal; to be tough, aggressive and smart” (546).

Unable to achieve the dominant notions of conventional masculinity—i.e., wealth, appreciation and eminence—Walter enters the drug trade and embraces deviant constructions of masculinity that demand status through violence. Anderson argues that conceptions of criminal masculinity derive from the “widespread belief that one of the most effective ways of gaining respect is to manifest nerve. A man shows nerve by taking another person’s possessions, messing with someone’s woman, throwing the first punch, ‘getting in someone’s face,’ or pulling a trigger” (92). Much of *Breaking Bad* presents Walter with a task of manifesting such nerve in adverse environments, which, in turn, allow him to reclaim his lost masculinity and find a sense of gratification by overpowering and outsmarting individuals that maintain a higher status. In “A Crazy Handful of Nothin,” for example, the audience witnesses Walter achieve a seemingly orgasmic release after bombing

Tuco's hideout with fulminate mercury, which, in turn, gains the drug lord's respect. For Walter, manifesting nerve allows weaker individuals to appropriate status through fear and intimidation: "You are a blowfish, small in stature. Not swift or cunning. Easy prey for predators, but the blowfish has a secret weapon. Doesn't he? The blowfish puffs up four to five times larger than usual. It makes him intimidating. Who messes with a blowfish?" ("Negro y Azul").

By cooking methamphetamine and engaging in criminal activities, Walter copes with his failed past by becoming the infamous Heisenberg. Parnaby and Sacco argue that, "the innovator engages in criminal conduct, not only to achieve material success, but also to gain social recognition" (15). As Hank suggests, "Good guys never get ink like the bad guys do" ("I See You"). In becoming Heisenberg, Walter gains notoriety as a large player in the methamphetamine business and his name is eventually linked to a high quality product: his methamphetamine has a unique blue hue and has a purity exceeding 99%. The demand of Walter's product gives him a sense of pride that he previously lacked, and, as a result, he refuses to quit cooking methamphetamine or lend his name to an inferior product. Through the manufacturing of methamphetamine, Walter acquires the financial stability he greatly desires and claims Albuquerque, New Mexico, as his "territory" by appropriating respect through the construction of a deviant masculinity ("Over"). As a result, Walter achieves his previous aspiration to become a master of crystallography even though the social structure forces him to do so through criminal channels.

Walter's venture into the methamphetamine business is a response to feelings of social strain. His journey, throughout five seasons, is a quest for autonomy through the outright rejection of social institutions. Through innovation, Walter circumvents an arduous social structure, successfully provides for his family, and reclaims his lost masculinity. Summing up this transformation, Walter appropriately boasts towards the close of season four:

who is it you think you see? Do you know how much I make in a year? I mean, even if I told you, you wouldn't believe it. Do you know what would happen if I suddenly decided to stop going to work? A business big enough that it could be listed on the NASDAQ goes belly up. Disappears. It ceases to exist without me. No, you clearly don't know who you are talking to. So, let

me clue you in. I'm not in danger, Skyler. I *am* the danger. A guy opens his door and gets shot. You think that of me? No, I *am* the one who knocks. ("Cornered")

By focusing *Breaking Bad's* plot around Walter's lawless pursuit of wealth, Vince Gilligan created a series that advocates the American dream while simultaneously negating its achievement through conventional channels. Walter becomes a successful man by breaking free of institutionalized norms and appropriating his society's aspirational references through the distribution of methamphetamine. Because of this, *Breaking Bad* exposes the motivations that lead many individuals to venture down a path of crime and successfully critiques criminality in America as a response to social strain.

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Who is the Man with No Name? Names and Namelessness in Western Fiction

Introduction

The “Man with No Name” motif has become almost mythical within the Western genre of literature and film. The figure has different literary/cinematic uses, most notably in Owen Wister’s, *The Virginian* and the films of Italian director Sergio Leone. This motif seems exclusive to westerns for many reasons that connect to both the real and fictional West and to the importance of the west as a meeting place between civilization and the wild, how names signify differently in each, and the desire for self-determination in the characters of Wister and Leone. The motif is more dramatic than meaningful, however, since literary and filmic names are largely labeling devices, with no true connection to a character’s observable identity. This paper discusses the setting, motivations, and results of the “Man with No Name” motif’s use in literature and film.

In the opening scene of *A Fistful of Dollars* (Leone, 1964), as in many earlier western tales, a man rides into town. The townspeople look him over; he’s an unknown. He looks unlike the strangers who have come before. He’s wearing a filthy poncho instead of a neatly laundered outfit. His old, flat brimmed hat is no Stetson. He sports a scraggly beard. He has no glittering star, no gleaming pistol, no shining smile. He rides a mule instead of a trusty steed and wraps a scowl around a cheap, short cigar. He’ll soon kill four men, ostensibly for scaring the mule. He’d be the perfect image of the western heavy, except for one point: he’s the “hero.” The biggest difference from the norm—he gives no name, and doesn’t seem to have a use for one.

The “man with no name” motif is one associated with relatively few films and books: most notably, Sergio Leone’s first four westerns, Clint Eastwood’s *High Plains Drifter* (1973), and at least one very famous novel, Owen Wister’s *The Virginian*. Despite that, the motif is instantly recognizable—even by people who don’t like westerns—decades later. Its mention evokes the image of a dangerous man cloaked in an extra layer of mystery. Once examined, however, it is apparent that rather than intensifying the mystery, this motif exposes how names and men without them—or, like the *Virginian*, men whose names are kept

from the reader—are mere devices that have little bearing on our understanding of a character’s identity.

The Meeting Point

The “Man with No Name” theme seems to be exclusive to westerns because westerns are a genre uniquely well fit for this motif. A quick study of the American frontier, both the real west and the fictional west of literature and film, makes that plain, and Frederick Jackson Turner is as responsible as any for both perceptions. “In this advance,” Turner said, “the frontier is the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization” (60). It also happens to be the meeting place between descriptive names and family names.

Descriptive names were an integral part of native America. Names like Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse instantly provide a warrior’s image; Pocahontas was a childhood nickname, meaning roughly, “little wanton,” given her as a reflection of her playful nature. Fiction, of course, amplifies this naming convention, and so we get in Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* a plethora of descriptive names on the wilderness side: le Gros Serpent, le Cerf Agile, Hawkeye (A.K.A. Pathfinder and Leatherstocking), le Renard Subtil. These names the characters earned, and they butt up, in this story’s frontier meeting point, against distinguished family names such as Heyward and Munroe.

These are the types of names that have value in civilization—the names you are born to, not the names that come from your actions or persona. Of course, “civilized” names have descriptive elements as well, but these are far removed from the people who hold them. Few people know someone named Smith or Cooper who actually shoes horses or makes barrels. Rather than literal meanings, civilized names hold status and a sense of value; a person with one name would often, with no other data considered, be assumed to have better qualities of manner and morals than another from a different family. Much of this comes from wealth, family history and the fact that those with distinguished ancestors sometimes felt a responsibility to those ancestors and to the family name. Wister’s Mary Stark Wood is a very proud scion of the historically distinguished Stark family, a direct descendent of Molly Stark, who she admires fiercely despite never having known her. This connection by itself could gain her entry to a half a dozen or so organizations that represent the elite upper crust of 19th-century American high society. A memorial to her ancestor occupies honored wall space; every important

decision is made with a mind toward honoring the family name; and it prevents her, for a while, from even acknowledging her attraction to the Virginian. This highlights the novel's romantic leanings; the much-sought but hard-to-win high-status person of either sex is a romance novel stock character. Still, it is a realistic one; name, wealth and status often influence Cupid's aim.

People adopted different naming conventions as they moved from between social spheres, as well, or as social spheres came to them. Just as natives took aliases that suited civilized men, such as "Captain Truckee," eastern men could drop their names as they moved into the wilderness. The man alternatively called Hawkeye, Pathfinder, or Leatherstocking, all descriptive nicknames of the native style, answered just as easily to the name "Natty Bumppo." The Bumppo name was evidently not distinguished enough to worry about keeping in the west, as was the Stark name. As unimportant as a name was to Wister's title hero, it is certain that he used his real one in business dealings.

Changes in name are not a surprising result of this change in locale; the west was supposed to be a place where a man could change, and would be changed whether he wanted it or not. "In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails" (Turner 61). And, it seems, he may adopt a Native attitude or several, including one that allows him to adopt a new name in a new place and feel like a new man after some strenuous living. "In defining 'strenuousness,'" Barbara Will tells us, "[Teddy] Roosevelt championed not healthful 'balance' but 'the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife . . . which comes, not to the man who desires mere easy peace, but to the man who does not shirk from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph'—the latter being nothing less than 'the domination of the world'" (Will 296). This defined for Roosevelt the type of man at home in the west, and it certainly reflects the literary and filmic western hero. These, of course, sprang from their creators' imaginations, and few fed their imaginations as legitimately as Wister. Seeking solace from nervousness, he foreshadowed the travels that his narrator, known only as "The Tenderfoot," would make in *The Virginian*. "Wister eagerly took up the challenge and in 1885 boarded a train destined for the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming Territory, anticipating a virgin wilderness where he could be 'something of an animal and not a stinking brain alone.' The

journey would prove transformative . . ." (Will 304). Wister clearly saw the difference between east and west, civilization and frontier, beyond the mere physical, and brought that as well as his actual experiences to his novel; "As the narrative proceeds, the narrator perceives that '[c]learly this wild country spoke a language other than mine'" (305).

The literary/filmic western character reflects this perceived reality, but in a fashion more grand and dramatic. He becomes everything that the verbose, deceptive, milquetoast easterner is not. The western hero ". . . moves within a sphere of self-contained masculinity, bringing order to an unbalanced environment, writing and speaking only when he has something significant—something that *signifies*—to say. . . . Wister's novel standardizes a genre in which 'straight talk' is equated with clear judgment, moral probity, and certain masculinity" (Will 295). According to Wister's protagonist, the west is a place only for men who can do the things they do *well* (258). It's easy to understand why a writer would choose a name that signifies something—one that describes—for such a character, rather than just a family name that would not be expected to have any connection to the character outside of birth. Unlike in the eastern world of small talk, social chit-chat, false politeness and outright deceit, the western man ". . . speaks and acts as though the world and the word were stable and balanced, as though actions produced effects and words produced meanings"(295). Words produce meanings, and names are words. Both the characters and the creators have reasons for withholding or recreating such meanings.

In discussing the frontier's significance, Turner ended with these words: "And now, four centuries from the discovery of America, at the end of a hundred years of life under the Constitution, the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history" (88). As a nation defined itself in terms of the frontier, so did men go to the frontier to define themselves. This makes the frontier—the American west—a uniquely suitable setting for a Man with No Name. Of course, this means that much in the realm of science fiction could work as well. Science fiction has its own frontiers; space, the "final frontier" (*Star Trek* was partly inspired by the western series, *Wagon Train*) and the frontier of the future, of new technology (Geraghty 194). These frontiers are so strange in themselves, however, that a character's namelessness cannot add much to the narrative, and, a name that defies human naming conventions is as good as no name anyway. In order to have effect, the

Man with No Name must seem to be someone who *could* have a name we would relate to.

Both writers and characters play with namelessness in their own ways and for their own reasons. A character that keeps his name hidden from others has many possible motives. One is simply to create mystery about himself, his abilities, and his intentions, and hopefully gain an edge over any opponents. This effect is illustrated perfectly in the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (Hill, 1969) when Butch frequently stops to ask, a little more nervously each time, “Who are these guys?” that are dogging his trail. It is certainly what motivates the harmonica playing man in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Leone, 1968). The nameless man may, alternatively, be trying to hide from his past, either a criminal one or a famous one. When no one knows who a man is, he can’t be held accountable for or asked to take responsibility for anything. Such men populated Bret Harte’s mining camps. He also won’t have challengers out to make their OWN names famous, which is why famed gunfighter J. B. Books uses a fake name in *The Shootist* (Siegal, 1976). A man with no name may simply want to control his identity with a mind toward controlling his destiny—in essence, his determination to be only what he consciously decides to be. This is, perhaps, what motivates Eastwood’s thrice-filmed bounty hunter from Leone’s canon. A man may also conceal his name behind a title or alias to increase his reputation and create a legend, as did the Lone Ranger and Deadwood Dick.

Instead of running from a criminal past, a character may hide his identity in the pursuit of a criminal enterprise, as *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (Leone, 1966) doubly illustrates. When Sentenza (Lee Van Cleef), alias “Angel Eyes,” asks his rival Tuco Benedicto Pacifico Juan Maria Ramirez (Eli Wallach), “also known as ‘The Rat’” why he is using the name “Bill Carson,” the alias of a third man that Sentenza seeks, Tuco’s response is revealing to us while evasive to Sentenza. “One name is as good as another,” he says, pretending the choice was random. “Not wise to use your own name. Like you! I bet they don’t call you Angel Eyes. Sergeant Angel Eyes!” he says with a laugh, as if “Angel Eyes” was his interrogator’s real name. In contrast to Eastwood’s Man with No Name, his competitors have multiple names to choose from, as suits them at any given moment, with none being a character’s real name for certain. With two of the three main characters doffing and donning names as if hats, and never providing a name on screen—as he must have to claim Tuco’s reward on several occasions—the film consciously

juxtaposes the characters' methods of gaming their names, and thus illustrates the contrast between their deeper motives as well.

Writers and directors, of course, have motivations of their own. Wister's intent was to describe his character, to show what this character is all about, and emphasize not only those qualities but also that observational way of learning about them. Other, less important characters could be named outright, but his main character was called by a series of nicknames—only for the reader's sake, and not any other character's—to illustrate what was important about him at that point of the story. The Virginian was nameless only to the reader.

In Leone's case, there is the realization that the old motifs, some stemming from Wister's influence, were worn out. Using them, one could only make movies that had been made before, with new faces beneath the Stetsons. Out to recharge both the western itself and his place in Italian cinema, Leone created the antihero described in the introduction, one who looked different than a western hero and who acted only for himself—a man who could kill four men from one gang for the hope of a job with another. His look was just the tip of the iceberg. “As the resultant Dollars trilogy progressed,” points out Lily Parker, “it became clear that Leone was doing more than add violence and so-called ‘antiheroes’ to the western; he was increasingly subverting it both formally and thematically” (6). Not only are the “heroes” less heroic and the villains far more sadistic and insane than usual, but they all exist in a west that totally lacks the morals and codes the western form had clichéd. Parker discusses how Leone ups the ante with every new film. Referring to *For a Few Dollars More* (Leone, 1965), she says “By explicitly identifying him as a bounty hunter, Leone attributes a particularly individualist and self-profiting motivation to Eastwood's character” (Parker 13). Bounty hunters are “unheroic” enough as it is, but in the next film, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, Eastwood isn't even an honest one; “not only is Blondie a bounty hunter, he is also a conman, repeatedly collecting bounties on the same man . . . Thus it can be seen that Leone's Avaricious Hero, developed through his collaboration with Eastwood, provided a significant departure from established models of heroism within the cinematic western” (Parker 14). Frayling said of this collaboration, “When [Eastwood] got there, he became one of the few actors in movie history to fight for *less* lines. He figured, as did Leone, that the more mysterious and silent, the more interesting the character would be” (43). And, as a consequence, his few words would have more

meaning—more *signification*. This “Avaricious Hero” is strange in many ways: he minds his own business, he seldom talks, and he doesn’t answer any of the usual questions that movie characters ask about the stranger in town, including his name. Thus, a newer standard for future films is born, albeit with many of the same qualities of a much older standard.

What’s in a Name?

It’s valid to ask why namelessness in fiction should be an issue at all. Even given the fact that these characters, like real people, are normally given names at birth, and simply choose to withhold or change them, why should that matter to the audience? Names in fiction are frequently disposable. In *High Noon* (Zinnemann, 1952), everyone in town knows and fears the name Frank Miller, but would it make any difference to the story if his name had been something else? Since nothing happened in the film resulting from his being named Frank Miller, it is doubtful.

In *The Usual Suspects* (Singer, 1994) the name “Keyser Soze” is of vital importance; the entire plot hinges on the question “Who is Keyser Soze?” Yet the memorability of the name itself is due mainly to its repetition in the film and the unusual nature of the name to American audiences. The plot would work as well with the name Andrey Glubokov. Despite being an Algebra professor’s name in real life, it could still have inspired tension and mystery in the context of the film, especially as the primary audience had grown up during the Cold War. Had Andrey Glubokov been the name in the film, that is the name filmgoers would recognize today. In Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the name Ernest is really only important because it makes a pun.

In some instances, characters are named as they are for particular reasons. A name may be a device to let us know more about the character; *High Noon*’s character name, “Will Kane” labels a strong-willed man who does not bend. Specific names are also important to “mistaken identity” plots, and of course for biographical stories or those featuring historical characters. Telling the story of America’s first president means using the name George Washington, not Harrison Bergeron. Names can also have purely symbolic meaning, like those of the animals in Twain’s *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*.

Of course, such meaning can come mainly from the viewer. For example, in *Once Upon a Time in the West*, the villain's name, "Frank," is widely considered to be homage to the *High Noon* villain named Frank Miller. Considering how much *Once* refers to previous westerns, if the villain's name had been "John" it would probably be considered a hat-tip to John Wayne or (perhaps more likely) John Ford. Had it been "Steve" we may think he was invoking Wister's ill-fated character. In fact, by the year of the film's release, almost any common name could be seen as homage to some prior film or story regardless of Leone's intent.

"Mistaken identity" and historical stories, along with those that have clever thematic reasons for characters' names, are a drop in the bucket, however. They are far outweighed by those tales where names are simply a way of sorting characters. In *The Virginian*, Judge Henry refers to "the man they call Steve"—not the man *named* Steve, but the one *called* by that label (Wister 57). Once a character is labeled "Steve," we know to whom other characters are referring when they say that name. He has no special quality of "Steveness" because there is no such thing. He's Steve because we're told so, and that is all there is to his being Steve. He could easily be Bill, Peter, or Simon for all the reader cares—as long as his name remains the same throughout. Ultimately, character names are mainly useful as simple devices to help us keep the characters from becoming confused with other characters.

Still, it should be noticed that even when a name is easily replaceable, it still must make sense in the story's context. "Frank" might just as easily be named "John" or "Will," those are considered normal names for the 19th century American west, names that audience members can identify with. He could not be named "Keyser Soze" or "Jar Jar Binks" without confusion, nor could he terrify a town with a silly name like "Cookie Forbush." The name itself may not be important, but the style of name will be in any genre.

What's *Not* in a Name?

"This short cigar belongs to the Man with No Name," starts the trailer for *A Fistful of Dollars*. "This long gun belongs to the Man with No Name. This poncho belongs to the Man with No Name. The Man with No Name—danger fits him like a tight black glove. He is, perhaps, the most dangerous man who ever lived." Harping repeatedly on the fact that the man has no name for vehemence—the rhetorical ploy known as *palilogia*—the trailer sells an image: a cigar, a poncho, and a gun. He is a

man of action, danger and mystery; a man who, according to the trailer's footage, can survive several point-blank rifle shots to the chest. The viewer is meant to respond to the image and want to know more about this Man with No Name. The phrase "Man with No Name" is nothing but a long pronoun that is never used in the actual film, but only in the film's sales pitch. This pronoun is a mysterious part of the truly important thing—the selling point—the image. When agreeing to play the bounty hunter in *For a Few Dollars More*, "Eastwood did not fancy smoking a cigar again, but Leone insisted, joking 'It's playing the lead!'" (Frayling 47)

On the importance of his "Trilogy" image, Eastwood explains; "You ask most people what the films were about, and they can't tell you. But they tell you "the look" [*he mimes throwing the poncho over his shoulder*] and the "da-da-da-da-dum" [*he hums the opening notes of The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly theme*], and the cigar and the gun and those little flash images that hit you . . ." (Frayling 102). Never mind names; according to Eastwood, people don't even remember the story itself. What they carry away from the film is the same image that made them watch it in the first place. Even when a plot is recalled, it is more common for a person talking about a movie to use the actor's name rather than the character's (in contrast, of course, to literature, where the reader has no alternate name, no other "sorter" to fall back on). The image and the actor matter more to the audience than the character's name. More to the point, it is not a character's name that is normally important to a story; it is that character's identity.

Unlike a name, which is normally just a given as it is for most of us in real life, an identity is slowly and narratively revealed. It comes partly from the character's "look," or appearance/description. For Eastwood's characters (as well as Harmonica in *Once Upon a Time in the West*) the look is rough-hewn as compared to Bret Maverick's or Sherlock Holmes' or even the Virginian's. Each one evokes a different image; unkempt gunfighter, dapper gambling man, well dressed Victorian gentleman, and traditional cowboy. Other clues to identity stem from the character's mannerisms. The Man with No Name's manner is generally tight-lipped, confident, and inscrutable, with the Virginian a bit less menacingly so, while Maverick's and Holmes' different manners help similarly to define them. The greatest identifier, however, is action: what we see this character do and what we think he will do based on that. That is why names are, ultimately, meaningless,

even when they prove to be memorable—a name doesn't tell us who a character is. Only watching what this character does and how he does it tells us anything of value. In *The Bourne Identity* (Liman, 2002) we know the main character's name up front, yet the mystery remains: Who is he? This we learn as the story progresses.

In *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Frank asks Harmonica who he is. Harmonica replies with a list of names, which Frank recognizes as a list of dead men. Robert C. Cumbow notes:

Later Frank asks again and hears more names: "More dead men," he says, and the man comments, "They were alive until they met you, Frank." Harmonica emphatically uses Frank's name when addressing him. In this way, he underscores his refusal to reveal his own name, while ironically connecting Frank with the named dead rather than with the nameless quick. Indeed, nothing could be further from the point than Harmonica's name, for what Frank really wants to know is why Harmonica is dogging him. One suspects that the revelation of Harmonica's actual name would be no help at all. (69)

It may have helped Frank: he certainly seemed to have a good memory for the names of his victims. It would not help the viewer, however, who knows nothing about what happened before the film began. All the viewer knows of the Man with a Harmonica is what has been revealed through his words and actions. By the end of the film we know that he is a man who is driven, who plays his cards close to his vest. He can shoot but doesn't take chances on someone else being faster, preferring to start with an unholstered gun until the film's final showdown. He does his homework, knows what's going on, and protects endangered widows. A name that tells us any of this is difficult to imagine.

In the Virginian's case, we know that he has a name and we know that others in the story know this name. After all, no one ever wonders about it, even though the fact of his name is raised only when Mary uses it upon finding him wounded. It is clear that his name is withheld only from the reader. We still know who he is, however, because we are shown throughout the novel. In this story's course the reader meets a man quick to humor but slow to friendship and wary of

non-westerners. He is clever enough to battle with wits, master of the tall tale, and the reader suspects that he can use a gun as well, but that is not immediately confirmed. He is an honest, humble, loner with a mean mischievous streak who can nonetheless calm a crying baby and is inclined to wax philosophical. He loves animals and hates those who mistreat them. He is thoughtful, generous—even to an enemy in victory, sentimental, and handy with the ladies but faithful in love. Interested in self-improvement—literary, economic, and social—he knows that he can and should stand for something. Again, no name could tell us these things that actually matter, but the lack of one can make us look at his qualities more objectively, and without the clutter and suppositions that a famous name or a title like “Judge” might bring. He isn’t only called “The Virginian,” however; Wister dubs him with a litany of nicknames, all designed to guide us toward the point of view that is important at that moment. He is called the Southerner, the Bengal Tiger, the trustworthy man, the Lover (with “her lord” on the same page), and the bridegroom, all to point us toward the qualities in action at that time. He is even called “Jeff,” yet this tells us nothing by itself, unlike the other nicknames. The fact that he allows Steve to call him Jeff when no one else does, not only informs us that this is not his given name, but that the name itself is utterly unimportant; the friendship behind it is what matters. Rather than a man with no name, he is a man with *many* names, but only one identity.

“The Man with the Harmonica,” certainly, has a name. If he chooses to be “Harmonica” to Cheyenne and “The Man Who Makes Appointments” to Frank, it is because for him, identity means more than being called something in particular one’s entire life. Indeed, it almost seems as if Leone and his anonymous protagonists regard having a name as a weakness or at least as a distraction from true self-assertion” (Cumbow 70). An actual name would diminish the character, or at least lull the viewer away from finding his true identity in his actions. The nicknames, however, are based on those actions, and are perhaps more accurate than any other name could be, as are the Virginian’s. The latter is, in fact, quite clear about what is important—and it isn’t a man’s name—when he berates his love interest with the words, “Don’t you think pretendin’ yu’ don’ know a man,—his name’s nothin’, but *him* . . .” (85). Name is nothing, and what he means by “him” is explained much later, when the Virginian makes it clear that if his character is maligned, he owes it action:

Don't I owe my own honesty something better than that? Would I sit down in a corner rubbin' my honesty and whisperin' to it, 'There! there! I know you ain't no thief'? No, suh; not a little bit! What men say about my nature is not just merely an outside thing. For the fact that I let 'em keep on sayin' it is a proof I don't value my nature enough to shield it from their slander and give them their punishment. And that's being a poor sort of a jay. (306)

Unlike the east, where a name must be preserved for its own sake, a western man is defined only by his nature and his actions. Names are too small to define the likes of the Virginian, Harmonica, or Eastwood's various bounty hunters.

Names in fiction, then, are mainly narrative constructs, making the lack of a name a construct also. The Man with No Name construct, however, is more a result of marketing than cinema in Leone's case and a matter of clever characterization in Wister's. It can be said to not exist in the first place, as they all had names, even if they were just nicknames given them by other characters or a narrator; such nicknames still served the same function as the other characters' "real" names, that of giving them a way to refer to each other. Eastwood's adventurer in *A Fistful of Dollars* was originally called "Joe." In *For a Few Dollars More*, he was called "Monco." The knowledge that this means for "one-handed" does little if anything to help establish his identity, although a sharp-eyed viewer might connect this nickname with the fact that the character does most things with his left hand while keeping his right hand near his gun. Tuco (Eli Wallach) calls Eastwood's character "Blondie" in *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*, but we also know him as "The Good." *Once Upon a Time in the West* has, as noted above, at least three nicknames in use (including, presumably, "Cheyenne") and the enigmatic man with no name in *High Plains Drifter* (Eastwood) receives his name in the film's last moments, but only to link two actual identities: the nameless man's with the murdered sheriff's. In fact, if he had remained a man with no name, the film's major theme of revenge from beyond the grave would come to naught. The Virginian had a litany of nicknames, plus a real name that the reader need not know. The "Man with No Name," then, is

never a nameless man to begin with; he is really a man without a known background, a man who must be taken at face value until his real identity reveals itself to the audience. It is, perhaps, this fraudulence that caused the motif to become played out rather quickly in literature and film, as Leone, who previously directed under the name “Bob Robertson” for American audiences, may have acknowledged when he ended the cinematic motif in 1973 with a film called, “*My Name is Nobody*.”

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BOOK REVIEWS

Projecting Tomorrow: Science Fiction and Popular Culture

James Chapman and Nicholas J. Cull
I. B. Tauris, 2013

The first thing to be said regarding Chapman and Cull's new book, *Projecting Tomorrow* is that it is pleasure to read; in an appealing, clear and witty style, Chapman and Cull analyze twelve key science fiction films in order to trace the evolution of the genre from David Butler's *Just Imagine* (1930) all the way to James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). The result is both entertaining and highly instructive, as Chapman and Cull shed light not only upon the conditions of production of each film, such as their respective historical and cinematic contexts, but also present their socio-cultural implications and semiotic contents—smoothly shifting from contextual to textual description and interpretation. While the introduction justifies the corpus of study underlining the merits of the selected films, the afterword introduces the new cultural trends that inform the study of science fiction cinema at large, observing in particular an increasing independence of the medium vis-à-vis its traditional sources of inspiration, such as novels, plays, novellas and short stories, suggesting hence that cinema is more than ever in the process of articulating itself as a complete culturally and artistically significant narrative vehicle.

Projecting Tomorrow is an important work for several reasons; first, it represents a direct and fundamental contribution to the on-going elaboration of a popular cultural canon, for it allows us to perceive the merits of traditionally frowned upon cultural narrative products, such as science fiction films, and their influence not only on our society but also on the manner in which we understand our reality. Secondly, from a theoretical point of view, Chapman and Cull's book is nothing short than exemplary: as cultural studies are plagued by over-conceptualized jargon and often exhibit a definite disdain towards primary sources, which more often than not serve as mere pretexts to promote pre-existing ideological agendas, *Projecting Tomorrow*, on the contrary, is firmly grounded upon empirical data and leaves no room for idle, theoretically esoteric speculations. This is not to say that Chapman and Cull are not theoretically informed, far from it, but rather that their approach privileges the primary sources and remains within the scope of their

study, which makes *Projecting Tomorrow* much more informative and convincing than many current postmodern, stylistically challenged essays on popular culture.

The selection of films that Chapman and Cull choose to analyze is sound and representative of the genre, although some may question their decision to treat *Robocop* over *Blade Runner* or *Avatar* over *Matrix*—there might even be a few purists who deplore the absence of any mention made to John Boorman's, *Zardoz*. The selection of a corpus of study is no easy task and the authors of *Projecting Tomorrow* explain in their introduction the factors that led them to their choices. I personally applaud the selection of *Robocop* over *Blade Runner* and rejoice at the fact that two serious scholars have recognized the significance of this particular film—it takes more academic courage to rehabilitate *Robocop* than to rejoin the cohort of critics that have already discussed the filmic adaptation of Phillip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Analysis of *Terminator*, *Matrix* or *Zardoz* would have indeed been welcomed, but not to the detriment of any of the existing chapters. In the space allotted, the authors could simply not treat everything; hence their selections might disappoint some hard-core fans here and there, but will on the other hand satisfy any serious student and amateur of science fiction cinema.

Chapman and Cull's conception of the science fiction genre is wide and includes dystopian fiction (*Logan's Run*, *Robocop*) as well as space opera (*Star Wars*) and fantasy (*Avatar*), which naturally prompts the question of generic definition. It could be argued that *Robocop* and *Avatar* represent each a very different treatment of the relationship between reality and the narrative universe, and therefore do not fulfill the same type of function nor occupy the same space within the collective exchange—whereas *Star Wars* and *Avatar* are suited for young audiences, it would not appear recommendable to take a child to a *Robocop* retrospective. However, the authors' flexible conception of the genre allows them to address many different aspects of what is commonly understood as "science fiction" and makes *Projecting Tomorrow* a more complete essay about the importance of anti-realistic cinematic narrations in our society and upon our collective consciousness than if it were solely devoted to one specific type of science fiction. Furthermore, in these times of considerable generic disorientation, mostly rooted upon the fashionable, if ill-conceived, post-structuralist notion that "Everything is a Text," which tends to even obliterate the

distinction between fiction and criticism, Chapman and Cull's position appears remarkably well-balanced, for it allows them to treat different sub-genres of science fiction without losing either focus or direction.

Similarly, the fact that all twelve feature films the authors chose to analyze are Anglo-Saxon might seem controversial: as post-colonialist theory triumphs, affording us a comfortable manner to alleviate the guilt inherited from our imperialist ancestors, Chapman and Cull do take some risk by remaining within the White, Occidental Anglo-Saxon canon and expose themselves to the attacks of the politically self-righteous critics. What is at stake here could be described as the opposition between scholarly integrity and superficial political correctness; the authors make abundantly clear in their introduction why and how Anglo-Saxon cinema and the science fiction genre are intrinsically related, both historically and culturally, and convincingly argue the legitimacy of their selected corpus of study. It should be pointed out as well that the authors are very conscious of the contribution of non-Anglo-Saxon science fiction cinema and include Godard's, *Alphaville* or Tarkovsky's, *Solaris* in their discussion of the genre; beyond fashions and trends, Chapman and Cull let the empirical evidence do the talking, and their choice of corpus reflects the coherence of their endeavor rather than the ideological opportunism that pervades so much of today's cultural criticism.

Chapman and Cull are not only teaching us about how we projected tomorrow through twelve key popular science fiction films: they are themselves projecting what the future of cinema and cultural studies ought to be.

Daniel Ferreras Savoye, West Virginia University

The Drunken Botanist—Plants That Create the World's Great Drinks

Amy Stewart
Algonquin Books, 2013

Amy Stewart's *The Drunken Botanist* provides a botanist's perspective on the sources, advent, modern practices, and recipes of the world's most popular alcoholic drinks. Other books Stewart has penned include, *Wicked Plants* and *Wicked Bugs*. In *The Drunken Botanist*, she proceeds, "in an orderly fashion through the alphabet," discussing fermentation and distilling, infusers, mixers and garnishes. She not only lists the plant and its fermentation process, but also its history, and how other organisms such as storage, bugs, and bacteria participate. Finally, she lists terminology, recipes, and in some cases, how to grow the plant on your own. Each section examines the plant, which is the study of botany, and also a host of other scientific disciplines that reflect the complexity of creating alcoholic beverages from plants.

Examples in the fermentation and distilling section include a revolutionary way to date when certain drinks were first consumed by humans. The Agave section includes a discussion on botanist, Eric Callen who first used human feces to date human consumption which determined that maguey, a beer made from Agave, has been consumed by South Americans for at least 2,000 years. The discussion also includes mescaline and its properties, shamanic and otherwise. We learn that by law, 100% Blue Agave is tequila made in the United States and that putting worms in tequila bottles is a sales device making such products substandard.

In the section on grapes, Stewart uses a multidisciplinary approach to explain wine making, mentioning that fermentation of grapes to wine began about the time that pottery was invented and that yeast from oak trees was first domesticated to make wine. She further explains the immense importance of the properties of oak barrels in the production of wine, brandy, and whiskey, bringing chemistry into the conversation

We learn that apples first appeared after the ice age. Their genetics are so diverse that it is impossible to get two apple trees with the

same genetics from seeds, reflecting how plants left to develop on their own become genetically diverse.

While Stewart claims this is a study of the botany of alcohol production, it is, in truth, an examination through many disciplines which each reflect how important alcohol is to its consumers. Although the entries for each plant are relatively short, the information is complete in terms of our understanding these beverages whose place in culture, popular or not, is indisputable.

Susan Hoerner, University of Nevada at Las Vegas

Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry: The Social Construction of Female Popular Music Stars

Kristin J. Lieb

Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013

There is something deeper going on in Kristin Lieb's book, *Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry*, than just the work at hand. Though this work is a powerful condemnation of the process of branding human beings in the music industry, it also discusses how the process reveals a ruling lack of social values endemic in America in general. Lieb does an excellent job of defining "the problem" of being female in the music industry, where women are defined by gender rather than by talent with the result that the sexuality that keeps them successful also limits the scope and length of their careers; but as she does this we are reminded that this notion of trapping women in place has been business as usual for a long time in America.

Addressing what has been said, Dr. Leib lays out the foundations of identification theory in her book and then defines the ways in which audience, marketer and musician collaborate on building audience identity. But she also begins a discussion of how any individual builds a definition of self in general and in the process reveals a frightening dynamic. In terms of the music industry the power of "naming" seems to roll back and forth between the crowd, the moneymakers, and the artists, with a kind of inequality that condemns the female rocker as those being marketing who seem to have the least say in the matter. You would think

by defining the problem that this work would also present a strong statement in terms of how anyone could learn to step out and resist being sold a bill of goods. The potential is there and alluded to, but since very few women seem to overcome the heavy handed sense of sex for sale in rock and roll, the book gets very dark as it reminds us of how gender bias still holds women back in America as a whole.

The point made here is that the gatekeepers of this process are in control and are themselves controlled by a sense of commodification and social norms that dooms the idea of a female rocker to that of the short lived life of a sex kitten. The few examples of female rockers who do succeed on their own terms are those who learn to command how their sexuality is used and this still leaves a bad taste in one's mouth. Dr. Lieb also nicely addresses the difficulty academia has in trying to remain scientific but also relevant in contemporary culture.

She also brings to the fore the power the normalization of the notions by which girls themselves are taught to devalue themselves and how loyalty to a generalized notion of the female who is valued only by the way she sells sex can ripple through a society and cripple it in many ways.

The book provides a great arena for argument. You may not agree with the conclusions, but you will want to join the debate after reading it. Dr. Lieb leaves us with a pretty darkly deterministic view in terms of what can be done to change how women are valued for how they look and ignored in terms of what they can do. And unfortunately it's not hard to see how gender branding in the music industry is reflective of a fundamental ideological tendency that still shapes American society as a whole even today.

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Macmillan (August 2012), and “How to Use the Pop-Screen in Literary Studies” published in *The Journal of College Teaching and Learning* 7.8 (July 2010).

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Popular Culture Review

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Please note that the journal is now all electronic and all requests for submission guidelines and/or submissions should be sent to Felicia Campbell (Department of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas) at fcampbell@ccmail.nevada.edu. Documentation may take the form appropriate for the discipline of the writer; the current MLA style sheet is a useful model. The editorial staff will defer to the current *Chicago Manual of Style* to resolve stylistic differences.

The journal invites articles on all aspects of both popular and American culture. Correspondence about membership in FWPCA/FWACA, which includes a subscription to *Popular Culture Review*, should be sent to Felicia Campbell at felicia.campbell@unlv.edu.

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

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