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Professor Abnet would like to thank the editors for their hard work, camaraderie, and professionalism while preparing this edition of The American Papers. Their willingness to give freely of their time—even over summer break—to add to this institution is very much appreciated.

He also would like to commend the authors for their exceptional papers and good-natured responses to the editorial process. Drew Bahna and Kacie Hoppe deserve special recognition for serving as this volume's co-Editors in Chief as do Judson Barber, Darcy Mahoney, Elizabeth Plett, and Amanda Ritter for serving as the Managing Editors. Outside of the editorial board, American Studies Student Association member Jonathan Schreiber deserves thanks for his assistance in securing funding for this edition. Finally, Professor Abnet offers special thanks to Nereida Moreno for her work on the layout and design of this issue. Together their efforts made the production of the 2015-2016 American Papers possible.

In recognition of their contributions to the American Studies Department and this journal, the 2015-2016 Edition of the American Papers is dedicated to:

*Professor Karen Lystra
& Professor Mike Steiner*

From the Editors

Welcome to the 2015-2016 American Papers!

Our objective for this year's American Papers comes twofold. First, we chose a return to its original formatting in honor of those editors and contributors who were part of the journal's inception. Second, this edition is a standing tribute to the many faculty advisors that spent countless hours of their time to assist the students at California State University Fullerton (CSUF) over the years in making and continuing to make the journal what it has become today. Although the look and style of the American Papers may have once again changed, our mission remains the same; as writers and editors we have held up the long-standing tradition of delivering to our readership what we believe were the highest quality papers written by our undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in our American Studies Courses.

At the core of American studies lies our goal to understand American culture both nationally and transnationally through an interdisciplinary scope. Our format for this year's journal reflects this goal by traversing through the various classes that our department offers. At CSUF, the American Studies department has worked hard to develop new courses that engage students in new avenues of study such as food in American culture, technology in American culture, gaming in American culture, monsters in American culture, and several other exciting subjects to come. This year's journal features papers written for some of these new courses as well as our traditional courses involving gender, race, sexuality, popular culture and more.

Additionally this issue will feature the winner of the American Studies' Earl James Weaver prize for best essay written by a graduate student. Kacie Hoppe's "The Cultural Work of Steampunk Literature in Cherie Priest's *Boneshaker*" explores the cultural significance of steampunk literature for the modern audience.

We hope that while reading this year's journal it will engage our readers in ways it has not before. Several of our essays explore contemporary topics in American culture that are changing the discourse of earlier scholarship and adding new and exciting pathways to critical discussion and analysis. Finally, the editors in chief wish to thank our contributors and our editorial staff for their incredibly hard work in putting this all together: Darcy Anderson, Judson Barber, Paula Beckman, Jena Delgado-Sette, Lisa Eisleben, Patricia Gomez, Darcy Mahoney, Aaron Mezzano, Nereida Moreno, Ashely Ongalibang, Liz Plett, and Bahar Tahamtani. We hope that you enjoy the 2015-2016 American Papers.

Meet the Editors

Drew Bahna is currently a second year graduate student in the American Studies department and holds bachelor's degrees in both history and American Studies with honors from California State University Fullerton. Drew's research interests are in intimacy, technology, gaming, and social media and hopes to be able to find a doctoral program that will introduce him to different avenues of research associated with his interests.

Kacie Hoppe is a third-year American Studies graduate student. She completed her undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton, where she received BA degrees in American Studies and English. Her research interests include gender and sexuality, intersectionality, and steampunk. She plans to continue her work in a PhD program.

Judson Barber is a second year graduate student in American Studies at CSUF. His interests range from the cultural and social impact of prisons in America to public memory, tourism and leisure in American culture, and Star Wars. He hopes to pursue a Ph.D. after the completion of his MA.

Darcy Mahoney graduated in May 2015 from California State University, Fullerton with her bachelor's degree in Sociology and American Studies. She is now a first year graduate student at Cal State Fullerton within the American Studies department.

Liz Plett is a recent graduate of California State University Fullerton, with Bachelor's Degrees in both English and American Studies. Her primary interests in American Studies include American perceptions of Nature and how those perceptions are portrayed through literature, particularly through Transcendentalist authors. In addition to working as a managing editor for American Papers, she has also worked as a poetry editor for CSUF's DASH Literary Journal.

Amanda Ritter is a second-year American Studies graduate student. Her research interests include popular culture, failure narratives, and gender and sexuality studies. She currently serves as the Secretary for the American Studies Student Association.

Darcy Anderson received her BA in American Studies from Cal State University Fullerton and is currently pursuing her MA in American Studies at the same campus. Her areas of scholarship include Mark Twain, Monsters in American Culture, and Death, Dying and Grief in American Culture. This is her second year on the editorial board of the American Papers and she is the current president of the American Studies Student Association at CSUF.

Paula Beckman is a second year graduate student in the American Studies program. In 2013, Paula graduated Summa Cum Laude as a double major in American Studies and Women's Studies. She is currently interested in the plight, displacement, and silent

histories of Native Americans in Northern Arizona. In her free time she enjoys spending time with her dog, Scout, as well as enjoying the views of the Arizona Mesa. She plans on continuing her education in a doctoral program following her Master's degree.

Jena Delgado-Sette is a first year American Studies graduate student. She received her double major in history and American Studies from California State University Fullerton in 2015. Her research interests are early American history and the culture of crime, violence and authority in American society.

Lisa Eisleben is a senior American Studies major interested in the role of gender and family in American culture. In addition to her role in this year's edition of the American Papers, she is a Co-Vice President of the American Studies Student Associational at Cal State Fullerton. After graduation she plans to pursue a graduate degree.

Patricia M. Gomez is a second year graduate student in the American Studies department. She received her B.A. in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley in 2013. She is a first generation college re-entry student, a single mother to a student athlete and, a social activist who volunteers and mentors youth in her community. After completing her masters degree in the American Studies Program, Patricia plans to continue her activism by helping undocumented youth and first and second generation students get into college while at the same time teaching race, class and gender as a professor in the California Community Colleges.

Aaron Mezzano is a third year graduate student in the CSUF American Studies degree program. He enjoys studying popular culture, American media, and the history of leisure in the U.S. He aims to teach community college in the near future, and wishes to create a program to increase preparedness for humanities students transferring to four year universities from community colleges.

Ashely Ongalibang is a third year double major in American Studies as well as Asian American Studies. Ongalibang's involvement within the American Studies program is solely with the American Papers. Ongalibang is also an active member within the Pacific Islander community through organizations such as, SPICA (South Pacific Islander Cultural Association) and OCAPICA (Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Association).

Bahar Tahamtani received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2015, and recently joined American Studies as a graduate student with the purpose of combining her interests in psychology with historical analyses. In addition to her academic pursuits, Bahar enjoys re-watching movies and worrying about the future.

Nereida Moreno recently graduated from Cal State Fullerton with Bachelor's Degrees in American Studies and Journalism. She is currently working a reporter for Los Angeles News Group and hopes to someday become an international correspondent.

Meet the Authors

Jenny Botello was born in Mexico, raised in Texas, and currently resides in Los Angeles County as a third year student at Cal State Fullerton. As a result of her living history, the question “Where are you from?” prompts her an unreasonable degree of agony. She has no idea where her life is headed so she spends her time painting, drawing, learning about psychology, and submitting essays about America.

Bahar Tahamtani received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2015, and recently joined American Studies as a graduate student with the purpose of combining her interests in psychology with historical analyses. In addition to her academic pursuits, Bahar enjoys re-watching movies and worrying about the future.

Heaven Ocampo completed her undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton in 2015, where she received BA degrees in both American Studies and Journalism. After graduation, she has continued her work as a student employee at the Port of Los Angeles and interns at the Orange County nonprofit, Girls Inc. Heaven hopes to find work in the nonprofit sector in order to combine her cultural understanding of American society with her communication skills in order to assist an organization that she is passionate about.

Peter Stearns received his BA in American Studies at California State University Long Beach, and is currently deep into his comprehensive exam for a Master’s degree in American Studies at California State University Fullerton. Stearns wishes to forward his affinity for American Studies through teaching. He wishes to acknowledge all of the wonderful faculty and cohorts in the American Studies program at Fullerton: in particular, Elaine Lewinnek, Mike Steiner, Erica Ball, Terri Snyder, and Adam Golub, were beacons of kindness and understanding during two incredibly troubling times early in his graduate studies. Finally, gratitude to his loving family—notably his beautiful wife Alissa and son Tristan—for their support and patience.

Sara Roberts is a fourth year double major in Sculpture and American Studies. She enjoys incorporating the information learned in American Studies courses into her artwork, often challenging her viewers to examine their own preconceived notion and beliefs. Her art and research interests focus primarily on female identity and critical analysis of political and social issues. After graduating she plans to gain hands-on experience in the field of Sculpture, and then pursue her Master’s Degree in an art-related field.

Mia Calabretta is an undergraduate American Studies student planning to graduate in May of 2016. Her research interests include the Civil War, southern culture and social history. She hopes to pursue her M.A. in Public History and Museum Studies.

Raymond Ortiz graduated cum laude with his BA in history from California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), in 2011. He is a seven-time author of the Welebaethan and two-time author for the Social and Global Justice Project. Ortiz served as an editor for the 2012 Welebaethan and later as co-editor-in-chief of the 2013 publication. As a graduate student, he won the 2013 Lawrence B. de Graaf Outstanding Graduate Student Award, the 2014 Ronald Rietveld Fellowship in the Era of Abraham Lincoln, and the 2014 Don A. Schweitzer Memorial Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Ortiz co-founded the Cultural and Public History Association at CSUF in 2013, where he served two terms as president and founded Voices, Journal of Cultural Studies.

In fall 2014, Ortiz completed his MA in history, focusing on United States gender and sexuality in which he researched male suffragists of the American Woman's Suffrage Movement. His thesis, Ladies and Gentle Men: The Men's League for Woman's Suffrage and its Liberation of the Male Identity, delves into the proponents of the eponymous organization and masculinity at the turn of the twentieth-century.

Gareth O'Neal is a graduate student in the CSUF English department studying Absurdist and Medieval Literature. He graduated from Fullerton in 2015 and holds two Bachelor's, one in Comparative Literature and the other in French modern language. He writes one sentence horror stories and is a master of technology 200 years obsolete. Gareth is also a brony, as are his mother and brothers. Brianna Flores completed her undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton in 2015, where she received a BA degree in American Studies. She plans to attend law school in 2016.

Alexis Demandante completed her undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton in 2015, where she received BA degrees in American Studies and Broadcast Journalism. She is currently working for a marketing agency in El Segundo, CA.

Drew Bahna is currently a second year graduate student in the American Studies department and holds bachelor's degrees in both history and American Studies with honors from California State University Fullerton. Drew's research interests are in intimacy, technology, gaming, and social media and hopes to be able to find a doctoral program that will introduce him to different avenues to research associated with his interests. He also served with Kacie Hoppe as Co-Editor in Chief for this volume of the American Papers.

Kacie Hoppe is a third-year American Studies graduate student. She completed her undergraduate work at Cal State Fullerton, where she received BA degrees in American Studies and English. Her research interests include gender and sexuality, intersectionality, and steampunk. She plans to continue her work in a PhD program.

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Course Descriptions

The following is a list of the courses and their descriptions from which the articles in this journal were written for.

AMST 201 - Introduction To American Studies With the concept of culture as a unifying principle, focus is on four separate time periods in order to provide the framework for an understanding of American civilization. Several different kinds of documents will be used to illustrate the nature and advantages of an interdisciplinary approach.

AMST 350 - Seminar In Theory & Method of American Studies To provide an understanding and appreciation of methodology, theories of society and images of man as they affect American Studies contributions to scholarship.

AMST 401T - Proseminar in American Studies: Culture and Commerce of American Music analyzes the creation and consumption of American popular music from the mid-nineteenth-century to the present. Topics include: music and social change; censorship and patriotism; music and globalization; corporatization in the music industry; and gender politics in music videos.

AMST 401T - Proseminar in American Studies: Stories of Los Angeles Examines how people have told stories about Los Angeles. Los Angeles is repeatedly represented, fantasized, and forgotten, famously divided and sprawling, renowned for both sunshine and noir -- and it is also the setting for most of our lives, so its contradictory stories are well worth exploring.

AMST 409 - Consumer Culture Consumerism in America, from the Boston Tea Party to today, from an interdisciplinary perspective using literature, music, clothing, advertisements, and consumer-based social movements to analyze the power of consumer culture.

AMST 418 - Food in American Culture Investigates food and identities in America, including explorations of American ethnic food, the industrialization of food, and contemporary food movements. We examine food both in terms of how it is produced – farming, marketing, distribution – and what it produces – sustenance, community, and identity.

AMST 428 - American Monsters An interdisciplinary study of the monster in American culture. The course examines monsters in historical and cultural context, looking at how they resonate with broader issues, fears, and anxieties surrounding nature,

science, gender, sexuality, race, the body, and the nation. Students analyze images of monstrosity in film, literature, folklore, television, material culture, public ritual, and performance art.

AMST 442 - Television and American Culture American television as an interactive form of cultural expression, both product and producer of cultural knowledge. Examines the structure and content of television genres, and social-historical context of television's development and use, audience response, habits and environments of viewing.

AMST 447 - Race and American Popular Culture Using popular culture as a lens, this course examines literature, theater, sport, music and film, and asks: how has popular culture contributed to and challenged the social construction of race and ethnicity in the United States?

AMST 468 - Culture in Turmoil: 1960's America Origins, manifestations, and continuing significance of the turbulence in American culture associated with the 1960's. Accelerated changes which occurred (or seemed to occur) in cultural meanings of authority, achievement, patriotism, sexuality, technology, and consciousness.

AMST 502T – Graduate Seminar: Public Memory Analyzes narratives of the past encapsulated in museums, memorials, historic preservation sites, living history projects, and popular culture. Emphasizes the cultural politics and packaging of public memory and tensions between national identity and local, ethnic and regional identity narratives.

AMST 401T - Proseminar in American Studies: American Literature and Culture
Weaver Award Course

This seminar considers the significance of literature as a complex cultural document. The guiding assumption for the seminar is that creatively and/or imaginatively written narratives are intrinsically multivalent expressive forms of culture: they are stories we tell ourselves to share, probe, and critique our cultural understandings of the world(s) we live in. In this seminar, we consider these cultural texts within the overlapping cultural contexts of production (the cultural positioning of the author) and reception (the cultural location of audiences, focusing on circumstances of reading and reader responses, including controversy and censorship); through “re-tellings” in other mediums of creative expression; and in terms of your own understandings as individual readers who are variously positioned but commonly situated in our twenty-first-century cultural moment. As a research methods seminar (AMST 401T), we explore the multiple angles of research and analysis that are necessary to fully understand works of literature as expressive forms of culture.

201: Introduction to American Studies

Almost Over the Edge: Analyzing the Angst of Young America

By Jenny Botello

This essay was written for a general education American Studies class with Dr. Susie Woo. I have always taken great interest in psychology and noticed that there are many similarities between how a human's mind and life itself reacts to things. Themes repeat themselves over and over again in a symbolic fashion. I wanted to illustrate this reoccurring pattern by comparing the reaction of young America when faced with restrictions and the actions taken by most young adults when demanding independence.

Young adults have always seemed to go through the same phases: a desire for independence, a need for individual identity, and a resentment towards authority.¹ There is a deep connection between a youth's innate need to rebel and the angst that blossoming America experienced. The need for rebellion is typically ignited within the turmoil of complex and layered emotions. When resolving these emotions, one is forced to analyze — sometimes for the first time — what he or she was raised to believe. This results in changes within one's personal beliefs and positions on issues, which later leads to contradicting behavior and hypocritical actions. The universal stages of maturing — resolving internal and external conflicts to gain and continuously improve one's independent identity — are strikingly similar to that of a young nation on the brink of independence, and it was these particular similarities that were vital for the success of the revolution and the future of America.

As aforementioned, America's rebellion was not initiated by a singular feeling, but sparked by a compilation of emotions. Anger was the yellow flicker; it was the most visible and initiating reaction. This was the result of a perceived threat on America, her loved ones, her property, and most importantly, her self-image.² There was shame; a feeling of inferiority to be belittled by the mother country and to be treated like a feeble-minded child in front of her foreign "peers." Thomas Paine recognized this shame and addressed it in *Common Sense*. He tactfully used this to fuel his argument in that America was no longer the helpless babe she once was, and that there was no need for this feeling of shame because "she no longer needed Britain's help."³ It is because of all these negative feelings that America began to reject her childlike attachment to Britain to clear the way for a more autonomous path ahead.

Once the source of her feelings was identified and accepted as true, America could begin to address her issues. However, without a solid idea of where her future would lie, some part of her felt relieved that Britain was still there to oversee the course of her existence. Paine

recognized that whatever fear America had of independence was the product of the unknown and was likely what prompted him to write a detailed plan of how their new government could be.⁴ Paine did not care if America thought his ideas were terrifically novel, sustainable, or even rubbish altogether. This man just wanted her to realize that the possibility of a new government was there, in her hands. Paine wanted to assuage her fears of potential independence by introducing the concept of free will and self-enrichment.

Due to this guided epiphany, America was able to visualize a way out of Britain's control and therefore take initiative for latter "stages of rebellion to get the separation and differentiation and autonomy [she] need[ed] to undertake [the] next momentous step;" to officially declare her independence.⁵ It would not matter if she stumbled at first, or even failed completely, because it would have been her actions and her actions alone that led her into that situation. This would result in the immensely satisfying right of constructing her own solutions.

Unfortunately, like any other developing being, America began quite flawed. Claims and accusations of hypocrisy ran rampant. How could the founding fathers fervently write about the sweet flavor of justice and unalienable equality for all when the writers themselves had a slave looming over them with a lamp to provide his masters light? The irony was ludicrous and the founding fathers knew it as well. So, why exactly did these educated men ignore what must have been a huge cognitive dissonance? They were notably influenced and had positive relationships with declared feminists and civil rights activists, so surely there had to have been debate about where women, slaves, and the poor would stand in the future America.^{6,7}

Perhaps the pressure of limited time and unlimited threats forced them to wrap everything up as quickly as possible. In order for this to happen, there must have been compromises and temporary solutions to other issues of ethics. Consequently, the America we know today is still severely flawed. Americans are still debating about gender equality, rights for minorities, and legal acknowledgement. As discouraging and seemingly antiquated as these flaws are, they do not define America. If anything positive at all, it demonstrates just how human she is. America gained her independence and had entered into an unknown dimension of freedom. All she knew was who she did not want to be, but had yet to discover how she would establish herself as an independent identity. She would continue to live her new life through trial and error, with times of prosperity, depression, discovery, and changing opinions.

It is comforting to know the depth and complexity of America — to know that she is not a flat character incapable of change. As she evolved, she quickly realized that by staying with her British parent she would not be able to experience this type of growth. Yes, she is flawed, but her rebellion demonstrated that she has the ability and opportunity to improve, making her an ever-changing living force. This pushed her to become independent and avoid the fate of living in her parents' basement where she would have decayed into a state of mindless vegetation.

¹ Carl E. Pickhardt Ph.D., "Rebel with a Cause: Rebellion in Adolescence," *Psychology Today*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/surviving-your-childsadolescence/200912/rebelcause-rebellion-in-adolescence>, Accessed February 23, 2015.

² Jeanie L. Davis, "Teenagers: Why Do They Rebel?" *WebMD*, <http://www.webmd.com/children/features/teenagers-why-do-they-rebel?page=3>, Accessed February 23, 2015.

³ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*. (Philadelphia: 1776).

⁴ Paine. *Common Sense*.

⁵ Davis, "Teenagers: Why Do They Rebel?" *WebMD*.

⁶ Woody Holton, "The Battle Against Patriarchy That Abigail Adams Won," in *Revolutionary Founders*, ed. Gary B. Nash and Ray Raphael. (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 273-287.

⁷ Author Unkown, "Truth v. Myth: The Declaration of Independence." *The Historic Present*, <https://thehistoricpresent.wordpress.com/truth-v-myth-the-declaration-of-independence/>, Accessed February 23, 2015.

350: Theories and Methods

Saved From the Titanic

By Bahar Tahamtani

This paper was written for Theories and Methods following an in-depth discussion on the shift in cultural ideals regarding manhood at the turn of the century. I was given an assignment in which I was to conduct archive research for primary documents between 1890-1914 and analyze them within their historical context. I found the Titanic to be an appropriate topic since it is famously associated with the “women and children first” code of conduct in dangerous situations. I wanted to analyze changes in white male superiority and the ways in which they influenced the American public’s interpretation of the disaster. I hope you, the reader, will finish this paper with your own sense of curiosity regarding cultural ideologies and how they impact the way people are viewed.

On April 10, 1912 the R.M.S. Titanic set sail from Southampton, England to embark on her maiden voyage to New York City. With the capability to stay afloat with up to four of her sixteen watertight compartments flooded, the ocean liner was touted by the White Star Line as the safest ship ever built. In fact, the ship was considered to be so safe that there were only enough lifeboats for half of the passengers and crew on board (even those were thought to be a waste of deck space). Then, four days into the voyage when the ship struck an iceberg, not only did 52,000 tons of steel sink into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean, over 1,500 people perished into a watery grave as well. In the wake of the disaster, upper-class men were hailed as heroes for staying on board the sinking ship so that others deemed less socially worthy could survive. Some people applauded Christianity for instilling in these men the spirit of self-sacrifice and bravery, while others treated panic as strictly a lower-class predisposition. A couple weeks after the disaster women launched a movement to have a monument built to honor the men, and with that they contributed to growing discourse that linked the disaster to an evolving ideal of what it meant to be a man in an emerging modern society.

In *Manliness and Civilization*, Gail Bederman analyzes the shift in cultural ideals of manhood at the turn of the century. Victorian assumptions of “self-restrained manliness” distinguished by bravery, eloquence, and high mindedness were challenged by ideals of “masculinity” shaped by a contradictory set of traits: “aggressiveness, physical force, and male sexuality.”¹ While masculinity had been held as something inherent in all men, the notion of manliness was reserved strictly for middle- and upper-class white men. As the nineteenth-century came to a close, however, the ideal of manliness began to merge with the ideal of masculinity. As a result, “civilized manliness”, characterized by self-control and discipline now became linked with “primitive masculinity”, defined by aggression and combativeness.² For upper-class white men who remained on board the Titanic, their wealth transformed them into

honorable heroes whose chivalric self-sacrifice and use of aggression to maintain the rule of “women and children first,” showed that they were both more manly and more masculine than men from the third class.

One account that came to represent the nobility of upper-class men was that of Major Archibald Butt, the man who helped the last woman escape from the Titanic, and — as the newspaper headlined — “bravely stood aside.”³ Marie Young recalled Butt’s “good brave face” smiling down as she was lowered in the lifeboat Butt had helped her into, “the sight of that man, calm, gentle, and yet as firm as a rock; will never leave me.” Butt kept the peace by calming panic-stricken women with a “cool and manly firmness”, but also kept those in lower classes in their place. “Sorry,” he was reported to have said to a hysterical man running toward the boat, “Women will be attended to first or I’ll break every damned bone in your body.”⁴ Here was military gallantry defending women of all types from the panic-stricken selfish male proletariat. Not only did Butt’s wealth transform him into an honorable hero, his self-sacrifice validated the superiority of wealthy white men.

Reverend R.A. Barnes, praising Christianity and manhood for saving the “weak” on board the Titanic, questioned how different the end result would have been if the ocean liner had not been filled with individuals from “truly Christian lands”. “The strongest men would have fought their way to the life boats,” he said, “and the weak would have perished.”⁵ Barnes celebrated upper-class white men for opting for honor through the opportunity of self-sacrifice, and by doing so they were depicted not only as manlier than other male passengers, but more masculine as well. Here a great deal of wealthy white men surrendered their spots in lifeboats not only for the women and children in the first class, but also for the “cowards in steerage.”

Discourse about the sinking juxtaposed bravery and fear, order and disorder, selflessness and selfishness. But also became intertwined with other opposites: manly and unmanly, rich and poor, white and foreign. Rather than an emotional state deriving from circumstances of a particular situation, panic was depicted as a predisposition specific to those of the opposite gender or of different cultural and racial backgrounds. At the same time, bravery and chivalry were associated exclusively with white males. In a piece from the *New York Times*, fright and panic became attributed solely to foreign and lower class passengers. “All disorderly conduct,” the article claimed, “occurred among the steerage passengers. Some of the men were determined to save their own precious lives, in spite of the orders to let the women and children go first.”⁶ Disregarding language barriers, a severely low number of crewmembers in proportion to third-class passengers, and a dangerous position within the bottom of the ocean liner itself, the article emphasized the lack of bravery amongst foreign and lower class passengers. Upper-class white men, however, were depicted as stepping aside courageously to die so that the lower sex and classes could live. However, the statistics for the death toll reveal a significant discrepancy between upper- and lower-class survival rates in relation to what was being reported.

The final figures point to a 93 percent survival rate amongst first-class women, compared with 80 percent in second class and 46 percent in third class. As for the men, 31 percent of those in first-class were saved, compared with 9 percent in second class and 13 percent in third class. In all, 61 percent of the first-class passengers survived, compared with 45 percent of second-class passengers and only 25 percent of third-class passengers.⁷ Many newspapers ignored the fact that more men in the third class died in comparison to men in first class, but it is important to note that this was during a time when

immigrant working men were challenging middle-class men's authority through protests and labor strikes.⁸ As the strength of socialist and anarchist movements increased, middle- and upper-class white men began to fear losing control of the country, in turn reinforcing the focus on manhood. Additionally, a rising interest in celebrity meant that newspapers cast the spotlight on stories that involved fame and wealth, especially one in which the wealthy and famed stepped aside so that far less significant individuals may live. As a result, the story that ended up being told most often was one that demanded gratitude from the lower class and women toward upper-class white men.

Within two weeks of the disaster some women organized to launch a movement to build a monument as a tribute to "heroic manhood."⁹ Natalie F. Hammond, the Memorial Fund's secretary, enlisted numerous wives of rich men, and women's clubs held fundraisers to appeal to the general public to increase donations. Expanding on the purpose of the monument, an editorial for the *New York Times* stated, "the present endeavor has for its object something which will commemorate the bravery and self-sacrifice of men who far at sea on a starlit night stepped aside to die that women might live."¹⁰ While there was a great deal of pride in the fact that women independently organized a monument of such a large scale — and of such national importance — the memorial nevertheless reinforced the doctrine of separate spheres. The level of independence demonstrated by the women who organized the construction of the memorial ultimately served to reestablish their position of dependence, because the monument also reestablished the restrictions of womanhood by affirming men's roles as protectors.

The sinking of the Titanic was not a catalyst for the shift toward modernity in America — the transition was well underway when the ship struck the iceberg. But the disaster did serve to redefine what it meant to be a man in a modernizing society. The American population interpreted the disaster through two ideologies that contradicted one another, but intertwined to form new meaning. The Victorian ideal of "moral manliness" became linked to the ideal of "primitive manliness," and while the sinking of the ship was unlike anything many readers ever experienced, class and gender discrimination were nothing new. However, it was through these two evolving ideologies that these practices were not only justified, but also came to validate white male superiority at the turn of the century.

¹ Gail Beaderman *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 19.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

³ Author unknown, "Butt's Heroism Prevented Panic," *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 20, 1912, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ R.A. Barnes, "Christianity and Manhood Triumph," *New York Times*, 1912, 3.

⁶ "The Drift of the Testimony," *New York Times*, April 20, 1912, 14.

⁷ Gough-Calthorpe, Arthur, Clark, and A.W. Clark. "Report on Loss of the Titanic," *British Board of Trade Inquiry*, July 30, 1912. 746-751.

⁸ Beaderman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 14.

⁹ George Clinton, "Tribute of Women Plan for Titanic Memorial to Men Is Progressing," *The Pioneer*, June 18, 1912, 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

401T Proseminar : Culture and Commerce of American Music

The Feminist Anthem: Competing Definitions of Feminism in Popular Music

By Heaven Ocampo

This essay was written for Dr. Adam Golub's seminar in Culture and Commerce of American Music in the spring of 2015. In this essay, I highlight three musical artists; Ani DiFranco, Grimes, and Amanda Palmer. Throughout the paper I analyze their music, lyrics, image and interviews and classify these women by the different types of feminism they each represent in American culture. This essay demonstrates how feminism is active in popular music while opening up the discussion of why female musicians are considered "low brow" and the effects this idea has on American culture.

*My idea of feminism is self-determination and it's very open ended:
every woman has the right to become herself
and do whatever she needs to do.*

-Ani DiFranco

The United States, within the last decade, has been experiencing a Third Wave of Feminism that is advocating for not only a change in the way women are treated in the media and workplace, but also advocating for social change and how the country handles that change. This essay will focus on these new ideas of feminism in popular music, specifically the competing definitions by the artists Ani DiFranco, Grimes, and Amanda Palmer. I am interested in the different ways these artists, who have openly stated they are feminist, portray their ideas of feminism within their music, including their videos and lyrics and extending through their personality exemplified in interviews. I argue that there are three types of feminism that are most prominent and each of the women I have selected fall into a different category. However, they have underlying similarities that focus on female empowerment in music. To define these groups, I will use the terms fundamental, modern, and progressive. Fundamental feminism refers to the original ideas of feminism during the first wave in the late nineteenth-century. In order to fix the problems among gender inequality there needs to be a change in how the economic, social and political structure handles ideas of gender inequality in the United States. Modern feminism is a current discussion about how the definition of feminism has shifted into a new sexual revolution for women who are taking charge of the way their sexuality is represented in society. This idea also refers to issues of sexual assault, female sexualization in the media, and how women are treated in the workplace. Finally, progressive feminism is the movement to normalize what is uncomfortable and unacceptable for women to take part in and openly discuss

in modern culture. This includes but is not limited to, ideas of abortion, rape, and how women reject mainstream media's inaccurate representation of the female body.

I will stay away from referring to any of the women I have selected as "Radical" in order to prevent associations with any extremist forms of feminism. Although, arguably, Palmer has radical ideas, that is not culturally reflective of how she defines herself. Using their cultural works, I will dig into the artists' own description of what their songs mean, specifically the ones in which I have selected, which are DiFranco's *Coming Up*, Grimes's *Oblivion*, and Palmer's *Oasis*. Each of these songs, I argue, summarize the way in which each of the artist's define feminism. The ways in which each of these songs are performed are parallel to the ways in which these women identify themselves, although each are from different music genres. Finally, based on these definitions of feminism, I will analyze their feminist ideas and the effects of those ideas by analyzing fan and critic YouTube comments as well as online interviews with these artists.

Ani DiFranco is an American folk singer who gained popularity in the 1990s. She is well known for her honesty as well as discussing her politics in her music. Now a mother of two, she is still creating music for her audience and giving messages on her record label, Righteous Girl Records. On her 1995 record, *Not a Pretty Girl*, she released her spoken word poem *Coming Up* accompanied by a music track in the background. The lyrics personify a male corporate world, staring down at the working class people below.

I know the weak hearted are strong willed/ And we are being kept alive/
Until we're killed/ He's up there the ice/ Is clinking in his glass/
He sends me little pieces of paper/ I don't ask/ I just empty my pockets
and wait/ It's not fate/ It's just circumstance/¹

The issue of class is the main focus of this song and is a movement of economic change that is still unbalanced in today's society. The narrator ends the song by stating that the poor below are going to "come up" the social and economic ladder and demand better chances in life and equality. This song exemplifies DiFranco's thoughts on feminism today: the idea that America still needs to understand why feminism is relevant. She advocates for social, political, and economic change in order to fix the imbalance of power, wealth, and the inequalities within gender and class. In the 2014 United States Census, it was reported that there was a higher enrollment of women in bachelors and masters degree programs. This data would suggest that women would be earning the same money as their male counterparts. However, in 2013, women living in California earned 8,000 dollars less than men on average.² Although the Equal Pay Act was passed in the United States in 1963, women still only make 77 cents to a man's dollar, according to The White House's official website. With women making up more than half of the workforce, bringing home less money effects the livelihood of their families as well the overall economy.³ DiFranco urges that society works and thinks within itself to examine how change can be possible and what are the steps to be taken.

By writing song lyrics, DiFranco uses language to express her political and social ideas. In another song *Letter to a John*, she discusses sexual abuse and sexualization of women in society. It can

be assumed that the narrator of this song is working as a stripper. She describes the sexual abuse she received when she was 11 and how her job is only temporary so that she can earn enough money to run away. In the first stanza, DiFranco states that “women learn to be women/ men learn to be men,” which alludes to issues of gender roles in society.⁴ The ideas of what makes up gender has been a large topic of debate within the last decade, especially when it comes to ideas of the LGBTQ community. From birth, children are taught that certain colors, games, and toys are meant for certain genders and that wanting to participate in the activities of the other gender is wrong. Children are taught that if a boy picks on a girl, it is acceptable because he likes her. In comparison, boys are taught that being sensitive or compared to a girl is something negative and a sign of weakness. This idea stems from Victorian ideals of men and women, in which a man’s job was to provide and the woman was expected to be the passive, moral compass of the family.

In the following stanza, the narrator reveals the reason why she is disgusted and aching to leave her life as a stripper.

I was eleven years old/ he was as old as my dad
and he took something from me I didn’t even know that I had/
so don’t tell me about decency/ don’t tell me about pride/
just give me something for my trouble/ ‘cause this time,
it’s not a free ride/⁵

DiFranco opens the conversation of sexual abuse and rape culture. In the study conducted by Erin Hatton and Mary Nell Trautner titled *Images of Powerful Women in the Age of ‘Choice Feminism,’* they argue that images of women in the media have become more sexualized within the last century.⁶ The authors discuss that the sexualization of women in particular is a way for not only mass media to control how women feel they need to look and act, but also make women feel that sexuality is the only power they have to use. In male dominated fields, such as law and business, women will try to portray themselves as sexy in order to justify their positions of power. After analyzing United States culture through issues of *Rolling Stone*, Hatton and Traunter argued that the shift of women obtaining economic and cultural gains in the public realm attributes to this increase of sexualization. This increase has moved sexualization out of the hands of women and into the hands of a patriarchal society. This movement has made it socially acceptable for men to view women as objects. The sexualization of women has allowed for the continuance of the injustices that DiFranco talks about in the songs I have mentioned.

In an interview with Chantal Pierrat from *Emerging Women*, DiFranco discusses that one of the problems feminism is facing is that people refuse to use the term *feminism* because it is associated with negative, man-hating ideas.⁷ She calls for intersectionality, sympathy, and understanding among women of different races and classes. Just because a women of higher classes may not be affected by the minimum wage earnings of an uneducated single mother, does not mean that the problem is to be ignored. DiFranco stated feminism “...is about addressing the patriarchy. It is about curing the social imbalance that leads to all of our problems...feminism is not just a tool to empower women, but to create peace on Earth.” Looking at responses from her audience and critics, a majority of these

people agree with the messages DiFranco tries to convey with her music.

Claire Boucher, commonly known as Grimes, not only represents an independent female character in her music videos, but she extends this ideology into her lyrics and personality. In 2010 the 27-year-old, originally from Vancouver, Canada, released her debut album *Geidi Primes*. In 2012 Grimes told *Spin* magazine that in the beginning of her career, she was discouraged to find that many male counterparts in the scene tried to convince her that she should have a band creating the music and she should just sing. Because of her gender, people in the industry assumed she had no idea what she was doing and labeled her as “cute” for being creative in a male dominated environment.⁸ Grimes found herself falling into this idea of what she was supposed to be as a female in the music industry. Besides criticizing her work, the media also pressured her to become more sexual and present herself as conventionally beautiful. In turn, Grimes became aggressive towards the media outlets she was encountering in order to stop their discrimination and sexualization of her and her career. She decided to start using her talent and her music to push for equality.

In Athena Elafros’s article *No Beauty Tips or Guilt Trips: Rockgrl, Rock and Representation*, the author discusses the former music female centric magazine *Rockgrl* and the contributions that the magazine had in popularizing female musicians. Elafros argues that the purpose of this magazine was to normalize female music and demonstrate in a mainstream way that these musicians were not a novelty but serious performers.⁹ The magazine, which stopped publication in 2005, emphasized the musical capability of artists and rebelled against the mainstream sexualization of female musicians. This article draws parallels to Grimes’s argument against the sexualization of women in the media and her refusal to become a victim of patriarchal society. In her song, *Oblivion* off of her 2012 album *Visions*, she discusses her sexual own assault with the following lyrics:

And now I the look behind, all the time/ I will wait forever,
Always looking straight/ Thinking, counting, all the hours
you wait/ see you on a dark night/ see you on a dark night¹⁰

The song depicts someone walking alone at night, constantly looking over her shoulder and watching out for the possibility of being attacked, alluding to Grimes’s feelings on her assault. In the music video, she depicts a female Japanese archetype who is very “small and cute but physically powerful.”¹¹ The lack of female protagonists like this in American culture contributed to Grimes’s decision to place this archetype within a masculine world that is associated with sexual assault and present this idea in a welcoming way. Besides making the protagonist into a powerful woman in the video for *Oblivion*, Grimes admits that the video making process has helped turn a devastating experience into a positive and therapeutic one.

In her music video for *Genesis*, Grimes is shown waving a sword surrounded by women dressing similarly to herself. This image is her way of rebelling against mainstream media’s perception of female characters in order to become a source for empowerment to women. Being open about sexual assault and expressing it creatively is a step into the next direction of feminism, which I will discuss later in this essay.

In April 2013, Grimes took to the social media outlet Tumblr in order to express her feminist ideas.

I don't want to have to compromise my morals in order to make a living.
I don't want my words to be taken out of context.
I don't want to be infantilized because I refuse to be sexualized.
I don't want to be molested at shows or on the street by people who
perceive me as an object that exists for their personal satisfaction.¹²

She continued on to discuss the behavior of men towards female participants in the music industry. Grimes stated that the men act as if the females in the industry were unable to function without them, although she never asked them for their assistance to begin with. Media outlets, such as *Rolling Stone*, belittled her feminist statement, describing her cry for social change as a “rant.” At the end of her post, Grimes stated that she is sad that her “desire to be treated as an equal and as a human being is interpreted as hatred of men, rather than a request to be included and respected.”

Grimes has received a broad spectrum of responses to both her music and public image. Some critics have attacked her because of the way she portrays herself, while her fan base has praised her for being a confident, female electronic artist who is opening up a dialogue about sexual assault. While some critics may refer to her as “ugly,” she points out everything she does is to fight against the social standard of beauty. Her fans have defended her and responded to the hateful comments explaining the meaning of her songs and how she has the power to choose how to be portrayed in the media. User moonsugar1 stated that the amount of love this video received defending Grimes buried the relatively few negative comments. The video for *Genesis* received the same type of mixed response. Many critics did not understand why she wore dreadlocks, and some even claimed the symbols in the video were linked to Satanism. Like their response *Oblivion*, her fan base defended her images of being a powerful woman by wielding a sword and other medieval weapons throughout the video.

Grimes opens up a modern idea of feminism because she directly links the way she presents herself and the way she creates music to the same problem. The male dominated industry tries to prevent her from being comfortable in the clothes she wears and demands she give up her position on her mixer. This is modern feminism in the way that she is choosing to create an image for herself that she embraces and can freely express herself without discrimination.

Thirty-nine-year-old Amanda Palmer, originally from Boston, came into the music scene in the early 2000s with The Dresden Dolls, a quirky cabaret duo. After finishing art school, she became a street performer known as the Eight-Foot Bride. For her performance, she would dress all in white, paint her exposed skin all white, and as people placed money in the hat at her feet, she would hand them a flower and make intense eye contact with them for just a moment. During her lecture discussing her book *The Art of Asking* at TED Talks, she said “...we would get this beautiful moment of prolonged eye contact being allowed in a city street, and we would sort of fall in love a little bit. And my eyes would say — ‘Thank you. I see you.’ And their eyes would say -- ‘Nobody ever sees me. Thank you.’”¹³ From the moment she became a performer, Palmer focused on the honesty and deep trust between her and her audience.

She released her debut solo album *Who Killed Amanda Palmer?* in 2008, featuring one of the most controversial songs of her career, *Oasis*. While the song is catchy and upbeat, the song tells the story of a young girl who is raped at a party and becomes pregnant. While going to get an abortion, she is confronted by religious protesters and is betrayed by her best friend, who tells everyone about the procedure. The only thing that makes the situation better is that she receives an autographed photo of Oasis, her favorite band.

When I got to the party, they gave me a forty/
And I must have been thirsty 'cause I drank it so quickly/
When I got to the bedroom, there was somebody waiting/
And it isn't my fault that the barbarian raped me/¹⁴

The music video portrays exactly what each stanza of lyrics is describing, which includes having a man “rape” Palmer, a doctor mimic an abortion using a hanger, having a group of “Christians” surround her with picket signs in the operation room and singing along with her in a Beach Boys harmony.

When the song went out for radio play, the majority of United Kingdom radio stations refused to play the song because it was making light of the subject. Palmer took to the internet to defend her song and talked about how important it is for women to be able to discuss these uncomfortable topics publically. She stated, “when you cannot joke about the darkness of life, that’s when the darkness takes over.”¹⁵ Palmer continued to explain that society would accept her song if it were slowed down to be more heart wrenching while explaining the struggles of the horrible events that happened in her life. By making the song sad and expressing the pain of this woman, it would feel more familiar and safe to listeners. Palmer believes that the underlying issue is that people are uncomfortable with hearing the truth about these real situations and the people these situations have affected. She states, “If you don’t know- or have ever encountered- a teenager who is going through intense heavy experiences and is laughing these things off like they don’t matter, then you are not alive and awake and living on this planet.”

The experiences expressed in *Oasis* are based on Palmer’s abortion at 17 and her rape at age 20. In a Tumblr post, Palmer talked about her experience at Planned Parenthood in Brooklyn. Her boyfriend at the time and her mother went with her for moral support. When getting out of the car, a group of women protesting crowded around them and began yelling. Palmer stated, “I still got the abortion. I’ve never regretted it and I feel an immense amount of gratitude that I had the sort of mother and lived in the sort of state where choosing between having a baby and finishing high school wasn’t a moral crisis.”¹⁶ In her autobiography *The Art of Asking*, she discusses these personal events and the positive response from the female audience. Her fans have come up to her after shows and signings, sharing with her about their own abortions. Although flattered by this trust and unique relationship she has with her audience, the problem she finds is that these women have only ever told her about these experiences and have not confided in people they love and are close with. This exemplifies the silence women are subjected to because of the victim blaming that surrounds abortion and

rape. This idea resonates in America today, especially since last year's Supreme Court case of *Hobby Lobby v Burwell*, which ended in favor of a corporation having religious freedom. The law allowed the craft and home goods store to refuse coverage of female contraceptives, which denies fair access to reproductive healthcare to women who work at any of the stores. However, the legislation would only refuse to cover anything that would be associated with abortion, leaving men's reproductive coverage in place. This denies women who work at a for-profit organization the right to reproductive healthcare. This change in legislation opens the door to not only deny healthcare to individuals, but also discrimination in the workplace.

In 2009, Palmer released a music video for the song *What's the use of Wond'rin?*² which addresses domestic violence in romantic relationships. The song is a huge departure from *Oasis*, because the song has a more dreamy and gentle feeling. The narrator sings:

Common sense may tell you/ That the ending will be sad/
And now's the time to break and run away/ But what's the
use of wond'rin?/ If the ending will be sad/ He's your fella
and you love him/ There's nothing more to say/¹⁷

The video shows Palmer dressed as a 1950s stereotypical housewife, making different foods with her friend, played by St. Vincent's Annie Clark, and smiling constantly. Palmer's character shows her friend bruising, which alludes to domestic violence, and weeps with only her friend to comfort her. At the end of the video, her husband is placed on a table, naked and with an apple in his mouth, with Palmer and her friend at the dining table. The video is inspired by society's discussion of domestic violence, which is very minimal. Women are taught to be passive and that they need to be the perfect wife, mother, and employee, and that failure of any of these would make them lesser of a woman. The patriarchal marriage creates an environment in which women do not have a voice and, in many cases, have no one to defend them against violence, whether it be mental or physical.

In 2011, Palmer released her song *Map of Tasmania*, which is her response to the derogatory Australian term for a natural and ungroomed patch of women's pubic hair. Palmer explains that the phrase typically is used in catcalling women. The song addresses the cultural ritual of women shaving all of their "unnecessary" body hair in order to please society and men.

Soft and sweet and shaped like a triangle/
Some girls want no shape and they shave it all/
That's so whack, it hurts with the stubble/
Walking 'round and look like an eight-year-old/¹⁸

The final line calls out this perversion of women needing to be hairless like a child in order to be seen as beautiful or sexually appealing. Palmer herself has unapologetically shown off her armpit, leg, and pubic hair in public on multiple occasions. She feels that hair is a natural part of the human body and is nothing to be ashamed or afraid of.

The response to her controversial songs and ideas have been quite positive, demonstrating a loyal and deep connection with her audience. For example, in the comment section of *Map of Tasmania*, the participants in the discussion of *whether or not women should shave any part of their body hair* unanimously took the side of women having the freedom to choose what they do to their bodies. One participant, Byron Stewart, commented that men are not supposed to like hair on women because that is how media and society wants them to think. There are people who believe that what Palmer sings about is disgusting or masculine. *What's the use of Wond'rin?* received a mostly positive response, perhaps because of Palmer's refusal to become a victim in the song and video. The song resonated with her audience and had feminists supporting the message to raise awareness of domestic abuse. Although *Oasis* is a much more controversial song, the response was much more positive than negative. Of the women who commented on the video for *Oasis*, many were victims of rape and sexual assault who were comforted that the song advocated for a stop of victim blaming. However, many people were offended by her satirization and claimed she was trying to be controversial in order to get attention by making rape jokes and being anti-feminist. This song was not as acceptable as *Tasmania* because it crossed the line into pro-life arguments and rape culture. The population of women who have been rape victims and that have had abortions applauded the song for taking a stand against mass culture.

These songs only touch the surface of the progressive mind of Amanda Palmer. Her creativity pushes boundaries of what is acceptable for women to openly discuss and advocates for change in the media and the cultural perceptions of the female body. In Palmer's blog post defending *Oasis*, she states that her mission in offending people is not to make individuals upset about what she is doing, but to start a discussion and push it into the open. In order to create change and to start a revolution, Palmer believes that an open dialogue will help stop future generations from dealing with these same issues.

If the subcultural groups are accepting and supporting these definitions of feminism in popular music, why do the majority of Americans not know who these women are and not associate them with feminism? In Catherine Strong's article, *Grunge, Riot Grrl and the Forgetting of Women in Popular Culture*, she argues that "...women are generally written out of historical accounts of music in order to reinscribe the creative dominance of men in this field."¹⁹ As discussed in the novel *Audiotopia* by Josh Kun, music serves as an outlet of memories and help place the context in which music is presented to the population.²⁰ This idea is parallel to Strong's argument that memory helps shape cultural identity of individuals and society. If women are taken out of that memory or are subjected to "low brow" culture, then their contributions to music will not reach the larger audience and influence future social movements.

In Strong's discussion of the lost memory of female contribution to grunge music in the 1990s, women in music are typically filed under "pop" instead of other genres of music. This idea suggests that the art that women make is not significant enough to be considered "highbrow." Strong states that "even where women have 'infiltrated' the rock scene, they are far more likely to be sexualized vocalists than to play instruments."²¹ As I mentioned before, Grimes experienced a push in her career to become more sexual and step away from her instrument to become only a frontwoman. Amanda

Palmer addresses these inequalities in her song *Gaga, Palmer, Madonna* in which she sings:

Art is great/ that way you can do anything/ you can make pop music/
you can paint ducks/ but if you're a pop star and you're a woman/
then it's much more likely that/ people will say your art sucks/²²

Palmer continues on to discuss that pop music is for anyone, yet her lyrics above show that culturally women who make this form of art are subjected to more criticism than their male counterparts.

DiFranco, Grimes, and Palmer play an important role in the music industry and serve as a reminder that what they are saying is relevant. They choose to push the issues that society is trying to hide into the spotlight and normalize difficult topics. Their music creates a safer and more encouraging environment for women while encouraging others to stop the victim blaming that rape culture has created. If American culture forgets the women in music and the messages that they are trying to convey in their music, they forget the inequality and classism that still resonates in the daily lives of the women of America.

¹ "Coming Up." YouTube video. Posted by "PoeticalTVLive." Dec. 20, 2011.

² Educational Attainment. United States Census. Accessed May 2015.

³ "Did You Know That Women Are Still Paid Less than Men?" White House. Accessed May 2015.

⁴ "Letter to a John." YouTube video. Posted by "ILLigitt." March 8, 2011.

⁵ "Letter to a John."

⁶ Erin Hatton and Mary Nell Trautner. "Images of Powerful Women in the Age of 'choice Feminism'." *Journal of Gender Studies*: 65-78.

⁷ Chantal Pierrat, "Ani DiFranco — Connection, Community, and the Feminine Voice." *Emerging Women's*. 2015. Accessed May 1, 2015.

⁸ Hopper, Jessica. "Grimes Comes Clean: Synth-Pop Provocateur on Her Big Year." *Spin*. December 6, 2012. Accessed May 2015

⁹ Athena Elafros. "'No Beauty Tips or Guilt Trips': Rockrgrl, Rock, and Representation," *Popular Music and Society*: 487-99.

¹⁰ "Oblivion," YouTube video. Posted by "GrimesVEVO." March 2, 2012.

¹¹ Jessica Hopper, "Grimes Comes Clean: Synth-Pop Provocateur on Her Big Year," *Spin*. December 6, 2012. Accessed May 2015.

¹² Grimes, "I don't want to compromise my morals in order to make a living," Tumblr. Posted on April 2013.

¹³ Amanda Palmer, "Amanda Palmer: The Art of Asking," Lecture, TED Talks, 2013.

¹⁴ "Oasis," YouTube video. Posted by "Amanda Palmer." Feb. 26, 2009

¹⁵ Amanda Palmer, "On Abortion, Rape, Art and Humor." Amanda Palmer. February 3, 2009. Accessed May 2015.

¹⁶ Amanda Palmer, "Did you know?" tumblr. Posted on Feb. 28, 2015

¹⁷ "What's the Use of Won'drin?" YouTube video. Posted by "Amanda Palmer." March 11, 2009.

¹⁸ "Map of Tasmania." YouTube video. Posted by "Amanda Palmer." March 8, 2011.

¹⁹ Catherine Strong, "Grunge, Riot Grrrl and the Forgetting of Women in Popular Culture." *The Journal of Popular Culture* (2011), 398-416. Accessed May 2015.

²⁰ Josh Kun, *Audiotopia Music, Race, and America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005),

²¹ Strong, "Grunge, Riot Grrrl," 398-416.

²² "Amanda Palmer- 'gaga, palmer, madonna,' a kitchen-ukulele-blogsong." YouTube video. Posted by "Amanda Palmer." December 17, 2009.

401T Proseminar: Stories of Los Angeles

Re-imagining Public Service: Los Angeles County Fire Paramedics in the Early 1970s

By Peter Stearns

This essay was assembled for Dr. Elaine Lewinnek's course American Studies 401T "Stories of Los Angeles" in the fall of 2014. The goal of this research was to highlight ideas of public service within Los Angeles County that are contrary to the city's history of racism, classism, and brutality. While it was not my intention when I began this essay, I cannot help but acknowledge that the story behind the primary years of the Los Angeles County Fire Department's paramedic program, and its national notoriety through television, comes at a time when notions of public "service" and racial bias are deservedly under local and national scrutiny.

Stories of Los Angeles are often about color. For boosters and critics, novelists and filmmakers, color has played a significant role in their Los Angeles narratives. Golden light, orange trees, the blue ocean, and green lawns, to name a few, have all made regular appearances in most accounts of the cityscape. Equally common, although usually in less endearing terms, are colors like Black, White, Brown, Yellow, and Red. In the context of Los Angeles history, these colors often represent conflict, oppression, segregation, and pain. This is the theme that many contemporary historians, filmmakers, and critics choose to focus their perspectives on — the agonies associated with the colors of Los Angeles. With that said, it is important to recognize that some of colorful stories in the region's history do involve attempts at equality, cooperation, and empathy.

This essay will illuminate stories and events that run counter to many of the narratives and criticisms Los Angeles has, at times, justly warranted with regards to race and classism. As with *A People's Guide to Los Angeles*, I seek to provide a different perspective of history of Los Angeles¹. It is my goal to show how the Los Angeles County Fire Department's paramedic program — a first of its kind in the country — altered the image of Los Angeles in terms of community and equality. Like *A People's Guide*, this requires using both academic and popular sources, reading between the lines, and, looking for what is not there in order to gain greater insight at the firefighter/community level². As the son of one of the original L.A. County paramedics, I have been fortunate with access to certain primary sources. However, because of the breadth of information to analyze, this essay will cover only a fraction of the whole story. It is a small step towards a greater investigation which I hope to conclude on a later date. This essay will answer some questions and, hopefully, inspire many more.

For many in the United States, firefighter/paramedics have become commonplace in their com-

munity; even to the point of taking them for granted. But, prior to 1972 and NBC's television show *Emergency!*, most Americans — save the handful of communities being served in Miami, Seattle, and the Los Angeles Basin — did not understand firefighters as paramedics.³ So, when four Los Angeles County firefighters drove their engine across the country in 1973, Los Angeles became a vanguard for ideas of public service and race.

This essay will attempt to answer questions over how this leadership occurred. For instance: why was the program initiated in Carson and other communities of Color, and not Palos Verdes or the Palisades? How did LACoFD hiring practices reflect the communities it served and the national community/audience? How did the NBC television show *Emergency!* present the LACoFD paramedic program and ideas of race and equality to the rest of the country? What impact did the tour have on the participants?

Politics and Medicine: The Beginning

Any modest research into Los Angeles paramedic history will reveal the names of Drs. Graf and Criley. They are two of the four horsemen — the other two being Drs. Eugene Nagel of Miami and Dr. Leonard Cobb in Seattle — who bolstered the paramedic idea in the United States. The four doctors received their notion from Dr. Frank Pantridge of Belfast, Ireland, whose innovative mobile pre-hospital cardiac unit was featured in medical journals.⁴ For the sake this essay's focus I will not delve too deeply into the medical establishment's history in paramedicine, as it is irrelevant to my paper's focus on Los Angeles County Fire. Likewise, much of the contemporary paramedicine equipment was developed and refined by the experiences of paramedics in the field. However, it is important to acknowledge the work of Dr. Nagel.⁵ In 1967 Nagel created a portable EKG machine and the Bio-Com, a "phone" paramedics used to communicate with the local hospitals.⁶ Nagel's work with these innovations cannot be undervalued. Nagel in coordination with the Miami Fire Department's Rescue One in June of 1969 established the first firefighter based paramedic program in United States, beating out Los Angeles by two months.⁷

In Los Angeles, with the tenacious support of Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, Drs. Criley and Graf were hard at work developing their own program. As cardiologists, Graf and Criley understood the importance of time in preventing death from cardiac arrest. Like Nagel, Criley also understood the importance and value of using firefighters; however, there was some uncertainty. According to Gary Davis, a LACoFD firefighter and member of the first paramedic class, Dr Criley exclaimed, "we don't know what you are capable of."⁸ That of course quickly changed. In many cases, the firefighters in training were present for the question and answer sessions with the hospital interns. "Dr. Criley would pose a series of questions to the interns, and if they could not answer, then he would ask the firefighters," writes Richard Yokley, "more than not the firefighters would provide the correct answer."⁹ Also like Nagel's program, the Los Angeles program was initially designed to simply cover cardiac arrests. The firefighter trainees, however, proved capable of handling much more, and their instruction was soon expanded to meet their capabilities. Groundbreaking triage, brought home from medics in the Vietnam War, was soon implemented into the process.¹⁰

However, California state laws still forbid any practical application of the skills firefighters had obtained, limiting these skills to doctors and nurses only. In an attempt to get around this quagmire, the paramedics working out of LACoFD station 59, located on the grounds of Harbor General Hospital, began taking cardiac calls in their freshly painted reconfigured ambulance with a doctor and nurse in tow. However, this was not practical for a timely response; as in most cases, the firefighters sat waiting at the rear stairs of the hospital for the nurse and doctor to appear.¹¹ Finally, in 1970, Governor Ronald Reagan signed the Wedworth-Townsend Act, which cleared the way for the newly trained paramedics to be assigned directly to a station and away from the hospital.¹² The umbilical had been cut, and three shifts (standard firefighter A, B, C procedure) were assigned to Station 36 in Carson.

The records and my interviews indicate that the firefighters volunteered to join the fledgling paramedic program. They volunteered to, at times, work double shifts, getting instruction and training with the doctors and nurses during the day, and returning to fire station in the evening. The program also took its toll at home as the firefighters had stay away from their families for even longer stints of time, than the three to four days a week the job often required.¹³ How the departments (LACoFD and LAFD) initially chose who was to participate in the pilot program is unknown at this time. Stearns had a college background in biology and experience as a lifeguard, and he believes this may have also attributed to his appointment. Evidence also suggests leadership and sensitivity may have also played a role in the eventual decision. Stearns became the first firefighter/paramedic promoted to Captain in LACoFD history, as well as one of the youngest to hold his position at age thirty-two. Within a decade most of the others followed suit in becoming promoted.

Although the first two paramedic classes of LA County firefighters were White men, the third class in 1971 included an African American. Ed McFall was the first Black firefighter within the Los Angeles County Fire Department to become a certified paramedic. According to the African American Firefighter Museum, he was also the first Black paramedic in the greater Los Angeles region.¹⁴ My research to this point indicates that McFall was most likely the first firefighter/paramedic in country; however, the often forgotten Freedom House Enterprises Inc., a private ambulance company working out of Pittsburgh in the mid-60s, may have been the African American paramedics.¹⁵

Neighbors: Station 36 and a multi-cultural Los Angeles

Everybody has some power, but, given the inequalities that exist in the world, the resources through which we can exercise our power are not evenly distributed.

*A People's Guide to Los Angeles*¹⁶

The first class of firefighter/paramedics have graduated from their training, and the legislation is now in place allowing fire departments to practice paramedicine without a doctor or nurse present. Yet, questions of where to release such a highly skilled group of individuals still remained. It would surprise no one familiar with Los Angeles's political and social history should a fire station serving the community's privileged few receive these individuals. Surely, the residents of Malibu,

Pacific Palisades, Bel-Air and Palos Verdes are the most important citizens to keep alive and well. In *Ecology of Fear*, Mike Davis interrogates, among other things, ideas over public services available to citizens of Los Angeles. In regards to fire-suppression and rescue resources, the city has a history of disproportionate access. Davis writes, “Elected officials, acutely sensitive to Malibu’s national prominence in political fund-raising were quick to oblige”.¹⁷ Davis argues, through stellar evidence, that the power and political philanthropy of wealthy suburbs pulls funding and attention away from the inner-city communities. However, in the wake of the 1965 Watts Riots, Supervisor Hahn promised not to neglect the needs of his beloved Second district any further.¹⁸ Hahn kept his promise. Working with Criley and LACoFD Chief Richard Houts, Station 36 in the ethnically rich city of Carson was chosen, and three other stations in his South Central district quickly followed suit.¹⁹

Kenneth Hahn was said to be a man of the people.²⁰ Regardless of the cliché, Hahn took care of his constituency, and was in turn re-elected for an astonishing ten terms to the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors.²¹ In another effort to take care of his district — which encompasses such traditionally marginalized African American neighborhoods as Watts, Willowbrook, Lynwood, Crenshaw, and Florence/Firestone, as well as, portions of the diverse neighborhoods of Koreatown, Baldwin Hills, Harbor Gateway, and La Brea — Hahn was instrumental in the building of Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital, whom he greatly admired, and was fortunate to meet in 1961²². What may seem remarkable to those unfamiliar with Hahn, or his legacy, is that Hahn is White. To be frank, a White politician was beloved, trusted and re-elected ten times in South Central Los Angeles.

In his essay, “What’s Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews: Creating Multiculturalism on the Eastside during the 1950s”, George Sanchez speaks of an “unspoken solidarity” that can be translated in cultural groups working with those outside their own.²³ Key to his argument is the election of Edward Roybal, who was supported by the Jewish community, “even when he ran against ‘one of their own,’” writes Sanchez. “Eddie was the best man” explains Joe Kovner, “We keep pounding away on the theme of sticking together. An injury to one is an injury to all”.²⁴ Hahn understood this sentiment. His injured neighborhoods needed a local hospital, *and* they would be the first to receive the paramedic’s care.

On the streets and in the homes of South Los Angeles the trust in Kenneth Hahn would become a trust in LACoFD’s paramedics. “People would come to us with all sorts of problems” explains Stearns. In many cases, this trust appears to have been earned through the active neutrality exercised by the firefighters. The early 70s were still a volatile time in Black America. The community, much like today, lived in fear of the police. “A lot of the time, they simply did not want the police to come into their homes,” explained Stearns, “maybe someone had a warrant, who knows. Wasn’t our business.”²⁵ In our interviews, Stearns who seemed to understand the importance of multi-culturalism in how we imagine ourselves — was very direct about the role of neutrality at the home. “I told the Sheriffs to wait outside, to stand down until we were done. There was no sense in creating extra anxiety,” says Stearns.

The fear and distrust of police ran much wider than the Black community. Latino, Japanese and Chinese Americans had their own histories with the LAPD and Sheriffs.²⁶ Also, another kind of trust was built through respect by the LACoFD paramedics. For many cultures, modesty with their body

is paramount. “Some of our calls (rescues) were initially very uncomfortable. Lifting their shirt to show us their belly, let alone allowing us to listen to their heart, or apply the EKG could be culturally fragile” says Stearns.²⁷ “In many cases, we had to juggle having the children translate with the parent not wanting to worry the child or humiliate themselves in front of strangers.”²⁸ It appears the paramedics’ respect for others bridged the language and cultural barriers inherent with Los Angeles.

In his essay “Where Worlds Collide” Pico Iyer creates an analogy between Los Angeles and its airport, LAX. Much of his argument is based on the strange blending of cultures as newcomers struggle under the hegemonic umbrella of the Los Angeles façade. However, Los Angeles does not always live up to its image as the magically bountiful dreamland. “For many immigrants, in fact, LAX is offering them a view of their own near futures...” offers Iyer.²⁹ This is a future where the realities



of racism and inequalities often fail to match golden expectations and promises of Los Angeles. It is said that LACoFD was consciously trying to be ahead of the Affirmative Action curve.³⁰ It was important to have faces that represented the communities served.³¹ Public servants should reflect the public at large. With that said, the original eleven men chosen as part of the paramedic program, as seen in photograph, were still all White men.³²

The Power of T.V. America Falls for LACoFD

Having Hollywood in your backyard has its advantages. Prior to the internet, television was an incredible vehicle for advancing and shaping the national public discourse. Dominant cultural paradigms can be shifted passively by introducing new ideas of normalcy.³³ In 1972, NBC released *Emergency!*, a weekly light drama about two LACoFD paramedics. Although the show’s genesis is murky, a previous relationship between NBC producers and LACoFD did exist, and the paramedic program proved to be a hit.³⁴ Lasting until 1979, the show enjoyed a large national audience. The success of *Emergency!* also provided another unique opportunity for the early paramedics as Hollywood technical advisors. I myself remember the two lead actors, Randolph Mantooth and Kevin Tighe, visiting our home to talk shop with my father. The writers and producers desired to get the show as close to truth as possible. In a contemporary context, the notion of a multi-ethnic cast is thankfully commonplace; however, in 1972, this was not the norm. In the early 1970s, LACoFD strove to reflect the colorful community it served.³⁵ *Emergency!* attempts to show this. For instance, the television crew of Engine 51 featured Marco Lopez, a Latino firefighter who, in some episodes, spoke Spanish to translate between

“victim” and paramedics Gage and Desoto.³⁶ The value of this common act by Los Angeles County firefighters is magnified when placed on an early 70s national audience. As George Lipsitz presents it, Los Angeles, “The capital of commercial television,” is a “primary generator” to how the nation imagines itself.³⁷ While Lipsitz is in fact referring to a discourse on war and the war machine, also found in Los Angeles, his point is effective here as well. Likewise, Dr. Nagel from Miami’s paramedic program alludes to the popularity of *Emergency!* as the most effective force in the promotion and adoption of paramedic programs across the country. “The public did not read medical journals... People would watch the show on their televisions and say, ‘why don’t we have that?’” explains Nagel.³⁸ Interestingly, *Emergency!* did not feature a Black firefighter or paramedic. However, it did regularly feature a Black surgeon.

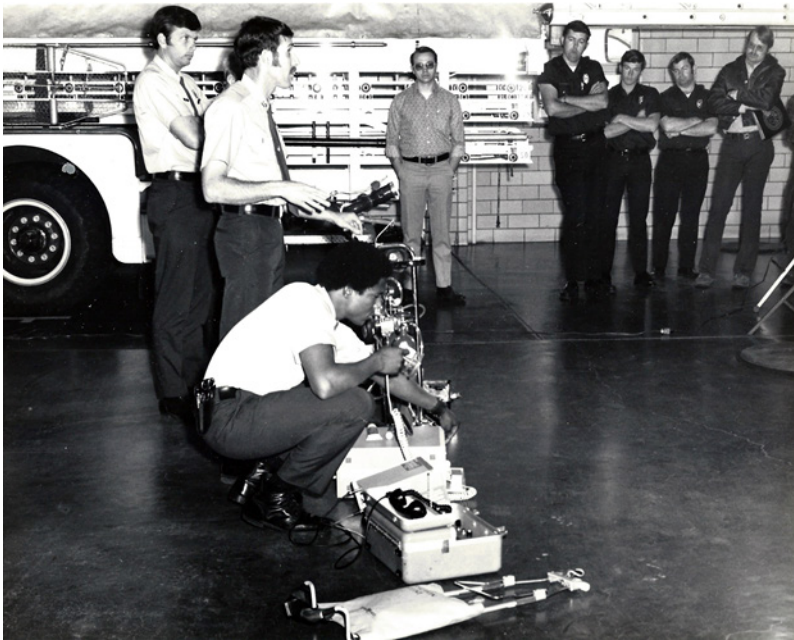
If television had such a dramatic effect on available public services, as Nagel suggests, what impact did *Emergency!*’s portrayal of LACoFD have on American ideas of racial identity? Lipsitz argues that “the forms of citizenship, subjectivity, and social membership central to the America being orchestrated by the nation’s elites are grounded firmly in the ideals and aspirations learned and legitimated in the apparatus of commercial culture.”³⁹ Is it possible that Los Angeles County Fire Department, through an NBC television show, was presenting a positive image of racial equality and cooperation to a national audience? A few of LACoFD firefighter/paramedics would soon find this out first hand.⁴⁰



The LACoFD on a Cross-Country Tour

Cinader told me to select the crew (as did the chief). Naturally, Stoker was one. I picked Michael Stearns, one of the six original P/Ms who was a good friend. But he had just been promoted to

captain. Cinader (and my chief) didn't care. That was three (with me). I suggested and Cinader, the chief and both Mikes agreed; it had to be Ed McFall, a graduate of the second or third class of P/Ms. Ed had personality plus and was a damn good P/M to boot. Besides (this may seem racist), Ed was Black and we were trying to promote the image of equality out here in our department. I drove down to FS 9 and met with Ed. He thought for all of 2 seconds, called his wife, and he was a part of our team.



Dick Friend⁴¹

In the spring of 1973, a hiatus period for the studios, NBC's Bob Cinader proposed a plan with LA-CoFD to pick up a new Ward La France pumper (fire engine) in New York and drive it across the country. It was an ideal opportunity to promote both the show and the paramedic program. As it would turn out, it was the perfect to, as Dick Friend puts it, "promote the image of equality."⁴² NBC was keen on the pumper visiting as many cities as possible during the tour.

Looking at any road map, you will find that there are a number of routes available: the main arteries being the Interstate 40 through the middle of the country and Interstate 10 running along the Southern region of the country. After much consideration and research, it was decided not to take the 10 and go below the Mason-Dixon line, where many firehouses were still segregated.⁴³ As Friend explains, "I made and remade the map and NBC would make additions and deletions. Finally, they agreed to our route, and I wrote letters from Chief Houts to EVERY f.d. along the route..."⁴⁴

Unfortunately, the four man crew would be reminded that racism did not have geographic boundaries. According to Friend, in New York City "we also had checked out of our hotel because we thought they were very rude to Ed."⁴⁵ This of course created a few problems. Good, clean, and affordable hotels are not easy to come by in NYC. Fortunately, they found one. Similar incidents occurred elsewhere, including St. Louis and outside of Salt Lake City.⁴⁶ McFall and Stearns were close friends during the 70s, and because of their bond Stearns knew McFall was well aware of the magnitude of his position in the context of the national perspective.⁴⁷ "Ed and I talked in length about it before we left," said Stearns, "he knew what it meant to the department, the city, and to himself."⁴⁸ I found it odd, yet, sincere that Friend questions whether he was sounding racist by mentioning Mc-

Fall's Blackness. The trip took a month and covered thousands of miles. In shopping mall parking lots, racetracks, firehouses, and local TV stations America was introduced to real live LACoFD firefighter/paramedics. At each stop Stearns and McFall would do a simulated rescue and discuss the merits of the program. At each stop Black and White were represented as a unified Los Angeles. The photograph above is an example of a simulation given at a Denver Fire Station. I find the body language of the local firefighters', seen in the background, to be very telling.⁴⁹ Not everyone was ready to embrace change at this time. Many firefighters, including some in LACoFD, still struggled with ideas of race and the paramedic program.⁵⁰ However, many more were ready. In a thank you letter to Chief Houts, Mrs. Mary Claire Hibbs of Pittsburgh writes glowingly about meeting the firefighters at the Allegheny Center Mall. "I personally spoke with Ed McFall and he was great," says Hibbs. "It was grand to see these young men chat with the kids, especially in this age when young people do not seem impressed with uniforms (police, fire etc.)."⁵¹

The particularities of place and the specificities of social relations require us to hope that all precincts are heard from, that we learn how life is lived everywhere in its full plurality and diversity.

George Lipsitz⁵²



In 1965 Los Angeles found itself on fire. Many recoiled from the flames. However, Kenneth Hahn found himself compelled to care for the burned. In 1969 the Los Angeles County Fire Department paramedic program was born out of Harbor General Hospital in Torrance. In 1970 the paramedics were released into the colorful working class neighborhoods that make up Hahn's Second District. In 1972 the country fell for Los Angeles and LACoFD through NBC's *Emergency!*. Los Angeles repre-

sented a new way to care for each other, in terms of public service and societal norms. In 1973 four LACoFD firefighters, Mike Stoker, Dick Friend, Ed McFall, and my father Mike Stearns, drove their engine across the country. The men introduced themselves as Los Angeles to both large cities and small communities along the way. They were Black and White, as one.

*Unfortunately, for all the strides LACoFD has made in terms of race relations, Los Angeles City Fire Department continues to have problems of racism. Also, both of Los Angeles's fire departments (L.A. County and L.A. City) have much work to do in regards to gender equality.

¹ Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough and Wendy Chen, *A People's Guide to Los Angeles*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 4.

² Ibid.

³ Randolph Mantooth, *Pioneers of Paramedicine*, video, (Los Angeles County Fire Museum, 2014).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Tom Widley, (LACoFD Ret.), interviewed October, 2014

⁶ Mantooth, *Pioneers*.

⁷ The Virtual EMS Museum, "1964: Eugene Nagel, MD First Telemetry Radio", <http://www.emsmuseum.org/virtual-museum/history/articles/398203-1964-Eugene-Nagel-MD-First-Telemetry-Radio>.

⁸ Richard Yokley and Rozane Sutherland, *Emergency!: Behind the Scene*, (Sudbury, Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2008), 3.

⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰ Michael Stearns (Captain LACoFD, Ret.) interview by the author, November 2014.

¹¹ Dale Cauble (Captain/Chaplain LACoFD, Ret.) interview by the author, October 2014.

¹² Yokley, *Emergency!: Behind the Scene*, 6.

¹³ Ibid. 5.

¹⁴ African American Firefighter Museum, "The History of Black Firefighters in Los Angeles", African American Firefighter Museum, 2012, accessed 2014.

¹⁵ Randy Cassingham, "The First Paramedics", Every Medic, 2013, <http://www.everymedic.com/the-first-paramedics>.

¹⁶ Pulido, *A People's Guide*, 3.

¹⁷ Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Fear*, (New York, Vintage Books), 111.

¹⁸ "Kenneth F. Hahn, 77, is Dead; Political Giant in Los Angeles," *New York Times*, October 14, 1997.

¹⁹ Cauble, 2014.

²⁰ Richard Simon and Judith Michaelson, "People's Politician Hahn Dies", *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1997.

²¹ "Kenneth F. Hahn, 77, is Dead; Political Giant in Los Angeles," *New York Times*, October 14, 1997.

²² Ibid.

²³ George Sanchez, "What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews": Creating Multiracialism on the Eastside during the 1950s", *American Quarterly* 56 (, 633-34.

²⁴ Ibid. 641.

²⁵ Stearns, 2014.

²⁶ Pulido, *A People's Guide*, 5.

²⁷ Stearns, 2014.

²⁸ Stearns, 2014.

²⁹ Pico Iyer, "Where Worlds Collide", *American Studies: Stories of Los Angeles*, ed. Elaine Lewinnek, California State University Fullerton, 2014, 235.

³⁰ Stearns. As a captain, and paramedic program coordinator Stearns had access into the inner-workings of LACoFD policy.

³¹ Dick Friend, “Nation Viewed from Pumper”, (Origin of original publication unknown), emergencyfans.com, 2014, http://www.emergencyfans.com/things/engine_51/nation_viewed.htm.

³² Photograph of the first firefighter/paramedic graduation in Los Angeles featuring LACoFD and LAFD firefighters. Property of Author.

³³ Pulido, *A People’s Guide*, 9.

³⁴ Yokley, *Emergency! Behind the Scene*, 21.

³⁵ Widley, 2014.

³⁶ Yokley, *Emergency! Behind the Scene*, 33.

³⁷ George Lipsitz, “Learning from Los Angeles: Another One rides the Bus”, *American Quarterly* 56 (2004) 518.

³⁸ Mantooth, *Pioneers of Paramedicine*, 2014.

³⁹ Lipsitz, “Learning From Los Angeles”, 518.

⁴⁰ LACoFD firefighters in Washington DC, Photo property of author.

⁴¹ Friend, “Nation From a Pumper.”

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Stearns, 2014.

⁴⁴ Friend, “Nation.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Stearns, 2014.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Photograph of paramedic demonstration to Denver Fire Department, Property of author.

⁵⁰ Stearns, 2014.

⁵¹ Letter from Mrs Hibbs, Property of author.

⁵² Lipsitz, 511.

409: Consumer Cultures

Satisfaction in a World of Things?

By Sara Roberts

This essay was written for Dr. Dustin Abnet's Consumer Culture course in the spring of 2015. In this paper I explore the evolution of the consumer market in America, as well as the social, economic, and political implications mass consumption has on American culture. Because consumption of material goods has become the penultimate way in which Americans define and express happiness, success, and desire, critical examination of its origin and sustainability become increasingly important.

The rise of mass consumption in the twentieth-century solidified the idea of America as a land of plenty, in ways that were material as well as intangible. Participation in the consumer market promised physical material comfort that resulted in a higher standard of living for many Americans, as well as promoted ideals of social and human progression that aligned with American values such as freedom, democracy, and enterprise. However, as society fulfilled the American dream by indulging in consumer desire, some Americans began to feel conflicting sentiments toward consumer culture. Hope for advancement was threatened by an underlying fear that consumption sabotaged humanistic authenticity, damaged the environment, and threatened traditional gender and racial hierarchies. In attempting to realize an ideal through consumption, Americans consistently battled the opposing forces of tradition and modernity, progress and deterioration. Mass consumption became a source of anxiety as some Americans realized it embodied their nightmares as well as their fantasies¹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, mass production and consumption evolved as a means to fulfill white comfort, particularly that of middle-class Victorians. However, in order to successfully market to this demographic, producers were required to overcome a substantial obstacle: the Victorian aversion to luxury and materialism. If the true nature of mass production were revealed, it would further validate the Victorian view that indulging in luxury and materialism were immoral and sinful behaviors. Thus, proponents appealed to Victorian morality by advocating that consumerism was the most democratic economic and social condition, while simultaneously masking its origins.²

Tactics used to entice consumers were sometimes so covert that the public remained oblivious to their intended effect. One example tailored to this idea was Frank L. Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. Upon preliminary inspection, this fairy tale appears to be a harmless story of adolescent adventure. However, many features in *The Wizard of Oz* parallel those of the consumer market: the color illustrations reflect the fantastical imagery of display windows, the City of Oz echoes the abundance and luxury offered by department stores, and the roles of consumer and advertiser are acted out by major characters — Dorothy and her three companions, and the Wizard, respectively. Yet, in explaining the motivation for writing his famous children's tale, Frank L. Baum expressed the following:

The time has come for a series of newer “wonder tales” in which the stereotyped genie, dwarf and fairy are eliminated, together with all the horrible and blood-curdling incidents devised by their authors to point a fearsome moral to each tale. Modern education includes morality; therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident. Having this thought in mind, the story of “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” was written solely to please children of today. It aspires to being a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out.³

By masquerading the enticement for material desire as an appeal to moral happiness — particularly that of young children — Baum effectively reached the seemingly impenetrable Victorian demographic. However, the “nightmares” that were absent in *The Wizard of Oz* were very much present in the creation of the market economy. In reality, consumerism was a profit-driven movement sustained through the systematic exploitation of workers; its foundation was created out of African American slave labor and, after emancipation, replaced with the labor of women, children, and foreigners. As this painful reality was increasingly driven underground, the façade of consumerism progressively resembled Baum’s fairy tale: free from “heartaches” and “horrors.”

Yet, even after the Victorian Era drew to a close, obscuring the true nature of the mass production continued to be a crucial task for American producers. The severe economic dislocation caused by the Great Depression rekindled antagonism toward industrialization — and in effect, mass production — because machines were taking jobs from financially desperate Americans. Just as nineteenth-century technological advances had taken the place of the agrarian farmer and pushed him to the industrial city, automatic machines of the twentieth-century were beginning to replace the need for factory workers. Producers discovered that one machine could accomplish more work than a team of laborers, but with less time and money, and with greater accuracy and efficiency. Machines promised progress and material comfort on a grand scale because they fueled the system of mass production, but they did so at the expense of many working-class American livelihoods. However, as the social and economic structure of America became increasingly reliant on material desire and individualism, the more the intimate relationship between mass production and human suffering faded into obscurity.

The impact of mass consumption on the American psyche is documented extensively in William Leach’s *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*. By tracing American consumerism to its nineteenth-century roots, Leach exhibits how the evolution of a consumerist mentality caused a distorted perception of reality: “the circumstance of material comfort and even of prosperity for most people... was being superseded by the idea of possession, by being through having, by pageantry and show rather than by open confrontation with reality, by desire rather than by fulfillment.”⁴ As material desire came to the forefront of American culture, the role of human suffering in the production of goods moved to the periphery. As a result, Americans were able to create a reality in which the personal fulfillment of goods was detached from the human suffering involved in mass production.

The rhetoric of businessmen and political leaders of the industrial era helped create this reality because it championed mass consumption as a means to create a utopian society. Inventors such as

Thomas Edison pioneered ideas for automatic machines that he believed would make life “easier and cheaper.” Of particular concern to Edison was the poor man’s position in the mass market. His “Samaritan Market” would decrease the cost of goods by replacing all the middle-men — shopkeepers, clerks, bag boys — with machines. Edison wanted to increase the purchasing power of the working class, thereby giving “[the poor man’s] nickel the same purchasing power that mine has.” This appeal to economic egalitarianism elicited support from the working class because it obscured the reality of industrialization: machines were taking the jobs from the very people Edison was attempting to help. Additionally, the appeal to frugality and thrift made mass production attractive to middle-class clientele.⁵

Furthermore, public figures often employed religious iconography in order to erase the populace’s scrutiny regarding any facet of mass consumption. Henry Ford — nicknamed the “prophet of mass production” referred to machines as “ministers to man” responsible for the “advancement of civilization,” while President Calvin Coolidge harkened “the man who builds a factory builds a temple.”⁶ By endowing the tools of mass production with religious meaning, these men attempted to reassure the American people that consumer culture would benefit, rather than impede, human progress.

The tool that most effectively increased public support was America’s largest advertising platform: the World’s Fair. Universal expositions such as this provided an opportunity to propagandize mass production and consumption on a national level. The most obvious implementation of propaganda was demonstrated succinctly in the motto for the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair: “Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms.”⁷ Throughout the early twentieth-century, the power of technology, production, and consumption were increasingly worshipped as the key to human and national progress, an idea that becomes readily apparent in times of economic and political turbulence.

In fact, the use of consumption as propaganda soared during the economic downturn of the Great Depression and the political antagonism of the Cold War. Amidst the ruins of the Great Depression, consumers were seen “as the potential source of expanded demand that could pull the United States out of severe depression.”⁸ Likewise, Cold War media advertised that consumption and capitalism would combat Communism by promoting American values of democracy and individualism. These two instances reveal how consumerism evolved into more than a coping mechanism in times of turmoil; it transformed into a significant element of American identity. Because mass consumption promised to rescue the nation from the pit of depression and the evils of communism, participation in the market became inadvertently synonymous with democracy, freedom, citizenship, and patriotism.

No social class in post-war America embraced this new identity more than women and African Americans. Consumer culture allowed these historically disenfranchised groups to redefine the roles that had been prescribed to them. Working women — who sought jobs in order to provide a higher standard of living for their families — challenged the economic and social culture, while stay at home mothers gained political significance by advocating for consumer rights and protections. Furthermore, African Americans used their purchasing power to gain access to jobs and fight white monopoly over the market. Armed with the motto “don’t buy where you can’t work,” African Americans envisioned a “Black Metropolis,” where economic freedom was secured by disassociating with the

business of white men.⁹ As a result, black consumers “converted acts of desire into a political and intellectual life of distinction and defiance against traditional ways of life.”¹⁰

While consumption provided liberation for disempowered groups of Americans, it simultaneously delegitimized the system of white patriarchy that characterizes the capitalist system. During the rise of consumerism, this newfound liberation challenged the system to such a degree that the very people who encouraged consumption began to feel threatened by the power it granted women and African Americans. As Lizabeth Cohen states in *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, “for social groups not otherwise well represented, in particular women and African Americans, identification as consumers offered a new opportunity to make claims on those wielding public and private power in American society.”¹¹ Ultimately, the white patriarchy of American capitalism faced a battle on two fronts: women fighting for their rights and protections as consumers, and African Americans boycotting for their rights to produce and consume.

Additionally, the market was beginning to experience antagonism from another segment of society: America’s disenchanted youth. Though consumer culture in the 1930s and 1950s faced backlash because people believed consumerism was depriving youth of the values of hard work — it created a generation of spoiled, lazy, and “decadent” adolescents — this opposition paled in comparison to the surge of anti-consumption sentiments that engrossed the 1960s.¹² During this period, a prominent number of American youth began to see their lives as products of the consumer capitalist society, void of individualism and authenticity; they themselves were merely products in a capitalist society.

This idea of people as products permeated throughout America’s educational institutions, and was prominently championed at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1963 University President Clark Kerr expressed his vision of a “knowledge factory,” where the “production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge” would “serve as the focal point for national growth.”¹³ According to Kerr, the future of the higher educational system depended on its ability to conform to business standards. Universities were an “industry” rather than a frontier for intellectuality; professors were “entrepreneurs” rather than vanguards of intellectual growth; students were “products” rather than individuals. Kerr’s notion of an educational system that mirrored the assembly line organization of industrial America transformed students into uniform products designed to serve the economy of consumption.

The group of middle-class youth that revolted against the “conformity,” “materialism,” and “containment of individual expression” imposed by the consumer culture became known as the Counterculture.¹⁴ In an attempt to find meaning outside of consumption, they participated in the Civil Rights Movement and the Hippie scene, and found release through sexual liberation and drug experimentation. However, as Gary Cross points out in *All Consuming Century: Why Commercialization Won in Modern America*, by adopting particular styles of dress and music, the “counterculturalists became rebels through consumption,” and ultimately “turned individualistic consumption into a mass market.”¹⁵ This irony highlights a critical moment in the rise of consumerism: the birth of what would become an octopus-like enterprise, ensnaring every faction in society, including the protesters.

The process behind the mass market’s insidious incorporation into every crevice of American

culture is explained extensively in Naomi Klein's *No Space, No Choice, No Jobs, No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. As companies in the late twentieth-century shifted toward branding, rather than product production, a "cultural feeding frenzy" took place, and "in the process, virtually nothing has been left unbranded."¹⁶ Through its emphasis on psychological connectedness to the product — rather than the physical product itself — companies were ultimately able to brand the human psyche. Even in the present day, the way Americans define themselves and others as individuals is due in large part to the products they consume, desire, loathe, and avoid. As a result, Klein believes Americans have become an insecure and emotionally detached people who define identity within a materialistic context.

One of the primary concerns today is how this materialistic emphasis affects the ability to form and maintain meaningful human relationships. In 2013 the *Journal of Consumer Research* published their findings based on data collected from over 2,500 consumers across a six-year time period. The results confirmed their "material trap" hypothesis: consumers who buy products in order to attain happiness and success experience increased loneliness, which in turn reinforces materialism.¹⁷ In his *Guardian* article *Materialism: A System that Eats us From the Inside Out*, George Monbiot states that the materialist quest for fulfillment is "associated with depression, anxiety, and broken relationships. It is socially and self-destructive."¹⁸

Yet, the contention between material desire and human emotional fulfillment is not only exhibited in scientific research; it has even found its way into popular culture, as demonstrated by the 2013 film *Her*. Set in the near future, *Her* explores the relationship between a man, Theodore Twombly, and his operating system, Samantha. Unlike Catherine, Theodore's ex-wife, Samantha is designed to fulfill all of his emotional needs. The validity of the relationship is called into question after Catherine accuses Theodore of being unable to handle real emotion. A society in which desire and happiness are fulfilled through material goods, the director Spike Jonze suggests, risks rendering human relationships as inferior, if not unnecessary. Because material goods are tailored to fit us, we can experience frustration when human beings are unable to live up to this level of perfection.

However, America's materialistic culture is not only destructive socially; it is destructive to the environment as well. Though awareness to the environmental effects of consumerism caught on in the early 1940s and lasted into the 1970s, these efforts shy in comparison to the behemoth that is twenty-first-century environmental activism. Americans are more conscious of the fact that production, processing, and consumption of commodities deprive the earth of natural resources and produce an immense amount of pollution and waste. Yet, the modern-day solution still involves consumption, only now it is in the form of "green" products — reusable bags and water bottles, sustainable furniture and fuel sources, and the countless commodities produced with recycled or reclaimed materials are only a small portion of products that have flooded the market — the irony of which reintroduces the concept of niche marketing discussed by Klein. Upon examining the current trend of consumption in the United States, it becomes apparent that rather than alter our views toward consumption, we have simply changed the products we consume.

The global environmental issues stem from a simple fact: there are too many people with too much stuff. Greenpeace activist Annie Leonard eloquently states, "It is a linear system and we live on a finite planet. You cannot run a linear system on a finite planet indefinitely."¹⁹ If we are aware

that our current standard of living is unsustainable, why do we continue to consume? The answer is not so simplistic. Richard Robbins, author of *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*, states, “Our consumption patterns are so much a part of our lives that to change them would require a massive cultural overhaul, not to mention severe economic dislocation.”²⁰ Consumption has become so fundamental in our personal lives and the global economy that we cannot escape it, even if the future of the planet and the well-being of the human condition are at stake.

Throughout the rise of consumerism Americans constantly had to concede their values of the past in order to attain the ideal future advertised to them. Though hesitant at first, society accepts, and even embraces the individualism and sophistication new commodities offer, particularly during turbulent times and especially among disenfranchised groups. However, American society is now realizing the true cost of consumerism: traditional values are dismantled, personal identity is compromised, and the environment is destroyed. Today’s anxiety emanates from the fact that the ideal is environmentally unsustainable and emotionally unfulfilling. The future America had planned for itself during the rise of consumerism is the *fata morgana* on the horizon of today’s consumer culture: illusory, intangible, and unattainable.

¹ Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 1, 150-160; Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 19.

² William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 6-8, 136.

³ Frank L. Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, (Chicago: George M. Hill Company, 1900), 5.

⁴ Leach, *Land of Desire*, 190.

⁵ “Edison Plans an Automatic Clerkless Shop,” *The Washington Post*, May 22, 1910.

⁶ Henry Ford, “Machines as Ministers to Man,” *New York Times*, March 5, 1939.

⁷ Robert Rydell, “Century of Progress Exposition,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, Chicago Historical Society, 1993.

⁸ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2003), 28.

⁹ Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*, 51.

¹⁰ Baldwin, *Chicago’s New Negroes*, 6.

¹¹ Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*, 32.

¹² Gary Cross, *An All-consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Modern America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 152.

¹³ Clark Kerr, “The Uses of the Univeristy,” Lecture, Godkin Lectures, Berkley, CA, 1963.

¹⁴ Cross, *An All-consuming Century*, 151.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 167-169.

¹⁶ Naomi Klein, *No Space, No Choice, No Jobs, No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York: Picador USA, 2000), 8.

¹⁷ Rik Pieters, “Bidirectional Dynamics of Materialism and Loneliness: Not Just a Vicious Cycle,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40.4 (December 2013), 615-31.

¹⁸ George Monbiot, “Materialism: A System That Eats Us from the Inside Out,” *The Guardian*, December 9, 2013.

¹⁹ Celia Cole, “Overconsumption Is Costing Us the Earth and Human Happiness,” *The Guardian*, April 21, 2010.

²⁰ Richard Robbins, *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism* (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 209-210.

418: Food in American Culture

Becoming a Pineapple Princess

By Mia Calabretta

Written as a final assessment for AMST 418, Food in America, the following paper tells a little known food story to draw attention to the relationship between marketing and what we eat through historical advertisements.

For many people, pineapples and Hawaii are synonymous. Known for being exotic, specialty fruits that we enjoy on occasion, they are chock full of Vitamin C and are a perfect summertime snack. To most Americans, that's the extent of the pineapple story. However, almost all of our pre-conceived notions about pineapples are a result of a massive advertising campaign beginning in the early 1900's. Similar to the oranges of Doug Sackman's *Orange Empire*, pineapples have a food story few know about that can be told through the past hundred years of its advertisements.

Pineapples, although thought by many to have originated in Hawaii, actually evolved in South America. There, they were enjoyed by native people due to their sweet taste and natural abundance. Christopher Columbus' sailors were some of the first Europeans to try the fruit, praising its flavor when they returned home. As Sidney Mintz explained in *Sweetness and Power*, fresh fruit, sugar, and sweetness were a rarity in Europe for hundreds of years due to their expense, making pineapples a delicacy. Pineapples, like oranges, were found on ships because they helped prevent scurvy on long sea voyages. Finally, on January 11, 1813, pineapples arrived in Hawaii. They didn't truly become successful, though, until Jim Dole attributed his name to the product and forever changed the story of the fruit.

James Drummond Dole, nicknamed "The Pineapple King," arrived in Hawaii in 1899 and began growing pineapples in Wahiawa, Oahu in 1901. In 1907, he moved his cannery to Honolulu, Oahu where overproduction quickly became a problem. Although they were able to grow and can plenty of pineapples that would store for much longer than fresh ones, the market wasn't large enough to keep up with supply. By the next year, the growers in Hawaii realized that they were not helping themselves by trying to promote individual brands. Instead, they decided to focus on promoting the Hawaiian pineapple over other foreign suppliers to increase America's awareness of the product and through that, demand. "On May 7, 1908, nine of the pineapple canners founded the Hawaiian Pineapple Growers' Association (HPGA)." Dole was elected as the first president of the HPGA.¹

One of their first decisions was to send salesmen out to the mainland to try to promote the product and educate the consumer. Advertisements began to be presented in grocery stores and magazines in an effort to increase curiosity. There was also a push in promotional literature, like recipes, on how to use this new fruit. They were mildly successful, but not nearly enough to move the massive crop that had been produced. Finally, in the fall of 1908, the growers decided to drop the price and launch the first major national consumer advertising campaign in the United States.²

As Doug Sackman argues, “Advertisements were the foot soldiers of the Orange Empire, marching forward into new territories, expanding their sphere of influence.”³ Similarly, the new ads had the potential to take pineapples to an almost empirical status. The campaign, costing \$50,000, targeted mothers, the 25 million reading audience of magazines for mothers, including *The Ladies Home Journal*. Pineapples were also the first American food to adopt a nationwide co-op ad campaign. Like Sunkist, they marketed pineapples as a health food that would help keep your children happy and healthy, as well as keep you young. Like Sackman’s argument for orange advertisements, pineapples were also promoted to “restore health, vigor and contact with nature.”⁴ Lisa Heldke’s article “Let’s Cook Thai” argues that food products are traditionally advertised to women because “food and cooking is something traditionally regarded as women’s work.”⁵

Like California’s exhibit at the World’s Fair Exposition in Chicago of 1893, displaying the Liberty Bell made out of oranges, The 1909 Alaska-Yukon Exhibition in Seattle displayed a twenty-five foot pineapple advertising Hawaii and its fruits. Probably the most essential factor in the pineapple’s success besides taste was its association with Hawaii. “Hawaiian Pineapple Day” was held in San Francisco in November 1915 complete with Hawaiian leis for visitors with a pineapple hangtag naming the time and place. The association was so helpful, we take it for granted in ads today. Similar to how California was portrayed as a wealthy, luxurious paradise, Dole capitalized on Hawaii’s tropical flair and mystery tenfold. Hawaii was incredibly exotic and fantastic to mainland Americans who had only read of such a place in books. Pineapples represented “the flavor of aloha” as stated on Dole’s website. Why, though, are we so infatuated with the exotic?

As early as Dole’s arrival in Hawaii, he began the crucial association of Hawaii’s island paradise with pineapples. It is a consistent theme in pineapple advertisements through today. Lisa Heldke describes America’s love of the exotic saying, “I could not deny I was motivated by a deep desire to have contact with or somehow own an experience of an exotic other.”⁶ Although she is talking about exotic cookbooks, the trend can be seen in America’s constant search for the new and the different. She goes on to say, “Exotic is understood to mean not only ‘not local’ but also ‘excitingly unusual.’ The exotic, in turn, we read as an indication of authenticity.”⁷ Ironically, pineapples and many other foods are not native to the places we attribute them to. However, that didn’t stop people from making sure they chose Hawaiian pineapples over any others, no matter what the price. The association not only helped increase sales, but also let Hawaiian growers command a higher price, even today. Many pineapples are grown and sold cheaper in Taiwan, but America’s trust has already been placed in the Dole Corporation and its Hawaiian fruits.

The exoticism can also be seen in the portrayal of Hawaiian women in the ads. Produced in 1935 by Dole, one highlights a sexy Hawaiian woman serving a white middle class family in the middle of the country. Not only does this capitalize on the exoticism, but also draws on Sackman’s idea of sexualizing women for advertising purposes. Like the ad for Tesoro oranges he describes in *Orange Empire*⁸, Dole uses an attractive woman to sell the product. The ad is not overtly sexual, despite the enormous slit in her hula skirt, but it does serve to romanticize the production, distribution and consumption of the fruit. So far in the ads, she is the closest thing the consumer is shown to a pineapple picker, leaving a historian to wonder who the real workers are.

Many early pineapple ads bear a striking resemblance to those seen on orange crate labels. They depict an abundance of fruit, some already canned, by some mysterious, unseen force. In the early 1950's, Edward Norbeck sought to answer a question that had bothered him during his time in Hawaii: who was picking all the pineapples? His book *Pineapple Town* serves as a study of the plantation lifestyle and the different races and ethnicities that worked on them. He also details the pineapple town communities and new technological advances. Although the book is now somewhat outdated, it does point out that someone else was concerned about those mysterious "factories in the fields" that activist and American author, Carey McWilliams, had warned of. Norbeck's studies show that "in roughly chronological order of importation, the list includes Chinese, Portugese, Japanese, Puerto Ricans, Koreans, and Filipinos."⁹ Because their economic and social status was low, many of the immigrant working populations stayed on the island and make up a majority of today's Hawaiian population.

But why not picture these hardworking people? Sackman believes that "the neat trick of absenting the grower and the other laborers not only heightened the consumer's sense of community with nature, it masked the working conditions from which the fruit emerged."¹⁰ Today's farm workers are "essentially trapped for months at a time in rat-infested camps, often without beds and sometimes without functioning toilets or a reliable water supply," claims Richard Marosi of *Los Angeles Times*.¹¹ Marosi also claims that "those who seek to escape their debts and miserable living conditions have to contend with guards, barbed-wire fences and sometimes threats of violence from camp supervisors."¹² Modern ads rarely picture those who are producing the product. I would guess that it is because even today, labor laws are so ineffective and unenforced, people would be ashamed to purchase a product produced by those means.

Pineapple ads have stayed fairly consistent from the 1950's and 60's on. We don't see ads for specific fruit as much; but generally they are still associating them with health and Hawaii. The biggest change in pineapple advertising can be seen in the change of pineapple for health as a diet tool. The image of a diet book was found on a casual internet search for pineapple ads. Upon further research, pineapple is still considered a diet food today.

Since the turn of the century, there has been a change in the meaning of health. Once meaning comfortable and slightly corpulent, now means skin, bones, and whatever it takes to maintain it. As the *Fat Studies Reader* states, America could not be too thin. The 1970's brought an increase in "low-cal" products with a 30% increase from the decade before. Now 70% of American families were trying out the new low-carb diet. "By 1971, government officials estimate diet product profits at somewhere between \$250 million and \$1 billion a year."¹³ It's not a surprise that the year before, a book was released entitled *The Sexy Pineapple Diet* advocating eating only pineapple to keep you slim. This is just one example of the "protein-sparing fasting programs" that were popular at the time.¹⁴

As many people know, this sort of unhealthy eating still occurs today. Creative recipe, craft and lifestyle website "Pinterest" is filled with juicing programs, unsatisfying fasts, and "miracle cleanses" that are unhealthy and equally ineffective long term. A basic search for "sexy pineapple diets" led me to the Livestrong website which advocates a different variation of the beloved pineapple diet involving tuna. It gives warnings of potential health risks of only eating pineapple and tuna for 3

days, but also assures the reader that it is inexpensive and leads to quick weight loss. Even though it is high in Vitamin C, one can infer that this fad diet, although probably tasty, is not good for your body and should not be attempted.

It's hard to ignore pineapples in everyday life. Once you start looking, they're everywhere! From hamburger advertisements at Islands restaurant, to Annette Funicello's song "Pineapple Princess," they are abundant in history and present day media. There are hundreds of recipes on the internet and in printed cookbooks for all types of pineapple infused entrees and desserts. It's hard to believe that there was a time when most of the population had never tried the summertime fruit, but such was the case only about 100 years ago. Beginning in the 1920's, pineapple growing and canning had grown into Hawaii's largest industry. The Dole Plantation in Hawaii is one of the most visited attractions on the Hawaiian Islands, second only to Pearl Harbor. Pineapples also served to sell Hawaii as a tourist destination. Overall, it seems the original \$50,000 advertising budget went a long way.

¹ Richard A. Hawkins, "The Cooperative Marketing of Hawaiian Canned Pineapple, 1908-39" learn.quinnipiac.edu, http://learn.quinnipiac.edu/charm/CHARM%20proceedings/CHARM%20article%20archive%20pdf%20format/Volume%2013%202007/259-270_hawkins.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Doug Sackman, *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 87.

⁴ Ibid, 89.

⁵ Lisa Heldke, "Let's Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism," in *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001), 396.

⁶ Ibid., 375.

⁷ Ibid., 398.

⁸ Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 91.

⁹ Edward Norbeck, *Pineapple Town* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 5.

¹⁰ Sackman, *Orange Empire*, 89.

¹¹ Richard Marosi, "Hardship on Mexico's Farms, a Bounty for U.S. Tables," *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 7, 2014.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Pat Lyons, "Prescription for Harm," in *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther Rothblum and Sondra Solovay (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 76.

¹⁴ Ibid., 76.

428: American Monsters

Biotechnology and the Beast: Jurassic Park and the Monstrosity of Genetically Engineered Sexual Reproduction

By Raymond Ortiz

In this essay, Raymond Ortiz investigates underlying themes of gender-based discrimination and the exploitation of sexuality found in Steven Spielberg's cinematic masterpiece. Written for Dr. Adam Golub's inaugural American Monsters course, this research argues that monstrosity of the cloned dinosaurs directly correlates with a cultural fear of women in the public domain, modern technology with reproduction, and — most important — the ramifications of these developments towards men. In the end, the female dinosaurs, which evolved to repopulate without the need of males, as well as the female human characters serve both as the monsters and heroines of the film. They serve in positions that prove the female embodiment as the strength and power while the male embodiment acts as the inferior — perhaps reflecting evolving gender roles in the United States.

“Shoot *her!* Shoot *her!*”¹ yelled game warden Robert Muldoon, played by Bob Peck, to kill the attacking dinosaur in the opening scene of 1993's cinematic blockbuster *Jurassic Park*. A story of science versus morality, the film connects to a longer history in the study of monsters. The American image of scientific monstrosity changes with each generation and draws from countless inspirations. As Muldoon alludes to, the movie utilizes a female monster, cloned from fossilized dinosaur blood, to convey fear. *Jurassic Park* explores the dangers of genetically engineered sexual reproduction without consideration to ethics and the overall dangers of scientific experimentation. From analyzing the uniqueness of female dinosaurs, the movie cautions male audiences about deviation from gender and sexuality that cloning and artificial insemination poses. *Jurassic Park's* fears of unnatural breeding acts a critique of the monstrosity in defying the natural order of hetero-normative reproduction between men and women. While science creates the monster, deviation from gender norms also symbolizes a problem to the welfare of American society.

Based on Michael Crichton's 1990 novel *Jurassic Park*, the film adaptation follows the same premise as the novelization. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the movie tells the story of Dr. John Hammond, portrayed by Richard Attenborough, a billionaire of InGen Corporation who creates an animal park of cloned female dinosaurs on the fictional Isla Nublar, Costa Rica. The protagonist is renowned paleontologist Dr. Alan Grant, played by Sam Niell, who Hammond brings to the park in hopes of getting his endorsement of the project. Grant, initially the heroic figure, struggles to balance his pas-

sion for paleontology with the ethics of whether or not science should resurrect these extinct, unpredictable creatures. *Jurassic Park* culminates with the dinosaurs breaking from the scientists' control as they breed on their own; concurrently, the humans fight to survive from these predators. The movie concludes when Hammond realizes his lack of moral judgment led to the scientists' downfall — a theme in monster films of science.²

Spielberg's interpretation of *Jurassic Park* contains similar tropes to classic science horror films, such as James Whales' 1931 *Frankenstein* and 1935 *Bride of Frankenstein*. In *Jurassic Park*, the monsters are primarily the Tyrannosaurus Rex and Velociraptors. Like the monster and bride in Whales' movies, the dinosaurs serve as vehicles for morals and values. According to W. Scott Poole in his 2011 book *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting*, the monsters embody society's "otherness" by deviating from what constitutes the "normal." Drawing from Poole's theory, Spielberg's creatures parallel Whales' figures in that all the monsters find themselves caught amid an ongoing debate of science versus religion. The dinosaurs, a hybrid of extinct animals and modern biotechnology, serve as commentary towards contemporary issues of genetic experimentation.³

Jurassic Park contextualizes theories of monstrosity through fears of biotechnology conducted without consideration of morality. The movie delves into this social anxiety in its storyline of dinosaur cloning and controlled sexual reproduction. It cautions audiences about rapid scientific progress that ignores ethics and regard to potential catastrophic outcome. For example, the dinosaurs embody the cautionary tale motif discussed in Heather Urbanski's 2007 publication *Plagues, Apocalypses and Bug-Eyed Monsters: How Speculative Fiction Shows Us Our Nightmares*. Urbanski states that speculative fiction, or the genre of fantasy and science fiction, "covers any story that deliberately violates the bounds of reality," further adding it "breaks [society's] rules of our environment our 'common' sense."⁴ She maintains that stories about this subject matter represent deviation from the norms of society.⁵

In *Jurassic Park*, the doctors, when witnessing the developments for the first time, question the lack of moral judgment in cloning the extinct beasts. Despite many of the characters' backgrounds in paleo-related fields of science or knowledge of human development, there appears a unanimous concern against dinosaur cloning. Portrayed by Jeff Goldblum, Dr. Ian Malcolm, a mathematician and chaos theorist, questions Hammond's motives and the dangers of cloning an extinct species of animal. Malcolm confronts Hammond, arguing, "Don't you see the danger, John, inherent in what you're doing here? Genetic power is the most awesome force the planet's ever seen, but you *wield it* like a kid that's found his dad's gun."⁶ Malcolm contends:

I'll tell you the problem with the scientific power that you're using here; *it didn't require any discipline to attain it*. You read what others had done and you took the next step. You didn't earn the knowledge for yourselves, so you don't take any responsibility for it. You stood on the shoulders of geniuses to accomplish something as fast as you could and before you even knew you had, you patented it...and now you're selling it.⁷

Malcolm's disdain towards Hammond's development without reason reflects Urbanski's Nightmares Model theory. According to the author, speculative fiction violates the boundaries of reality in

which society understands them.⁸ When compared to this idea, a major component of *Jurassic Park*'s cautionary tale is the terror of *science gone wrong*. The Nightmares Model presents speculative fiction as warnings, drawing from widespread anxieties that originated in the Scientific Revolution.⁹ Quoting Ray Bradbury, Urbanski argues that, at some point, the mechanism of science stops serving in that capacity and becomes a dangerous device that generates paranoia. This experimentation will ultimately become and leave humankind "nowhere to hide from either that brilliance or that stupidity."¹⁰

Acknowledging the inability to hide from the "brilliance" reveals an underlying, and perhaps, primary monstrosity with the power that produced the monsters themselves. *Jurassic Park* situates within a broader history of monster-genre films that utilize a trope of the mad scientist figure. Hammond, the billionaire philanthropist of InGen who created the park, loses all sight of moral judgment in order to succeed in his endeavor. Using his wealth and academic knowledge, he disregards all hesitation from his peers and guests in regards to potential repercussions of cloning dinosaurs. Paleobotanist Dr. Ellie Sattler, portrayed by Laura Dern, challenges his lack of reasoning, stating:

[H]ow can you know anything about an extinct ecosystem? And therefore, how could you ever assume that you can control it? ... [Y]ou have plants in this building that are poisonous, you picked them because they look good, but these are aggressive living things that have *no idea* what century they're in, *and they'll defend themselves, violently if necessary*.¹¹

Using the prehistoric plants as the basis for her argument, Sattler foreshadows the danger that ensues later in the film. The dinosaurs act according to their natural instincts; they hunt, kill, and feed on anything threatening to their existence, which in this case are the humans. Hammond, and the backlash he received, brings forth an ongoing social debate discussed in Urbanski's analysis of not only morality versus science, but a criticism of Hammond seeing himself as god-like. The figure that exploits science, or power, without any regard to potential repercussions symbolizes the greater fear.¹²

According Poole in *Monsters in America*, the moral debate in *Jurassic Park* is a broader fear of uncontrolled power — namely who *wields* it. Using Whale's *Frankenstein* as a case study, Poole asserts that scientific modernity poses a threat to the human experience. In *Frankenstein*, doctor Henry Frankenstein, played by Colin Clive, creates life within "the monster." Despite attempts by his love interest and close peers to make Frankenstein realize the immorality with his experiments and potential problems, Frankenstein continues his work and brings the man-like monster to life. He states, "I know what it's like to be God," conveying a lust for the power he holds.¹³ Comparably, *Jurassic Park*'s Hammond mirrors Frankenstein. Both exploit their power and passion for scientific progress, which culminates in mass devastation by their creations. In *Frankenstein*, the monster, unbeknown to cultural norms of civility, wreaks havoc throughout the local village; In *Jurassic Park*, the dinosaurs begin reproducing without the technicians and break free from their enclosures, hunting the humans as they would in their natural state.¹⁴

Urbanski's analysis of improper use of power and uncontrolled sciences proves true in *Jurassic Park*, which resonates with the period in which Spielberg created the film. In Kendall R. Phillips' 2005 publication *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture*, he claims the fears in monster films and fic-

tional works reflect cultural moments in American history. Phillips maintains that monster films, such as *Jurassic Park*, capture society's collective anxieties and concerns, which in turn become a cultural moment. From the mid to late 1900s, scientists across the world experimented with test tube babies and in vitro fertilization, a process in which a human egg is fertilized with medical assistance outside of the female's body. In 1981, medical professionals at Monash University, Australia, successfully impregnated fourteen women, resulting in nine births. American scientists at Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) in Norfolk, Virginia, capitalized on this development and furthered its success by creating a hormone known as follicle-stimulating hormone. This agent gave EVMS' doctors the ability to *control* the embryo's development. Many religious sects, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Jewish community, condemned reproductive technology as it removed human love and procreation as norms of marriage. *Jurassic Park*, as well as Crichton's original novel, draws from the ethics of controlled pregnancy and the fears of an unfamiliar outcome. The power behind the monstrous rejects morality for the sake of science. Hammond's lack of moral judgment does not question if science could, but rather if it *should*, signifying a greater anxiety over the undisciplined nature of this form of modernity.¹⁵

Amid the prominent storyline of controlled genetic reproduction in *Jurassic Park*, a subtext of gender deviance emerges that alludes to an underlying fear of the feminine. The film's storyline situates within a longer history of disrupting natural relations and reproduction between males and females. In Harvey Roy Greenberg's 1975 article, "*King Kong*: The Beast in the Boudoir — or, 'You Can't Marry That Girl, You're a Gorilla!,'" the author argues that female monsters resonate with male audiences as a form of emasculation and gender superiority. Greenberg states, "[M]ost female monster movies to date have portrayed what *men* find fearful about the feminine."¹⁶ Using the 1933 film *King Kong* as an example, he upholds a woman's purity as the utmost convention that requires protection from monstrosity. Greenberg insists *King Kong* conveys to audiences ambivalent attitudes in regards to female sexuality. *Jurassic Park* follows a similar trope as *King Kong*; monstrosity in both films challenges traditional gender norms through the chaos that ensues if such ideals are not maintained. Specifically in *Jurassic Park*, if the feminine embodiment deviates from its inferior position to the masculine, then the female representation becomes a menace to the normal — which is determined by the male.¹⁷

Jurassic Park continuously reiterates to audiences that the scientists solely bred *female* dinosaurs to control reproduction, which assured the creatures could never procreate on their own. Early in the film, Spielberg incorporates allusions to what will become the terror. When the doctors land on the island, their helicopter faces turbulence. Grant struggles to buckle his seat as his contains only two sockets, symbolizing two female genitals. He finally ties them into a knot, demonstrating that the task can be completed without the need of a plug, or the male genital. This scene emphasizes not only the recurring theme of nature finding a way to survive, but that it will evolve beyond the norm of heterosexual reproduction if needed. As the film progresses, the dinosaurs begin breeding in the wild *without male insemination*; they are able to reassign their own sex as a result of the cloned blood stemming from a specific of frog that shares the same ability. The movie is a critique on gender normality through the conventions of sexual reproduction. It resonates within the fear of female mutation, sexual and gender deviance, and — most importantly — creating life without the need of the opposite sex.¹⁸

The subtext debate over maintaining gender and sexual norms is seen with the human characters throughout the film. Grant and Sattler are in a committed relationship and struggle in deciding whether or not to have children; Grant does not want to bear children, while Sattler desires a family of her own. Furthermore, in the midst of the terror the humans experience towards the female dinosaurs, the male characters react differently to Sattler's reaction to the creatures. When witnessing the Tyrannosaurus Rex, this dialogue ensues:

Malcolm, Grant, and Sattler observe the Tyrannosaurus Rex enclosure.

Malcolm: "God creates dinosaurs. God destroys dinosaurs. God creates man. Man destroys God. Man creates dinosaurs."

Sattler: "Dinosaurs eat man. *Woman inherits the Earth.*"

Malcolm and Grant stare at Sattler in horror.¹⁹

Sattler, who spoke with much confidence and assurance, adds to the hybridity of the monsters. She juxtaposes their fear of the dinosaurs with the idea of women dominating the earth. The monster personifies not only a fear of modern science and cloning, but also emasculation and an end to a patriarchal world. As Greenberg discusses in his article, monstrosity emerges when female innocence and purity is lost. His theory manifests when the dinosaurs' evolution breaks from the scientists' control, which the majority are male doctors. The climax of the film relies heavily on the female representation as the unexpected mythic heroines. Hammond's granddaughter Alexis Murphy, played by Ariana Richards, protects the remaining survivors from the Velociraptors by hacking into the security control system — a feat they did not know how to achieve. Accordingly, the female Tyrannosaurus Rex abruptly kills the Velociraptors that threatened the humans for the duration of the film. *Jurassic Park* ends with its female representations saving everyone from the beasts.²⁰

Jurassic Park situates within a filmography of monstrosity disrupting the male embodiment, which symbolizes normalcy. Elizabeth Young argues in her 1991 article "Here Comes the Bride: Wedding, Gender, and Race in *Bride of Frankenstein*" that horror films reflects anxieties of gender and sexuality. These narratives reveal complex power relations and gender dynamics that permeate the United States. She claims, "Recent feminist criticism of the horror film...has developed powerful psychoanalytic interpretations, focusing, for example, on the explanatory force of male anxieties about *castration* and about the maternal body."²¹ The female monster of Whale's 1935 *Bride of Frankenstein* becomes a menace to the male figures only when she rejects her intended mate as a companion. As the result of this refusal, the male monster decides *she belongs dead* and kills them both. It is the bride's deviance to her expected role that justified the male monster's actions. Young contends that the bride reverses the normal — female powerlessness. Overall, the monstrosity draws from female empowerment and dominance. The author argues that the bride becomes a threat when she rejects her intended role of a *bride*. *Jurassic Park*, when compared to *Bride of Frankenstein*, upholds that trend of castration anxiety with female monstrosity and unfixed gender designations as the ultimate problem. The female dinosaurs reject their controlled environment and become problematic when they produce offspring without the need of insemination — rejecting the male, as did the bride.²²

Harry M. Benshoff, author his 1997 monograph *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film*, maintains that many monstrous figures are feared because they disrupt the status quo of heterosexuality and traditional gender roles. He explains that audiences fear the imbalance of gendered power. In a similar argument, John Edgar Browning claims in his 2013 essay, “Towards a Monster Pedagogy: Reclaiming the Classroom for the Other,” the feminine image often serves as the monster — specifically female sexuality. Within patriarchal institutions, the empowered female embodies the negative aspect of society. Poole affirms Benshoff and Browning’s claims in *Monsters in America* that the need to protect gender norms resonates in horror films. Regarding an event of 1817 in which fishermen allegedly spotted a sea monster off the coast of Massachusetts, he states, “Some claimed, or rather worried, that the beast that had come into their harbor, had been a female of its species, and had come to spawn.”²³ *Jurassic Park* exemplifies the cautionary warnings discussed by these authors. The monsters, female dinosaurs, only become a problem once they begin to breed on their own. The shock value of *Jurassic Park* results from the dinosaurs’ liberation from the institutionalized environment established by the doctors and deviate from their intended purpose.²⁴

Created in a period of science progressing through cloning and in vitro fertilization, Spielberg’s *Jurassic Park* comments on the dangers of genetically engineering reproduction and reveals an underlying panic of how these changes violate morality and conventions of gender. Comparing the movie to the *Frankenstein* series by James Whale, *Jurassic Park* succeeds a broader filmography in speculative fiction that spans over eighty years. These movies caution audiences on the many dangers of scientific progress with no regard to ethics. Accordingly, *Jurassic Park* serves as a vehicle to show how sexual deviance threatens traditional manhood and womanhood. Female monstrosity symbolizes fear of the male losing his sense of identity. In the end, normalcy depends on morality triumphing over science and male superiority over the female.

¹ *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg (1993; Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures), DVD.

² *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg, DVD; Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park* (New York City: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

³ W. Scott Poole, *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 2-3, 6, 8, 11, 23.

⁴ Heather Urbanski, *Plagues, Apocalypses and Bug-Eyed Monsters: How Speculative Fiction Shows Us Our Nightmares* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 8; *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg, DVD.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 8, 17-8.

⁶ *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg, DVD.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Urbanski, *Plagues, Apocalypses and Bug-Eyed Monsters*, 8.

⁹ Urbanski states, “As A.E. Levin observes, ‘the first quarter of this century [the twentieth] saw revolutionary changes in the foundations of basic sciences, from physics to biology. A vast pool of ideas and information was created, and applied disciplines could start utilizing it,’ all of which ‘changed life a great deal’” (*ibid.*, 15).

¹⁰ Urbanski, *Plagues, Apocalypses and Bug-Eyed Monsters*, 15.

¹¹ *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg, DVD.

¹² Urbanski, *Plagues, Apocalypses and Bug-Eyed Monsters*, 16.

¹³ *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale (1931; Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures), DVD.

¹⁴ Urbanski, 15-7; Poole, *Monsters in America*, 92; *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale, DVD.

¹⁵ Kendall R. Phillips, *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 2-5; Randi Hutter Epstein, "Pioneer Reflects on Future of Reproductive Medicine," *New York Times*, March 22, 2010; Alina Dain, "Reconciling Religion and Infertility," *Medill Reports*, July 30, 2009.

¹⁶ Harvey Roy Greenberg, "*King Kong*: The Beast in the Boudoir — or, 'You Can't Marry That Girl, You're a Gorilla!,'" in *The Dread of Difference: Gender and Horror in Film*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 338.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 338, 342, 349-50.

¹⁸ *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg, DVD.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg, DVD; Greenberg, "*King Kong*: The Beast in the Boudoir," 338.

²¹ Elizabeth Young, "Here Comes the Bride: Wedding, Gender, and Race in *Bride of Frankenstein*," *Feminist Studies* 17, no. 3 (Autumn, 1991): 404.

²² *Bride of Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale (1935; Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures), DVD; Young, "Here Comes the Bride," 403-4, 410; Paul Lauter, *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park: Activism, Culture, & American Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 109.

²³ Poole, *Monsters in America*, 19.

²⁴ Harry M. Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997), 6-14, 33-4; John Edgar Browning, "Towards a Monster Pedagogy: Reclaiming the Classroom for the Other," in *Fear and Learning: Essays on the Pedagogy of Horror*, ed. Sean Moreland and Aalya Ahmed (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013): 43, 51, 53; *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg, DVD; Poole, *Monsters in America*, 19.

442: Television and American Culture

Welcome to the Herd: My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, the Brony Sub-Culture, and Changing Masculinity Norms

By Gareth O'Neal

Written for AMST 442: TV and American Culture, this project was the term research paper. Due to the negative media attention the fandom receives and the uniqueness of the brony fandom, scholarly work on the show was difficult to find, especially in the show's platform of changing masculine norms and heteronormativity. The project proved enlightening as through its research, the author discovered the reason behind his own appreciation of My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic.

Adult fans of the show *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* have created a large interactive fanbase within the past five years. The prominence of the show's unexpected "brony" male fandom suggest that the messages of the show carry meaning outside of the intended audience of young girls. The fandom has grown amidst a metaphorical perfect storm of neo-sincere adult fans, fan edits, pastiche of the show, and lax digital rights management on the part of Hasbro. With the popularity of the show continuing to grow, general culture has begun to notice the fandom's size. While some individuals within the online community and news media may mock the show and its fans, bronies are starting to re-orient masculine gender norms through their unironic love for the show.

The My Little Pony Franchise

The Hasbro toy manufacturing company began producing plastic ponies under the name "My Pretty Pony" in 1981. Two years later, the company began international distribution after rebranding the line to My Little Pony. In the three decades since the toy's production, Hasbro commissioned three animated cartoon series and a number of TV specials. Robertson notes that the vast majority of individual pony personalities made for the line "bear the quintessential hallmarks of femininity." Indeed, branded products have always targeted juvenile girls, naming almost all pony personalities with feminine names and designing the toys around bright color palettes, rarely venturing into dark colors.¹

Hasbro redesigned the pony products a number of times, creating four generations distinct from each other due to the style of animation and character designs. The most recent generation, Generation Four (G4), was designed by showrunner, Lauren Faust. Previously known for her creative roles in designing other cartoons like *Powerpuff Girls* and *Foster's Home for Imaginary Friends*.² The pilot of

the new series *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, oft-times shortened to MLP, aired in 2010 and since then has grown in popularity outside its intended juvenile female target audience.

With Faust's new designs and executive producer status, she was able to change much of what American cultural participants previously perceived as a series strictly for female children. Intending the show to be entertaining for parents and other adults watching the show with the juveniles, she chose an aesthetic that would appeal outside of the show's target demographic. Drawing from anime and manga elements, the characters took on a new chibi aesthetic design, having heads and eyes larger in proportion to the bodies. Even though the character proportions are cartoon-ish, the motion is realistic and characters express a broad range of emotion through clever facial design. Robertson posits that this babyish appearance, with large heads and eyes in relation to neck and body, inspires an emotional attachment to the characters on the show and may even call on an evolutionary "protective instinct."³

The style of humor is often sophisticated. The show's animation makes use of clever sight gags, fourth wall breaks, and bricolage. References to science fiction, fantasy, and popular culture abound in the episodes. The first two episodes of season two introduces the monstrous chimera Discord, voiced by John de Lancie, and obviously based on de Lancie's portrayal of the capricious, omnipotent character Q from *Star Trek*. Also numbering among the references are those to R-rated comedies such as *The Big Lebowski*.⁴ The show speaks to many adults for these reasons as the show is inclusive of many geek fandoms.

Subverting Expectations

As a geek sub-culture, Bronies actively engage in playful construction and reconstruction of the masculine category of geek. The name "brony" itself is a portmanteau of "pony" and "bro;" this connection plays with the connotations of "bro," a word which is synonymous within the geek and internet subcultures with hyper-masculine over indulgence and derogatory senses of masculinity.⁵ Bronies are mostly male adolescents of Western countries and as geeks are usually enthusiasts of both video and board games, speculative fiction, animation, computers, and the internet in general. The geek subculture is synonymous with social and creative elements in internet forums, blogs, and video creation.⁶

The brony subculture follows in the tradition of fables and other forms of storytelling which uses anthropomorphized animals as a metaphor for the human condition. The use of such animals provides a reflection on human nature and culture while allowing a convenient distance to remove oneself from the character's actions. Other similar uses within popular culture include *Maus*, which used anthropomorphized animals to depict one family's tale about the Holocaust, or animations such as Felix the Cat or Mickey Mouse.⁷ Laura Miller posits:

Human-like animals not only attract the viewer to hold or caress them, but also reveal a wish to insert distance between us and some troubling aspects of human behavior...[Z]oomorphic images deflect our focus away from age, gender and ethnicity, inviting us to see ourselves in them.⁸

Because of the distance from the thematic subjects, bronies have been able to take on difficult aspects of culture such as the masculine homogeneity and embrace the show with neo-sincerity, akin to a metaphorical tonic for cynicism and irony.

Fandoms in general are participatory cultures that make meaning from materials others have dismissed as trivial or useless. Bronies generally respond to criticism in a veiled or jocular tone. The rallying cry to neutralize negative detractors, especially “trolls” or those who intentionally antagonize in order to receive a negative reaction, has become “love and tolerance.”⁹ In this, bronies subvert the ironic and encompassing cynicism of the internet age. Through pastiche and remixing from within the sub-culture and without, bronies subvert the white male nerd stereotype. The community actively embraces an identity that “transgresses the stereotypical cynicism, hegemonic masculinity, and belligerence that tends to represent internet interactions”¹⁰

The Tough Guise

While sexual traits are determined through biology and genetics, gender norms are entirely cultural. It is the societal meanings tied to these biological differences that give the definition for each gender. These norms are learned through repetition and validation within the culture-at-large.¹¹ With the prevalence of modern internet culture and consumerism, one of the easiest ways to repeat and validate these norms is through media consumption.

Jonathan Katz argues that violent masculinity has become a cultural norm, or at least a perceived one. Young adults equate being a man with being violent, physically intimidating, or domineering. When he asked students words to describe a “man,” they responded with adjectives like “strong,” “powerful,” “physical,” and “intimidating,” among others. Katz analyzes this trend of masculine norms within American culture, commenting, “The messages that link men with being violent, controlling, and intimidating are everywhere in the culture, such as sports and wrestling, as well as the more obvious places like video games and films.”¹²

Katz discusses at length about American masculinity norms. He argues, “Nothing is natural or inherent about masculinity. It is largely about playing a role defined by broader structures”. He continues, using the prevalence of hip-hop and rap culture among suburban white adolescents as an example to show that even if one’s environs do not dictate the need to create a hyper-masculine persona, because of societal pressures from the larger culture, there is a requirement to conform to these images or risk falling into a peripheral definition of masculinity.¹³ What, then, happens when the popular culture heralds the image of the lone quick draw of the western or the spy licensed to kill as icons men should aspire to? It is natural that these images would be adopted through the natural human desire to become a member of the in-group and through peer pressure. This acts as a survival mechanism within an adopted culture of masculine hegemony.

The brony sub-culture and fandom in general is often devalued: “...fans are often feminized and/or desexualized in the dominant discourse.”¹⁴ Stanfill posits this type of discourse is established as a way to “shame” a fandom or subset of fandom in line *with* the perceived cultural norm. This can be powerful as a type of peer pressure to fit in to the hegemonic norm because people desire social

existence. The fear of being marginalized in a non-normative category is a push towards obedience.¹⁵ Fans are mainstream consumers but rarely feel mainstream. The longstanding stereotypes have influenced the collective psyche. Combine this psychological damage with Katz's observation that in the violent masculine, one gains respect by disrespecting another, it is not surprising that some bronies have reported some instances of disrespect from other fanbases within geek sub-culture.¹⁶ Others outside the fandom often see the brony culture poorly. A number of people outside the fandom, when asked their opinions on male fans of MLP, expressed some disgust or even belief in sexual deviancy. A minority of fans have reported worse, such as homophobic slurs directed towards them, threats of violence, and even destruction of property.¹⁷

This leaves the stereotype of the geek/nerd in a rather tenuous position. The image of the nerd held a liminal masculine identity from the 1980s.¹⁸ Though somewhat liberated from its negative stereotyping since then, it is still "...devalued as feminized — comprised of either insufficiently masculine men or hysterical women."¹⁹ Mocking representative tropes continue in the media and are use especially by non-fans.²⁰ This might be due in part to their introduction to the larger culture. The brony subculture has grown to its size because of the hands-off approach Hasbro has taken with digital rights management, allowing fans to upload episodes on Youtube without recourse. Fans now have a lot of influence over the show since season two when the fandom had begun its growth. This is an example how the fan, the geek, the nerd, has moved from the margins of pop culture and into the center of media production and consumption. Stanfill explains that fandom is the "new normal" for media interaction and are no longer subject to the marginalizing representation.²¹ The center of media production and consumption is now the fan and with that power there allows the fandom to help change the media interaction, representation, and the cultural hegemony at large.

Joy is a Human Right

Bronies have stated *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* has brought an escapist release and a way to explore the human condition within an anthropomorphized, de-masculinized fantasy world. As explained by Strike:

FiM has appeal to adult males for many reasons, but one I think is inescapable: this series has an unapologetic, infectious joy to it that reaches all audiences while condescending to none. In Western society, men are allowed only emotions of competition, aggression, and dominance; anything else is mocked as weak or effeminate. Joy, however, should NOT be linked to gender; it is a human right. *MLP:FIM* is a show which allows men to experience the simple-but-profound emotion of joy in a world that actively tries to deny them this feeling.²²

This simple need for joy, to experience a show without fear of prejudice or fear of mockery is the simple impetus that has made the brony fandom as big as it is today. The fandom has taken these ponies that represent archetypal qualities of friendship and gentleness and created a supportive, inclusive fan-base that is as creative as interactive. With their sincere love for a children's cartoon, they

have subverted geek and masculine normativity to provide a channel for self-expression and reflection that supports other likeminded people who share the same goals.

¹ Venetia Laura Delano Robertson, "Of Ponies and men: *My Little Pony Friendship is Magic* and the Brony Fandom." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2014 Vol 17 (1): 25.

² Ibid.

³ Robertson, *Of Ponies and Men*, 29

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Bro." Urban Dictionary. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bro> (Accessed May 2015)

⁶ Robertson, *Of Ponies and Men*, 22-23

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Laura Miller, "Japan's soomorphic urge." *Asian Network Exchange* 17(2): 79-80

⁹ Robertson, *Of Ponies and Men*, 28

¹⁰ Ibid., 33.

¹¹ Jason Mittell, "Representing Identity" in *Television and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. p. 305

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Tough Guise: Violence, Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation

¹⁴ Mel Stanfill, "'They're Losers, but I Know Better': Intra-Fandom Stereotyping and the Normalization of the Fan Subject." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* Vol 30, 2 (June 2013): 127.

¹⁵ Ibid., 129-30.

¹⁶ Tough Guise

¹⁷ Bronies: The Extremely Unexpected Adult Fans of My Little Pony. BronyDoc, LLC., 2013.

¹⁸ Lori Dendall, "Nerd nation: Images of nerds in US popular culture." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* Vol 2, 2 : 261

¹⁹ Stanfill, "'They're Losers, but I Know Better," 124.

²⁰ Ibid., 120.

²¹ Ibid., 119.

²² Strike J (2011) Of ponies and bronies. *Animation World Network*.

447: Race and American Popular Culture

Guilty Until Proven Innocent: Black Victims in the United States

By Brianna Flores

This essay was written for Dr. Erica Ball's Race and American Popular Culture course in the fall of 2014. Its purpose is to illuminate how the controversy surrounding Amandla Stenberg's casting in The Hunger Games figures within a larger, long-standing effort to deny black victimhood.

On April 18, 2011, Lionsgate Films announced the casting of Amandla Stenberg as Rue in the highly-anticipated film adaptation of Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games*.¹ Despite textual clues characterizing Rue as a twelve-year-old with "dark brown skin and eyes," a vocal number of the series' fans deemed thirteen-year-old Stenberg ill-suited for the role.² On numerous social media sites users decried Stenberg's casting as a miscarriage of Suzanne Collins' vision. Stenberg's blackness, several users opined, seemed inconsistent with other facets of Rue's character, namely her youth and innocence. "Awkward moment when Rue is some black girl and not the little blonde innocent girl you picture," one user wrote on Twitter.³ "I imagined Rue being... More frail? I dunno, more young, like the actress of Prim," a second user agreed.⁴ Other users believed Stenberg's blackness undermined the poignancy of Rue's death. One user, for example, confessed, "Kk call me racist but when I found out rue was black her death wasn't as sad."⁵

Many dismissed the objections to Stenberg's casting as the grouching of a vocal minority of fans who glossed over the canon description of Rue. Given the subtext of the objections, however, such a dismissal seems misguided. As the discourse surrounding the murders of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin and eighteen-year-old Michael Brown illustrates, the uproar following Stenberg's casting proves symptomatic of a larger cultural tendency to regard black victims of violence as unworthy and undeserving of sympathy. Such a tendency stems from our culture's long-standing characterization of black victims as transgressors.

Current Paradigm

According to legal scholar Stephen Carter, American culture confers victim status upon individuals divested of property or physical safety and defines victimization as the consequence of the "concrete, individual acts" of "identifiable transgressors." These cultural understandings, Carter argues, have established a legal paradigm in which only a select class of individuals may claim victimhood and all legal sanctions function to dissuade or punish the "identifiable transgressors."⁶ In other words,

a paradigm in which only a select class of individuals may successfully seek legal recourse in the wake of violence or, alternatively, justifiably exercise force in order to avoid victimization.⁷ Deep-seated prejudice has governed how American culture establishes which individuals enjoy such privileges and which individuals belong to the group of “identifiable transgressors.” Accordingly, victimhood has remained the exclusive province of non-blacks in the United States throughout American history. In cases involving black victims, American culture seeks to reconcile the supposed anomaly and thus, endeavors to deny the occurrence of a crime through the demonization of the black victims.

Historical Underpinnings

In 1869, statistician Frederick L. Hoffman authored *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, a seminal analysis of black crime and the “racial deterioration” of African Americans. Fixed within a larger discourse surrounding increasing rates of black mortality, Hoffman’s work identified an, “undermined constitution, a diseased manhood and womanhood,” as the leading cause of the declining number of blacks in the United States.⁸ Disregarding discrimination and the physical and psychological harm stemming from racial oppression, Hoffman characterized black criminality as a, “racial proclivity.”⁹ In order to strengthen his conclusion, he cited data from several regions (including the West Indian Islands, a, “paradise on earth,” for, “the Negro,”) and hence, persuasively minimized the influence of external conditions.¹⁰ Significantly, Hoffman eschewed such logic in his analysis of white mortality. White suicide victims, for example, succumbed to the, “total amount of misery and vice prevailing in a community,” as distinguished from individual vice.¹¹ Moreover, an increased rate in white mortality amounted to a snag in the social fabric, a cultural issue warranting social and economic reform as opposed to retribution.

Beyond identifying blacks as the nation’s chief transgressors, *Race Traits* mounted a vigorous defense of violence against blacks. “The crime of lynching is the effect of a cause, the removal of which lies in the power of the colored race,” Hoffman opined. “Until the negro learns to respect life, property, and chastity, until he learns to believe in the value of a personal morality operating in his everyday life, the criminal tendencies [...] will increase.”¹² Hoffman deemphasized the racial animus fueling incidences of lynching and instead, underscored the heinousness of the crimes for which infuriated white mobs lynched blacks. To illustrate, he cited an editorial from the *Atlanta Constitution*, which euphemized lynching as a “manifestation of human nature,” and a safeguard against “black beast[s].”¹³ Hoffman’s inclusion of such a text within his ostensibly objective analysis allowed him to frame the victimization of blacks in a manner that exculpated whites entirely.

Race Traits serves as only one example of a nineteenth-century text with enduring influence on our cultural construction of victimhood. Numerous texts sustain the aforementioned paradigm, including the black caricatures promulgated to malign blacks and undermine Reconstruction. Historian Robin Bernstein characterizes the “pickaninny,” for instance, as “an imagined, subhuman black juvenile,” who, regardless of other variations (in appearance or temperament, for example), allegedly lacked the ability to experience pain.¹⁴ According to Bernstein, the pickaninny’s supposed insensateness served to justify violence against African American youth and the brutalization of slaves.

Insensateness distinguished black children as devoid of innocence and hence, as “nonchildren.”¹⁵ The pickaninny’s insensateness echoed a broader cultural consensus as to the “subhuman” standing and irredeemable nature of African Americans. Southern pseudoscience, for example, distinguished blacks as “insensitive to the effects of corporal punishment,” due to “dyaesthesia Aethiopsis,” an “obtuse sensibility of body.”¹⁶ Other questionable research identified an underdeveloped, essentially “animal,” nervous system.¹⁷ Regardless of the physiological cause, the values underlying such conclusions precluded black victimhood.

Crime in Progress

“This guy looks like he’s up to no good or he is on drugs or something,” George Zimmerman observed, as he trailed “suspect” seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin wandering around his neighborhood on February 26, 2012.¹⁸ According to Zimmerman, he wielded his firearm in the ensuing struggle “in fear for [his] life.”¹⁹ In order to lend credence to his alleged victimization and his characterization of Martin as an identifiable transgressor, Zimmerman’s legal counsel subpoenaed Martin’s academic and social media records.²⁰ Specifically, the defense brandished the records to underscore Martin’s supposed propensity for crime, including his supposed fascination with “gangsta” culture and his suspensions for truancy and vandalism (graffiti), and thereby justify Zimmerman’s use of deadly force.²¹ Thereafter, a vocal minority vehemently denied Martin’s victimhood. On Twitter, for example, several users accused the press of warping coverage with images of a twelve year-old Martin (“more innocent-looking,” according to the Miami Herald) and urged for more emphasis on Martin’s supposed criminality.²² “Hey Fox News - use the current pic of Trayvon Martin - instead of one when he was 12,” one user demanded, linking to a photograph of seventeen-year-old Martin flashing an obscene gesture.²³ When Martin’s use of the term “cracker” in reference to Zimmerman was revealed, a fifteen-minute segment on CNN considered whether the term is equally as offensive as the n-word and users on Twitter accused Martin of racism.²⁴ In a vacuum, the Zimmerman defense’s vilification of Martin would appear standard among self-defense criminal defenses. Juxtaposed with historical defenses of violence against blacks and the vilification of eighteen year-old Michael Brown, however, Martin’s vilification exposes the rule governing black victimhood as opposed to an exception.

On August 9, 2014, Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson Police Department approached Michael Brown. Following a tense exchange of words, Brown allegedly assaulted Wilson. “I felt that another one of those punches in my face could knock me out or worse,” Wilson testified, echoing Zimmerman’s justification of his use of deadly force.²⁵ Like Zimmerman’s legal counsel, Wilson’s legal counsel foregrounded Wilson’s victimization, and hence, encouraged public scrutiny of Brown’s character. Wilson’s testimony, for example, included an extraneous reference to Brown’s socks, which featured images of marijuana leaves on them.²⁶ Meanwhile, much of the media reframed the events of August 9th with an emphasis on Brown’s alleged theft of cigarillos from a convenience store. “[W]e saw that video of when he was in that 7-Eleven. [...] He was acting like a thug, not like a gentle giant,” Bill Maher charged on his HBO *Real Time* program.²⁷ Seemingly in accordance, several news

organizations circulated images of Brown allegedly flashing gang signs and on Twitter, a number of users callously insisted, “THUG LIFE = THUG DEATH.”²⁸ Again, a vocal minority denied the victimhood of a young black man.

Both of the preceding cases exemplify the editing effectuated to ensure cases involving black victims of violence conform to our culture’s exclusive definition of victimhood. Considered in conjunction with Hoffman’s *Race Traits* and the pickaninny, such editing proves indicative of a longer historical effort to deny African American life intrinsic value. Far from trivial or innocent, the dissension among fans of *The Hunger Games* following Amandla Stenberg’s casting attests to the continued success of the latter effort. Stenberg’s black skin, though consistent with Rue’s “dark brown skin,” hindered the ability of a number of fans to see Rue as vulnerable and as equally deserving of Katniss’ protection as Prim, Katniss’ fair-skinned sister. Perhaps more significantly, Stenberg’s blackness prevented a number of fans from mourning her death. Because Martin’s and Brown’s blackness had analogous consequences, the value accorded to black lives depends on acknowledgment and consideration of the prejudice underlying our culture’s designation of victims and identifiable transgressors.

¹ Kate Ward, “‘Hunger Games’ Casts Thresh and Rue,” *Entertainment Weekly*, April 18, 2011, <http://insidemovies.ew.com/2011/04/18/hunger-games-thresh-rue/>.

² Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (New York: Scholastic Inc., 2008), 45.

³ Alana, <http://twitter.com/sw4q>, as cited on <http://hungergamestweets.tumblr.com/post/19806181341/member-that-word-innocent-this-is-why-trayvon>.

⁴ Lydia, <http://twitter.com/shedestroyssuck>, as cited on <http://hungergamestweets.tumblr.com/post/19508657199/this-is-some-hot-bullshit-the-actress-playing>.

⁵ Jasper, <http://twitter.com/JasherParas>, as cited on <http://hungergamestweets.tumblr.com/post/19889080375/im-pretty-sure-that-many-of-the-people-expressing>.

⁶ Stephen L. Carter, “When Victims Happen to Be Black,” *The Yale Law Journal* 97, no. 3 (February 1988): 421.

⁷ Elizabeth B. Clark, “‘The Sacred Rights of the Weak’: Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America,” *Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (September 1995): 492.

⁸ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 39.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Frederick L. Hoffman, “Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro,” *Publications of the American Economic Association* 11, no. 1-3 (August 1896): 234, accessed November 22, 2014, <https://ia700504.us.archive.org/18/items/racetraitstenden00hoff/racetraitstenden00hoff.pdf>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁴ Robin Bernstein, “Tender Angels, Insensate Pickaninnies,” *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶ Clark, “‘The Sacred Rights of the Weak,’” 473-474.

¹⁷ Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 17.

¹⁸ Lizette Alvarez, Dan Barry, Serge F. Kovalski, and Campbell Robertson, “Race, Tragedy and Outrage

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¹⁹ “George Zimmerman’s Written Statement,” as cited in *New York Times*, June 21, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/06/22/us/21george-zimmerman-transcript.html?_r=0.

²⁰ Lizette Alvarez, “Judge Rules Trayvon Martin Files Can Be Used by Defense,” *New York Times*, October 9, 2012, accessed December 2, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/20/us/judge-in-trayvon-martin-case-says-his-files-can-be-used.html>.

²¹ Lizette Alvarez, “Defense in Trayvon Martin Case Raises Questions About the Victim’s Character,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2013, accessed December 2, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/zimmermans-lawyers-release-text-messages-of-trayvon-martin.html?_r=0.

²² Benn, Evan S., Audra D.S. Burch, and David Ovalle, “George Zimmerman not guilty in murder of Trayvon Martin,” *Miami Herald*, July 13, 2013, <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/trayvon-martin/article1953237.html>.

²³ Steve Spilker, <https://twitter.com/Rightwing47/status/349167927754371073>.

²⁴ CNN News, “N Word vs. ‘Cracker’: Which is Worse?” video, July 1, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9QgPjTJRX4>.

²⁵ *State of Missouri v. Darren Wilson*, Grand Jury Volume V, as cited in Krishnadev Calamur, “Ferguson Documents: Officer Darren Wilson’s Testimony,” *The Two-Way: Breaking News from NPR*, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/the-two-way/2014/11/25/366519644/ferguson-docs-officer-darren-wilsons-testimony>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ “Episode # 12.31,” *Real Time With Bill Maher*, Home Box Office (Los Angeles, CA: HBO, October 24, 2014).

²⁸ Chris Keniston, <https://twitter.com/NoFear3136/status/525180445131288578>. Raven, <https://twitter.com/RavenMad73/status/525854542466805762>.

468: Culture in Turmoil: 1960s America

“We Wanted to Break The Rules”: The Unpredictable Sounds of The Velvet Underground, Nico, and Bitches Brew

By Alexis Demandante

This essay was written for Dr. John Ibson’s Culture in Turmoil: 1960s America course in the spring of 2015. The assignment asked students to critically compare and contrast two films, record albums, or other objects associated with the tumultuous time of multi-faceted revolution in the 1960s. I chose to analyze the records Bitches Brew and The Velvet Underground & Nico and examine how the world around them is reflected in their musical choices. If possible, listen while you read.

Art is and always has been in step with every social event in existence, and no era manifested this better than the late Sixties. The moon landing is forever paired with the 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*;¹ both *Easy Rider*² and concert footage from Woodstock³ exude a wild end-of-an-era mania; and the rise of consumerism in America is made visible by Andy Warhol’s Campbell’s Soup can. Art at its best is a two-way mirror: both a window to a shift in collective consciousness at any given time and an example of how we progress as a people. In the late 1960s, the Velvet Underground’s debut album *The Velvet Underground & Nico* and Miles Davis’ *Bitches Brew* each offered their own mirror of cultural events.

In his liner notes for a reissue of Miles Davis’ record *Bitches Brew*, producer Bob Belden remembers the summer of 1969 “for many things: politics, space travel, warfare (at home and abroad), thick ugly glasses and hair tonic; in other words, transition.”⁴ *The Velvet Underground & Nico* and *Bitches Brew* are shining examples of this transformation. From the opening chords of “Sunday Morning” to the scattered build on the keys in “Pharaoh’s Dance,” these albums assure the listener that something is happening in the hearts and minds of the American people. It is not the same youthful playfulness of the early part of the decade. It is something new, yet menacing — an infectious paranoia. In a world both screaming for change yet struggling to accept the changes as they come, such brutal events as the Vietnam War, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the growing opposition of the counter-culture movement started to show that the dream was in fact over and it was time to wake up.

Both records were released only a few years apart (*Velvet Underground & Nico* in March of 1967 and *Bitches Brew* in 1970, but recorded throughout 1969) and represent a transition of cultural attitudes. Lou Reed, songwriter, vocalist, and guitarist of the Velvet Underground, paints vivid portraits of worlds known, yet unseen. Hookers, dopers, pimps, the feeling of a glorious and terrifying high are all displayed in detail through a unique combination of descriptive lyrics and inventive use of song

structure. These types of characters and scenes would be depicted in more detail in the coming years, as ideas expressed earlier in the decade (the sensation of getting high, sex as a tool for liberation) are being shifted by reality (drug progression and the feelings of coming down from a high, sex as work). Songs like “I’m Waiting for the Man,” “Heroin,” and “Black Angel’s Death Song/European Son” exemplify these ideals best.

Similarly, *Bitches Brew* is a vivid landscape of near prophetic work. It takes the already loosely knit musical style of freeform jazz and slacks the strings even further. Listening at a later time with the luxury of hindsight, the brilliance of an already established and stellar jazz career is apparent, but so are elements later found in Seventies funk. Whereas *Nico* stands naked in its imagery with words, *Brew* reveals a savagery to human emotion: that there exists a deeper reservoir to love than what the average pop song conveys. “Spanish Keys/John McLaughlin,” “Miles Runs the Voodoo Down,” and the titular “Bitches Brew” are songs layered in raw emotion, transcending the era in which they were produced.

Each album is a unique artistic testament to a changing cultural climate, and within these distinctive qualities between the two albums are similarities. *The Velvet Underground & Nico* begins with the song “Sunday Morning.” It sounds like a standard Sixties tune, (which should come as no surprise, considering the album was released in 1967) something that you would hear from earlier Sixties artists such as The Turtles or The Byrds, or maybe a less manic Jefferson Airplane song. There is something dream-like about the sounds that start off the album as Lou Reed sings with an almost child-like reminiscence. But, something is not right. You strain, listen close to the lyrics. They become haunting. “Watch out, the world’s behind you.” After the first chorus, suddenly his voice is echoed. It doesn’t go away, only builds, like a soul blissfully being ripped from its body. The guitar solo is disjointed, picked apart like vultures, a scratchy violin underneath. Again the chorus: “Watch out, the world’s behind you/There’s always someone around you/who will call/It’s nothing at all.” While the song talks about a bright morning and the dawn of a new day, there’s an unnatural fear and anxiety with the light of the sunrise, an animosity usually associated with its contrasting dark nightfall. “Sunday morning/and I’m falling.” There are a number of ways to interpret this sentiment, but the fear, paranoia and overall disembodied bliss (not to mention what follows) all point to a certain lunacy that is derived from one thing: drugs.

Bitches Brew sets the stage in a similar way with a quick drum rat-a-tat, the guitar, and Davis’s horn. You know you are listening to a jazz record. But the percussion gives it away again. The keyboard is a shaky ground and, as it builds, all the elements seem disjointed. A bongo drum filters in and out. As in *Nico*’s “Sunday Morning,” the bass is the only steady musical element. There are rises and falls, the instruments fighting over one another like lovers. It somehow evens out to a groove, all elements pounding out a solid jam. But, the passion is clear, the trumpet rising above all. All at once, you hear jazz; something gets your toes tapping but then also forces your ears to search. Then, it breaks down again. And this goes on for twenty minutes! Rise and fall. The words stood out in *Nico*, but *Brew*’s opening recording makes you very aware that there is something deeper than what is presented, Davis’s trumpet emitting a similar haunting echo to the one in Reed’s voice.

By the time *Bitches Brew* was released, Davis was already considered a jazz legend, while *The Velvet Underground & Nico* was the debut album for each of the collaborators. Both artists are varied in terms of musical style but are unified in the chances they take with their particular medium. Many of the songs on the albums have extraordinarily long run times, and both make risky moves in terms of song composition. The songs start one way, then veer sharply and send you to a new direction. The Velvet Underground's rock and roll and Davis' jazz are both musical genres that have grown, expanded, and changed. Each of these artists challenged stylistic norms as both an expression of self and a rejection of tradition.

Most of the songs on *Nico*, in particular the ones I've chosen to highlight, come off like a "What to Expect When You're Expecting Drugs" how-to book on the ins and outs of drug culture. In "I'm Waiting for The Man," Lou Reed taught me a few things about drug dealers, such as "He's never early, he's always late/First thing you learn is you always gotta wait." He takes the listener through the streets of Harlem as the narrator awaits his drug dealer. The workings of a drug deal were not a part of the mainstream discussion or acknowledged at the time of the album's release in 1967, but such events were definitely a growing part of counterculture, as the estimated number of heroin addicts reached 500,000 by 1970.⁵ He describes his perspective during his waiting period: the intersections he crosses ("Up to Lexington, 125"), the questions from Harlem residents ("Hey, white boy, what you doin' uptown?/Hey, white boy, you chasin' our women around?"), to the sight of his dealer approaching ("Here he comes, he's all dressed in black"), and the trip into the dealer's apartment ("Up to a Brownstone, up three flights of stairs"). He starts "Feeling sick and dirty, more dead than alive" but by the end, after his dealer "gives [him a] sweet taste" of the drug, he's "feeling oh so fine." The high is temporary, he says, "Until tomorrow, but that's just some other time." This no-holds-barred approach to such a seedy topic was a sharp contrast to the subtlety of most of this era's artists. While Bob Dylan coyly suggested, "everybody must get stoned," Lou Reed stated a harsh reality in beautiful poetic detail.

The blatant drug references are not more present in *The Velvet Underground & Nico* than in their song titled "Heroin." While drugs are integral to the stories told in the song, "Heroin," both lyrically and sonically, exists to invoke the feeling of being on heroin. The first few bars transition into a more airy melody with the viola speeding up as Reed sings about the literal feeling of injecting heroin. It builds slowly, searching, as I imagine a user might when he "puts a spike in (his) vein." One constant note of the violin fill is in the background, consistent like a heart monitor. Then the drug kicks in, the drums pounding like a heartbeat. "When I'm rushing on my run/And I feel just like Jesus' son." The song itself is unstable foundation. Most of the lyrics on the album adhere to a standard rhyme scheme. Here Reed ponders all life and death with the force of a spoken word poet. "You can't help me now," he sings. Besides calling heroin his "wife and...life," a passionate need, he doesn't really romanticize the drug at all. He knows heroin is not good for him and wishes that he was "born a thousand years ago...Away from the big city" of New York, "Where a man cannot be free/Of all the evils in this town." Yet in the chorus, Reed sings repeatedly, "I guess that I just don't know." All of this is to say quite straightforwardly that using heroin is a decision he has made, for better or for, more likely, worse.

This record ends with “The Black Angel’s Death Song” and “European Son,” both tracks that exemplify the kinds of style challenges and self-expression that The Velvet Underground sought to deliver with the wild spirit of a train roaring into a station. John Cale, who played viola and bass on the album, sums up the entire recording when he described how the near-eight minute long “European Son” was recorded: “We didn’t know what we were doing but it sounded funny... We wanted to break the rules, so we broke every fucking rule we could.”⁶ “The Black Angel’s Death Song” and Cale’s electric viola feature, especially on the vinyl copy I used, hurt my ears. Hissing noises and even the actual words “Shrill yell” make these free-form verses a raw expression of Reed’s decision-making process. “Choose a side to be on... Choose to choose/Choose to choose/Choose to go” reminded me of the draft. The cadence of the “choose” phrases is so fast it seems to replicate the mind when it can’t make a decision, reminiscent of the battle between fleeing or fighting that Tim O’Brien writes about in *If I Die In a Combat Zone*.⁷ Or, these could be the decisions made between participating in some of the sex and drugs Reed sings of earlier.

These unpredictable sounds devoid of structure on *The Velvet Underground & Nico* can also be found on Davis’ *Brew*. The jazz genre is well-known today for its wildness and all-over-the-place notes. Before Davis began recording *Brew*, he helped form other progressive jazz movements like cool jazz and free jazz. But, by 1969, these styles were becoming worn out. In his liner notes, producer Bob Belden references the merge of rock and roll like *The Velvet Underground* with the jazz music for which Davis was popular. With Wayne Shorter on saxophone, Chick Corea on electric piano, Dave Holland on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums, the Miles Davis Quintet began playing the music that would become *Bitches Brew*. Like *The Velvet Underground*, *Bitches Brew* captures similar passions. Lou Reed’s “Heroin” is about the internal, chemical longing for the drug. Davis’ track “Bitches Brew” (which runs at almost 27 minutes) evokes longing for a woman, particularly a “bitch,” someone who draws ire out of a man. With Davis’ personal stamp of the driving trumpet, the entire *Bitches Brew* is a creation that expands upon the traditional jazz moments of before. On the original LP liner notes (with beautiful stream-of-consciousness prose that simply tells it like it is better than I ever could), jazz and pop music critic Ralph J. Gleason wrote about the importance of avoiding labels like genres.⁸ *Bitches Brew* does not conform to any idea of what is expected from “jazz music” or even what is expected from a well-known jazz musician like Miles Davis. Instead, it is a free expression of feelings, and has the potential to conjure different emotions for anyone who listens to it.

Returning again to the transitive nature of *Brew*, the funky guitar riffs and tight rhythm section on “Spanish Keys” propel the song into a groove reminiscent of Funkadelic,⁹ like the soundtrack to a 70s cop movie. This song in particular is a summit to all the Black styles and genres that have come before it and will come after. It has all the power, passion, and creativity for which Black culture is known for. This is an important statement, as struggles of the civil rights movement are well documented and remain the most resonant example of the changing climate of the 1960s.

“John McLaughlin,” named for the electric guitarist on the record, is the shortest song on the album at four minutes and twenty-six seconds, flowing effortlessly from the preceding track “Spanish Keys” with their similar guitar-driven technique. They’re sister songs, like *Nico*’s “Black Angel’s Death

Song” and “European Son.”

“Miles Runs the Voodoo Down” is probably the most consistent of all the tracks on *Brew*. The bass line is front and center, never wavering to the point that about half way through it seems exhausted. Literally putting his name on this 14-minute song, Davis’s prominent trumpet notes seem to be a personal statement from the artist, more so here than on the rest of the album that allowed the rest of the band to step to the forefront. This is an example of the power of organic musicality, even without lyrics.

The Velvet Underground & Nico, however, is a less-organic package manufactured mostly by producer/financial-backer Andy Warhol. Warhol’s famous style of artwork on the cover has commercialized the album and popularizes the music today, despite its counterculture contents, although the record initially was considered a commercial failure peaking only at 129 on the *Billboard 200*.¹⁰ Liner notes inside a vinyl copy of the record discuss “The Exploding Plastic Inevitable,” an Andy Warhol tour production during which he introduced collaboration of *The Velvet Underground and Nico* and recorded their debut album. Warhol’s personal mix of producing art and marketing make the record less about the music and more about commercializing art. Although it was initially unsuccessful and earned little press, despite Warhol’s intentions, the world was finally ready for *The Velvet Underground & Nico* when it started to receive positive reviews and recognition for its influence on music. From the early 90s on, it was near the top of “Best Music” and “Influential Albums” lists, such as *Rolling Stone’s* “500 Greatest Albums of All Time.”

Although it became more popular post-60s as opposed to its initial release, I still consider *The Velvet Underground & Nico* to be a product of and a reflection of its time. It really is a look into a subculture and particular feelings of a generation, or even just one perspective through writer and guitarist Lou Reed. His language like “heaven,” “Jim-Jims,” “Gypsy Death,” among others that I still do not know the meaning of, really seem to bring the listener back to a voyeuristic fashion within that time period.

While *Bitches Brew’s* experimental nature is obvious, it is not constrained to the time during which it was recorded. Today, it will still evoke emotions in any listener and hold up as a relevant record. Other than the song titles, the songs themselves give little insight into the thought process driving the artist. This proves to be more of a blessing than a hindrance. The mind is left to project and discover. The album makes something new of what is familiar and, given what we know of the era, it stands as a bridge to the past and an expansion to the future.

If art can be thought of as a mirror, let us ask what we see in mirrors. We see ourselves, both what is physically present and the image we create in our minds. The reflections presented in *The Velvet Underground & Nico* and *Bitches Brew* are vivid representations of these times. Both records are eloquent examples of the cultural shift occurring during their creation, while people were becoming more or less disillusioned as they faced the weight of current events like civil rights battles, oppressive war, rampant drug use, and the effects of unprotected sex. While *The Velvet Underground & Nico* is more obviously related to the popular culture associated with the 1960s, the artistry exhibited from it and *Bitches Brew* exemplifies a change in music to match the change in cultural climate in the 1960s.

In mirrors we see ourselves, both what is present and what we make of ourselves in our minds.

These albums are vivid reflections of what the artists saw in themselves and what they perceived from the world around them. Although they can be difficult pictures to process, sometimes unattractive and hard to hear, the honest recordings of The Velvet Underground, Nico, and Miles Davis share their perspectives of culture in the 1960s, each in their own divisive way.

¹ *2001: A Space Odyssey* is an Academy Award-winning science fiction film produced and directed by Stanley Kubrick that was the highest-grossing film in America in 1968, the year of its release. There was much excitement over space exploration at this time: the Soviet Union's successful Moon mission took place nine years prior to the film's release in 1959, while the first manned mission to the moon by the United States occurred one year later in 1969.

² Movie information database IMDb.com describes *Easy Rider* (1969) as a film about "two counterculture bikers," played by Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper, who "travel from Los Angeles to New Orleans in search of America."

³ The Woodstock Music & Art Fair was the famous, impossible to reproduce, free concert held in New York in 1969. Nearly five decades later, the festival continues to be referred to as one of the pivotal moments in counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s.

⁴ "Bitches Brew," *Album Liner Notes*, http://aln3.albumlinernotes.com/Bitches_Brew.html accessed April 20, 2015.

⁵ Humberto Fernandez, *Heroin*, (Minnesota: Hazelden Publishing, 1998), 212.

⁶ Tom Pinnock, "John Cale on The Velvet Underground & Nico," *Uncut*, <http://www.uncut.co.uk/news/john-cale-on-the-velvet-underground-nico-30063#iwL2avHi1rR4woS4.99>, <accessed April 23, 2015>.

⁷ Tim O'Brien's autobiography *If I Die in a Combat Zone* was one of the required readings for Dr. John Ibson's *Culture in Turmoil: 1960s America* course. In it, O'Brien tells a narrative story of his experience serving in the Vietnam War.

⁸ "Bitches Brew," *Album Liner Notes*, http://aln3.albumlinernotes.com/Bitches_Brew.html, <accessed April 20, 2015>.

⁹ Funkadelic is a still-active band formed in New Jersey in 1968, typically credited with beginning the funk music phenomenon associated with the 1970s.

¹⁰ "The Velvet Underground," *Billboard*, <http://www.billboard.com/artist/419361/velvet-underground/chart?f=305>, accessed April 23, 2015.

502 Graduate Seminar: Public Memory

Virtual Mourning: Grieving and Memorialization in the Age of Facebook

By Drew Bahna

A graduate research essay that looks at the various ways in which contemporary America has turned to social media to grieve and mourn the loss of friends, family, and acquaintances. I apply an overarching cultural question, "What facets of intimacy that are traditionally interacted through face-to-face exchange are being affected by the use of technology in an over-saturated technocultural world;" to the world of online mourning.

Utilizing close readings and analysis to several types of memorialized pages on Facebook including official memorials, un-official memorials, and communities and paying close attention to two case studies and the posts that were left on the pages of the dead, or the pages of friends and family; I argue that for an introverted individual, this form a mourning may prove to be an acceptable alternative to traditional means of mourning and grieving. Furthermore, certain aspects of this form of mourning may actually provide individuals with a feeling of community and are often times a place where family and friends may share in the final expenses of an unexpected death. Finally, these findings provide evidence that this form of mourning and grieving may be a product of westernized capitalist culture and societal constructs that place boundaries on specific members of society.

"Let no one weep for me, or celebrate my funeral with mourning; for I still live, as I pass to and fro through the mouths of men." - Quintus Ennius

The quote above comes from the bust of Quintus Ennius, poet and founder of Roman literature at the time of his death in 170 BC.¹ In today's technocultural world, Ennius' epitaph speaks volumes to the way individuals have come to grieve and mourn on social networking sites such as *Facebook*. This essay will focus on how death and the processes surrounding it, such as mourning, grieving, and memorialization, have found their way onto the timelines and pages of people on *Facebook*. For many individuals who have lost someone in their lives as well as their communities, or even for individuals who are mourning a national loss, such as the 20 children who were murdered at Sandy Hook, *Facebook* has become a place for public memory to reside through the processes surrounding death.² The *Facebook* timeline records the events that a user deems important in their lives or uses to post links to national and worldwide news events har-

bors the necessary components of public memory. It remains in an online virtual archive and is forever cached in cyberspace even if *Facebook* falters and somehow loses its footing in its domination of social media. Photos, videos, memorials, comments, and status updates are essentially placed in a virtual time capsule that can be accessed and revisited at any point in time. *Facebook* has made this information even more accessible with its new feature, *the archive*.³ This feature allows a user to download every post, every comment, photo, video, and even private message that they have participated in during their time on *Facebook*, similar to a virtual time capsule.

My cultural question began to develop approximately a year and a half ago when I was working on a different research project that examined, “what in the world is going on with hookup culture in society today? It seems to be all around my collegiate surroundings.” My findings for that early research project linked intimacy and technology in association with courtship by suggesting that the increased use of technology and the open floodgates of online dating applications in a smartphone-saturated world was an underlying key factor in the growth of hookup culture.⁴ In turn, hookup culture was affecting the intimacy of courtship in America through its association with technology. I then was able to formulate my underlying cultural question: what facets of intimacy that are traditionally interacted through face-to-face exchange are being affected by the use of technology in an oversaturated technocultural world? Death became the next chapter in my quest for understanding my cultural question.

Exploring my cultural question through my second lens of death and technology, enabled me to find a common thread in the research I gathered from these two projects concerning technology and intimacy, and as such they have led me to my deep thesis for this essay. I argue that there are social constructs that govern the time in which we as a society are allotted to express intimacy in events that we traditionally interacted with through face-to-face exchange; and that because of the time constraints and pressures placed by these constructs, individuals have opted to seek an alternate and more time efficient manner to express their most intimate life moments by utilizing technology. Additionally, in relation to understanding public memory I sought to ask how were individuals using social media platforms such as *Facebook* to change the way we grieve, mourn, and memorialize those whom we have lost in our lives. This question ultimately led me on a path to discovery. I once held a bias that technology was ruining intimacy on a very fundamental level; however, I will argue here that contrary to my bias against technology, the mediums of online social networking and specifically *Facebook* have allowed for a space and place where individuals can express very intimately their way to grieve, mourn, and memorialize those they have lost.

While searching for primary evidence, Avery Gordon’s book *Ghostly Matters* was at the forefront of my mind. I could not navigate through the various *Facebook* profiles and community pages without feeling the presence and absence of the ghosts that led me there and the chill of the hauntings they left behind. In Gordon’s book, she defines a haunting as the seething feeling of that which appears to be not there, an event, person, or lingering notion that is left unexplained in the past.⁵ Gordon also expresses that the ghost is not simply the person that is missing, but the social figure that leads to the site where history and subjectivity have left a presence

and an absence.⁶ There are very distinct ways in which these key terms allowed me to think about my approach and analysis of my primary evidence, and this will be addressed later on.

Changes in the physical landscape of our nation mark sites that, “Have been inscribed with messages that speak to the way individuals, groups, and entire societies wish to interpret their past.”⁷ Like the landscape of America, so too can the digital landscape of a *Facebook* profile page change and inscribe messages to speak to the community of those experiencing a loss. Kenneth Foote’s book *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* describes four key concepts of how a site relates to memory. This study lies in the space between two of Foote’s key concepts; the changes that a *Facebook* profile undergoes lie somewhere between designation and rectification. As Foote states, “Designation is... marked for its significance, but this response omits rituals of consecration. . . They arise from events that are viewed as important”⁸ Foote continues, “designation lies squarely between active veneration and direct effacement.”⁹ Foote then explains that, “Rectification is the process through which a tragedy site is put right and used again. The site gains only temporary notoriety in the aftermath of the tragedy... rectification frequently produces the least activity at the tragedy site.”¹⁰ These concepts, helped with distinguishing how the changes of the digital landscape of a page changed from its everyday use to something that was marked for a particular memorial cause. I mention that the profiles lie between these two concepts because after a given set of time, the pages are often left abandoned after all have grieved and mourned. Locations in which Americans memorialize as well as the events and people behind those memorials or the lack thereof give a lesson that remind us of the fragility of our past, the momentous or landmark events we remember with or without the prompting of memorialization, and the events we choose to forget.

Research Boundaries and Key Terms

I began this project with a far broader scope, looking at the various social media websites such as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, and *Instagram*. Due to the sheer amount of primary evidence I came across and its significance, the project was narrowed down to focus specifically on the ways individuals turn to *Facebook* in regard to death. My evidence focused primarily on close readings of comments, replies to said comments, and the content in which individuals chose to include in their postings to the deceased (i.e., photos or videos). Additionally, I analyzed the change over time that *Facebook* profiles of the dead undergo, shifting from the last post the deceased placed on their page, to the transition and plethora of incoming wall posts that their friends and family members post to their page and the context within those postings.

Diving into *Facebook*’s terms of service as well as their policies regarding official memorial and legacy accounts (which they introduced to the website in 2015) was another piece of primary evidence that connected the way individuals memorialize the deceased on *Facebook* and allowed the necessary evidence to compare and contrast official versus unofficial memorial pages. Archival research into bereavement policies, both in the public and private sector, gave me an inside look at how the government and corporations allot time for those who are grieving and became an integral piece to determining the direction of my conclusion. Finally, I turned to interviews of employees at *Facebook*,

of those who have experienced “deathtech,” and of individuals who were simply interested in the use of deathtech but have never experienced it firsthand.

These pieces of primary evidence were all collected in the same manner: researching within the electronic archive, I sifted through various web pages and followed links of one person’s *Facebook* page to another, tracking the trail of evidence. Additionally, I interviewed acquaintances who were open enough to share the pages of individuals they knew and lost in the past, as well as their experiences with deathtech as cultural informants. Interviews with *Facebook* employees proved to be more difficult; due to the changes on the site regarding memorialization and legacy contacts, not many were knowledgeable about the intricate details or policies behind it and I was forced to jump from one *Facebook* representative to another. Finally, the bereavement policies from the public sector were easily accessible through online databases and county websites while the private sector forced me to seek out human resource handbooks.

Although I feel the evidence I have gathered is telling and rich with support, I must address the limits that I encountered. First, it is impossible to find official memorials to an individual’s *Facebook* page using the general search bar; this is because an official memorial page is removed from their search algorithm entirely and thus requires a direct link to the person’s page to be accessed. Additionally, there is no filter to search for a deceased person’s page, be it official or unofficial, making it difficult to find memorials. Furthermore, the evidence I did choose to follow led me in the direction this essay will take although there were other possible avenues for research and analysis. For example, focusing primarily on community pages over the pages of individuals. Finally, the most obvious limit came from my analysis: because much of this is a close reading of comments and their subsequent postings, it is my personal analysis and may well be called into question, considering that what I interpret from a post may be far different from another person’s interpretation.

Patterns of repetition were the most glaring sign of evidence to be analyzed, for example, the use of third party websites to fundraise the final expenses of the departed were repeated evidence of communal intimacy (this will be discussed further). The types of comments being posted, be it text or media were also important to look at, especially how they were presented on the deceased’s page. I analyzed what I perceived were forms of intimacy being processed over digital technology as a priority, and how others may have reacted to what was posted. As more and more evidence began to center on issues of time, community, intimacy, and *Facebook* policy began to emerge, the attention to unofficial and official pages of memorialization became my primary focus.

Within this essay, the terms *public memory* and *deathtech* will seem ubiquitous in their placement and thus it is important to define both for a full comprehension of the arguments being presented here. For the purpose of this paper, public memory will be defined as the shared knowledge and memories of a group, or groups of individuals, that emerges from a past event or person through representation in narrative, space, myth, symbol, performance, tradition, image, or artifact. Furthermore, public memory should be understood as the relationship of a group or groups shared past with the narrative artifact in question and how they choose to remember it. Deathtech on the other hand, will be defined as the process of combining death culture with some sort of techno-

logical outlet, in the case of this essay for example, the way individuals mourn using *Facebook* as an outlet would be considered a form of deathtech.

Grounding Through Secondary Sources

Due to the evolving nature of this very current topic regarding death, mourning, and technology, there has yet to be a large enough volume of monographs to form a proper grounding. Consequently, the secondary sources of this paper are primarily based on edited volumes with several contributions coming from individuals in varying fields. However, the research that has been done in relation to social networking and online grieving has been significant in its work and the authors of my secondary sources come from an array of academic backgrounds.

To understand the processes involved in mourning and grieving culture prior to the digital age, I turned to Dr. Candi Cann. Her book *Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-First Century* mixes the disciplines of American Studies, thanatology, and her specialty regarding comparative religion, death, and bereavement. Dr. Cann gives a brief but rich background regarding the mourning processes of the late nineteenth and twentieth-centuries. Cann reminds the reader that as early as two hundred years ago in America, there were traditional grieving rituals being performed, and that these rituals were a result of the responsibility that individuals had to the deceased.¹¹ Close family and friends “gave care to the dying in the home; washing, dressing and preparing the body for the funeral following the death; and then disposing of the dead in the local cemetery or churchyard.”¹² Furthermore, she addresses the common rituals and traditions that were expected of grieving individuals during this time which were, “fairly universal and included the wearing of mourning clothing, and observing a certain period of enforced bereavement, during which one was both expected and permitted to take time off from traditional social events such as dinners, dances, and so on.”¹³ What Cann is attempting to present to the reader is the sense of intimate interaction we once had with the dead.

Cann’s book is divided into four chapters, each addressing new avenues in the ways individuals mourn in the twentieth-century; she places these sections in an order that reflects the distancing from the mourner to the body of the deceased during the process of mourning and grieving. Rather than grieving at the funeral service of one who is departed, contemporary individuals are turning to alternate methods of handling their grief. For example, in the first chapter, Cann discusses bodiless memorials, including public and spontaneous memorials such as those created for the victims of Aurora, Colorado theater where individuals can leave candles or stuffed teddy bears at the site of the tragedy.¹⁴ In her next chapter, Cann places the mourner another step further from the body of the deceased, no longer at the site of death, she discusses the process of remembering the dead on the body of the living through the use of tattoos. Using several case studies, she argues that tattoos may act as a marker on the landscape of the living body in a similar way that a carved piece of land is a marker for physical reasons to mourn at the site of death, or the site where the body lay.

Cann’s third chapter discusses mobile memorialization, a non-permanent form of remem-

bering in which an individual may wear a memorial t-shirt or place a memorial decal on their vehicle that can be worn one day, removed the next, and be forgotten about shortly after. This form of mourning, however, should not be considered as non-intimate; on the contrary it “operates as ways of both affirming one’s status as a mourner and allowing one to move away from the status once an appropriate amount of time has passed.”¹⁵ Finally, Cann’s most relevant chapter to this research revolves around the internet and social network memorials, stating that there has been an increase in the spontaneous memorials found on sites such as Facebook, various blogs, and chat room services. Furthermore, she argues that these sites are being used to create a written narrative, similar to the obituary and eulogies that have long existed in the world of mourning, giving meaning and retelling stories of the departed.¹⁶

These four chapters and the historical context of this monograph were essentially the backbone of my grounding and assisted in the methods and rationale regarding the evidence I chose to examine. Additionally, some of Cann’s research influenced me in looking further into bereavement policies which helped in finding the common threads necessary for formulating my conclusions.

The following three sources were all edited volumes, filled with essays that were associated with death, dying, grief, identity, and emotion in the digital age. Though each essay had their strengths and weaknesses, several stood out with clear representations of historical context as well as insight to assist with the grounding of my work. For example, in the edited volume *Emotion, Identity and Death: Mortality Across Disciplines*, edited by Douglas Davies and Chang-Won Park, scholar Tim Hutchings writes an eloquent chapter on death online. In his chapter, he discusses the various online memorials that had existed since 1995, referencing *cemetery.org* in Canada, as well as *webhealing.org* in the United States. He explains that these “online spaces appropriated new media and communication possibilities to develop much more elaborate memorial platforms.”¹⁷ This chapter alone allowed me to place *Facebook’s* online memorialization, at least in its official form fourteen years later on the timeline regarding the birth of online grieving. Other essays focused on the identity, and relationship between the griever and the departed.

Another edited volume, *Dying, Death and Grief in an Online Universe: For Counselors and Educators*, edited by Kathleen Gilbert, Illene Noppe, and Carla Sofka, offers an additional look at grieving practices. With doctorates from family studies, applied health science, and educational psychology (with a research focus on college student bereavement), these three editors were capable of cultivating a book filled with insight from several fields. The book covers several topics, for example, Lisa D. Hensley’s chapter discusses how online communities develop experiences of loss in relationships. In her chapter, Hensley uses case studies from the online video game *World of Warcraft* to present an argument that there is a sense of disenfranchised grief surrounding these types of online communities.¹⁸ The most crucial aspect of this edited volume, however, came from their target demographic; because the book is aimed at counselors it assisted me in the interpretation of some of the comments that people were leaving on their *Facebook* posts, for example, why they were using present tense in their conversation with the deceased.

The final edited volume, *Digital Death Mortality and Beyond in the Online Age*, edited by Chris-

topher M. Moreman and A. David Lewis, contains twelve essays spread across three sections: Death, Mourning and Social Media; Online Memorialization and Digital Legacies; and Virtual worlds beyond death. The main argument across the collection of essays is how digital existences and identities affect the real world and virtual worlds. One of the most interesting and informative chapters of this book led me to find the *Facebook* app *IfIDie*. Pam Briggs and Lisa Thomas discuss the ways in which individuals may set up accounts on various social networks to communicate postmortem with friends and family. For example, “New applications such as LIVESON use the tagline, ‘When your heart stops beating, you’ll keep tweeting,’”¹⁹ and present their services as a social afterlife. This application essentially learns from a user’s past likes and syntax to generate tweets that the user would have likely posted prior to their death.

Though there is still much work to be done in this field, these editors and authors have scratched the surface of a new and exciting way of studying death, these experts have dubbed it Thanatechnology. I hope that for the sake of academia and the world as a whole, that someone (perhaps me) will have the courage and fortitude to take on such a task in creating a larger volume surrounding the various aspects related to online mourning. The subject deserves to be addressed at length in the form of a monograph, not simply in numerous essays and student research papers.

Primary Research & Analysis

I want to begin by clearing some of my bias first by explaining a bit of my personal observation and initial reaction. By happenstance, during my research I had the chance to experience a Catholic funeral service for a man I’ll call Joe. During the service, several people stood at the podium and spoke their eulogies, several of whom seemed incoherent and distraught due to their loss and had to be ushered off by a member of the family who appeared to have realized that nothing about Joe was profoundly being stated between the wailing and sobbing. Other individuals spoke of what Joe was, a father, an uncle, a brother, a husband, etc. Facts, impersonal facts, no one, not one person spoke anything that created tears in the eyes of those listening or touched their hearts the



Belasquez, Adolph Joe, age 86, passed away on April 19, 2015 at his home, with his family by his side in Fullerton, CA. He is survived by his loving wife, Linda Belasquez; 2 sons, Joe and David Belasquez; one daughter, Vivian Yslas; 11 grandchildren and 10 Great Grandchildren, with one on the way. Adolph served in the United State Navy, from 1946 to 1950, stationed in the South Pacific. After meeting the love of his life in 1950, they were married in 1953, they loved and adored each other for 61 years, and down to the end, still holding hands.

He worked in construction most of his life. In 1961 he started his own company - Joe's Lathing. He was always willing to teach someone the trade, or help anyone he saw that might need his help. He loved children, he had a heart of gold.

Visitation will be Wednesday, April 29, 2015 from 4 pm to 8 pm at Hilgenfeld Mortuary With a rosary at 7 pm. Mass will be Thursday, April 30, 2015 at 10:30 am at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Placentia. Interment to follow at Riverside National Cemetery at 12:45 pm. Hilgenfeld Mortuary (714) 535-4105

Figure 1 Obituary Section of Orange County Register April 2015

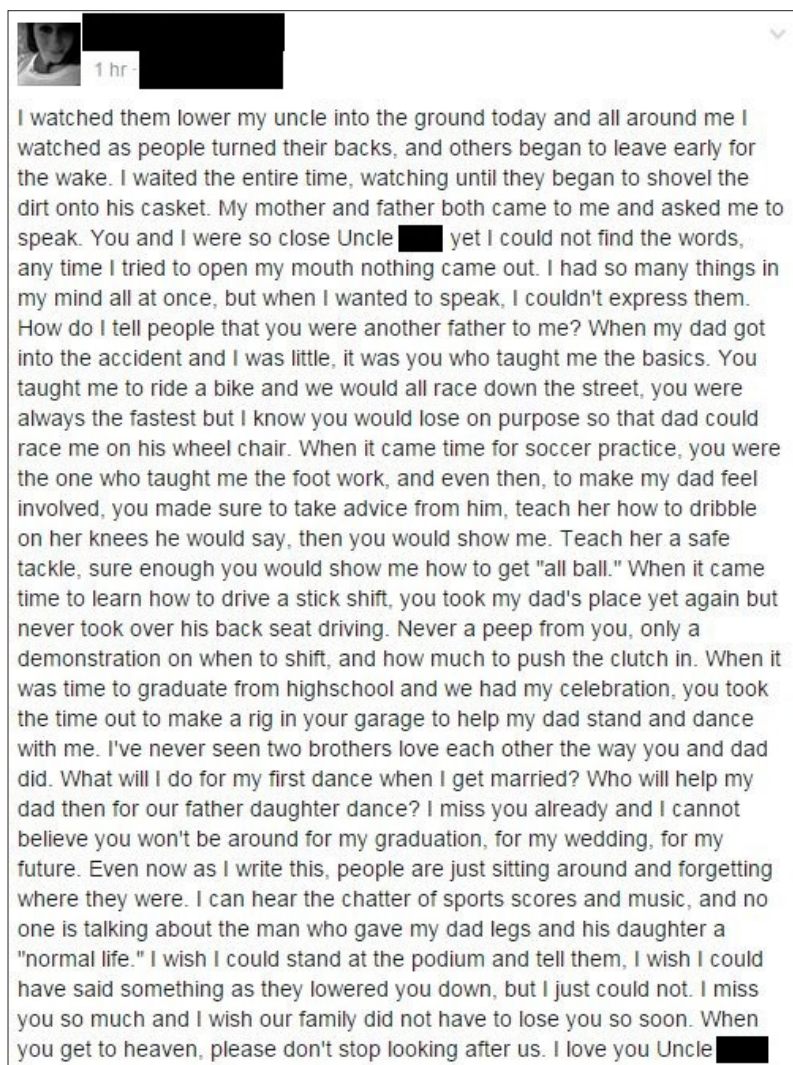


Figure 2

capsule of her *Facebook* timeline that was far more intimate than I was expecting. From this moment forward, I felt my bias for technology's lack of potential regarding intimate encounters fade away, and I was able to look at my evidence in a new light.

The Mourner's Page as Memorial

One must understand that there is an etiquette on how people memorialize on *Facebook*. Primarily, the website is utilized for social networking, telling people what you are doing at that very moment, or sharing photos of a good meal, or vacation, or evening out. When someone close passes, family members tend to dedicate several days, weeks, even months of their social networking fixated on

way I felt they should have. They all read like a standard newspaper obituary, cold and formulaic (See figure 1).²⁰ Throughout the wake, I noticed one young woman, possibly in her early twenties constantly looking at her phone for long periods of time. I could not tell what she was doing. Was she on *Instagram*? Was she on *Twitter*? Shopping? *Facebook*? It was bothering me. A little under an hour later, I made it home and looked her up through a mutual friend on *Facebook*, and there I found what she was doing on her phone: she had been posting a comment on *Facebook* (figure 2).

What this young woman wrote was not what I was expecting; she spoke of things in her comment that others could not do with prepared speeches at the funeral itself. The eulogies and the obituary were facts about the individual; in this *Facebook* comment were snapshots of Joe and *who* he was, not *what* he was. In a very powerful and distinctly fragile moment in this young woman's life, she placed a comment in the time

posting about how they are mourning on their personal pages. This can seem a little odd and out of place, one moment you are posting about having the best date of your life or what you had for lunch, and suddenly the next day you are posting about the loss of someone in your family.

In December of 2014, a young woman named Kristen (figure 3)²² lost her life via a battle with depression and sought what she believed to be her only way out, suicide.²³ Using a close reading of several hundred posts from her mother's *Facebook* page, I noticed a trend in friends and family utilizing photos they had shared with Kristen as new profile pictures. This was their way of showing the world they had a close relationship with the departed and a way to express their grief. Additionally, in sifting through many profiles of the deceased members, I found another common thread. More often than not, the news of the services or the loss itself was posted as a *Facebook* post as opposed to traditional methods or even private messages. Again, using this case as an example, an outcry of emotional support and touching comments were left for the deceased's mother and family. Some family left comments in a religious manner,



Figure 2

Our hearts are broken, we are deeply sorry for the loss of your precious child, my beautiful cousin. Know that we have been and will continue to pray for you all for God's comfort, that you will feel His presence in this most difficult time. I wish more than anything we could be there with you to celebrate her life. God bless you.²⁴

The final sentence of the above comment alludes to the fact that there may be a distance between the person commenting and Laurie (Kristen's mother), and thus emphasizes the importance in which technology is capable of bringing intimate moments from long distances together that are usually saved for face-to-face engagement. Others left Laurie snapshots of their memory with her daughter, "Anthony and I are shocked and saddened" says Terri, "Love and prayers always to you. Just that day I was thinking about you two as you always come to the Nutcracker and we missed you. This is just not right."²⁵ While Cameron, a young woman who went to school with Kristen shared, "I went to highschool with Kristen and got to see her dance many times. She was always a little ray of sunshine, I will be there for the funeral. I will be praying for you and yours."²⁶

Many of the comments were marked with *Facebook* likes, and more often than not, one would be directly from Laurie. Only three days after the death of her daughter, Laurie was having to sift through the plethora of notifications on her *Facebook* page; a constant reminder of Kristen's death, however, also a touching tribute to the loss of her daughter as hundreds of comments flooded the original posting of the news.

Approximately two weeks after the death of their daughter (a proper time to grieve according to some), Kristen's parents went to Disneyland, one of Kristen's favorite places to go

to, and her mother even donned her daughter's Mickey Mouse ears in memoriam. Was this a tribute or was this a way to get over the grief? 121 people liked this post, and several left comments in support of it. As time passed by and Kristen's birthday arrived in March, Laurie set out to memorialize her daughter and celebrate her life post mortem at a Southern California beach. An event was created on *Facebook*, and several comments in support of the memorial once again flooded Laurie's page, several of which pledged their time to be there (figure 4). This event was broadcasted and shared through Laurie's network and the act itself, having the bonfire in memory of her daughter as "something we did many times on her birthday,"²⁷ became a form of public memory through performance. Diana Taylor suggests in her book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* that these kinds of performances are an "act of transfer" which transmits memory via actions or oral traditions and various rituals.²⁸ Laurie's *Facebook* page had become the forum in which to share an event that would be transcribed as a form of public memory.

By April of 2015, after passing posts which bounced between memories of her daughter and Laurie's vacation photos around the world it would seem the pull of *Facebook's* main purpose of social networking was beginning to return Laurie's posts in line with the kind of status updates she had before her daughter's tragedy. However, from time to time, it would seem as though she was still not over the stages of grieving and mourning, as Laurie would post an image of a burning candle in memoriam and Laurie's timeline became a virtual chainlink fence like those found at the site of a national tragedy (ironically, the digitized background of the candle image is indeed a computer generated image of a chainlink fence mimicking common sites of public



Figure 4



Figure 5

memory from other collective tragedies; see figure 5).

Just three days later, it would seem that the alternating status updates Laurie was posting of her daughter and her own social life had finally been called into question regarding the legitimacy of her public electronic mourning and grieving. Laurie posts (figure 6),²⁹ In my interpretation, the final portion of this post indicates that someone may have questioned if it was inappropriate to mix and match

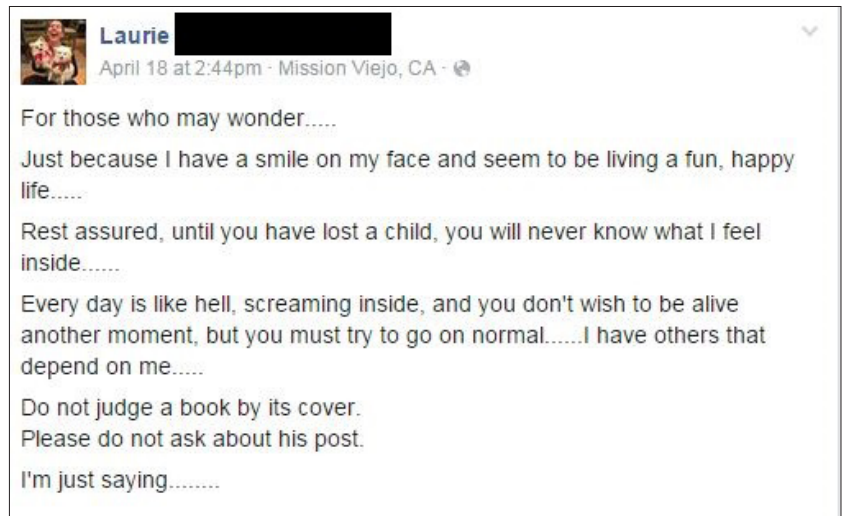


Figure 6

posts of Laurie's vacation excursions and the death of her daughter Kristen; or perhaps asked if Laurie had moved on. It had been nearly four months since Kristen's death, and Laurie's impromptu memorial on her *Facebook* page was coming into conflict with societal constructs: the time in which an individual should recover from their grieving had long since passed, and the use of *Facebook* needed to return to its intended function as a (alive) social networking site.

So what do these posts tell us? There are definite moments of intimacy being exchanged between this grieving mother and the people she knew, as well as, the people who knew her daughter. Friends and family took the time to change their profile photos as a way to show they were mourning as well as standing in unity with the grieving family. Moral support never seemed to waver from those who were closest to Laurie, and nearly every individual who posted a comment expressed an interest in lending their assistance in any way possible. Distances between friends and family were no longer an obstacle to sharing intimate moments, and the ability to share the news in mass must have eased the pain to some degree in comparison to having to retell each individual about the loss of Laurie's daughter. However, trying to balance an unofficial memorial as well as one's social interests on the same *Facebook* page has its conflicts, thus memorials tend to be better suited when on the deceased's page, although if left unofficial they tend to produce some ghostly matters.

The Unofficial Memorial on the Deceased's Page and Change Over Time

The significant difference between memorializing on the deceased's page versus the mourner's page is the separation of one's social life and their mourning practices. Laurie encountered this issue when mixing her vacation photos with those of her deceased daughter, making it awkward for her friends, family, and followers to feel at ease when commenting on posts as time

went by. Utilizing the deceased's page, however, removes this restriction as there is no way for the dead to commune with their family and friends or update their profile with new statuses.

One of the most frequent postings I found through these types of unofficial memorials were ways to spread the news to those closest with the departed. Rather than a family member posting the news directly to their page which, may not have connections to mutual friends with the departed, postings of the death itself or funeral services were often posted to the deceased's page in the form of a comment. Additionally, another common posting was the use of third party "crowd sourcing" websites such as *Gofundme* and *Youcaring*. These sites were often used as a fundraising effort to help the families with final expenses. According to an iStrategyLabs study, as of January 2014, *Facebook's* user base consisted of approximately 51.8 million users between the ages of 13-24.³⁰ Considering these statistics, one may assume that the final expenses of this age group are not established. Thus, these fundraising websites offer a unique form of communal intimacy. Not only were these posts found on the deceased's *Facebook* page, but they were shared by hundreds of friends (Kareem, another case study for this essay, had a crowd source that was shared 721 times)³¹ and spread across their varying social networks through *Facebook*. This allowed friends and family to provide financial aid to assist with the funeral arrangements which otherwise may not have been available. In both of my case studies, for Kristen and Kareem, these fundraising posts were used and in the case of Kristen, her goal of \$15,000 was surpassed by well over 30%³².

With 721 shares for Kareem's memorial fund, public awareness of his death was spreading quickly, and his page was transforming. His profile was rapidly repurposed from its everyday use of posting Kareem's status updates, to embracing moments of grief and mourning from those who were closest to him; Kareem's profile was undergoing a process toward rectification. Kareem's final *Facebook* posts were pure and humble, a reflection of who he was; on August 19th, 2014 he pledged a donation toward the ice bucket challenge that was sweeping the nation, and on August 27th he was found "chillin!" with friends at a local steakhouse.³³

So what happens when someone passes on *Facebook*? What changes are made? Of course, the individual certainly is no longer posting unless someone else has his or her account information. Nevertheless, the landscape of the individual's *Facebook* changes, and suddenly their final post is pushed aside by a wave of well wishes to the family, as well as intimate details from friends, family, and acquaintances begin to flood the page. Kareem's page quickly changed after his death on September 5th, there was an unexpected increase in the photos people shared of him, and although not pictured in the photos, they often tagged themselves as being so. This pattern may indicate that these individuals longed to have spent just one final moment with Kareem before his unexpected death.

Another emerging pattern comes from the vernacular of the *Facebook* posts themselves, several comments left from Kareem's friends, and family read as if Kareem were still alive and able to reply. George writes,

I can't believe you're actually gone. I woke up this morning hoping it was all just a bad

dream and that we were still gonna be meeting up at the cave tonight. You've been such a huge part of my life the past year and have truly become one of my closest friends. It seriously just tears my heart apart to know that I'll never see one of my best friends again. I'm really gonna miss you man rest in paradise Kareem.³⁴

George's post clearly exhibits denial, the first stage of grief from the Elisabeth Kübler-Ross five stages of grief model (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). The language he uses attempts to make conversation with Kareem as if expecting a reply. Several of Kareem's friends took to this type of "dialogue" when leaving posts, unable to advance through the subsequent stages of grief for several months.

Kareem's *Facebook* had become an unofficial memorial, and as the months passed, several posts found their way onto his page. For example, as the holidays came around, closer friends left notes, and wished him a happy new year in heaven. When his birthday arrived in February several left comments and birthday wishes, some wished he could come back while others had accepted his death and hoped he was enjoying himself in heaven.³⁵ With no one to *post* from Kareem's page, it lacks the societal pressures that Kristen's mother, Laurie's *Facebook* page had in juggling her posts of mourning and social life. Kareem's page continues to be used specifically for a memorial purpose. Thus, there is an active presence of absence in the continuing of postings from friends and family to Kareem's page, emphasizing the absence of any live updates at Kareem's timeline.

Unofficial memorial pages like Kareem's have become commonplace on *Facebook*, *providing* a virtual space and place where individuals can go to leave a message, well-wishes, and share a moment of intimacy with mutual friends and family. These spaces act similar to an online gravestone and have essentially been rectified to allow for a change in the way a visitor views the page. There is no expectation of the typical social networking post on an unofficial memorial. Instead, it is understood that the page has become something different, and its use no longer needs to follow the archetypical *Facebook* profile of the average user. Although this type of memorialization and mourning differs from the previous method and may have some benefits, it is not without its faults. As stated earlier, an unofficial page is riddled with ghosts and hauntings that may force the process of mourning to linger far longer than expected.

The Ghostly Matters of an Unofficial Memoria Page

As stated at the end of the previous two sections, the ghosts and hauntings that Avery Gordon alludes in her book appear in an unofficial *Facebook* memorial pages as well. A lingering presence and absence haunt the page in several different forms. For example, the personal information of the deceased such as where they work, and where they live, remain in present tense. This gives the feeling that despite the person having been deceased; a piece of their everyday life remains unsettled (figure 7).³⁶ Additionally, a common feature that uses an algorithm that combines a user's friends list, with the list of a mutual friend to suggest people to "reconnect"



Figure 7

with may sometimes include someone who has passed. Again, this keeps the deceased lingering in spaces they no longer actively inhabit, allowing what Gordon terms “their seething presence” by suggesting that they are still actively participating in the social network.

There lingers another type of haunting that an unofficial memorial page may produce. Earlier in the essay, I discussed that Kareem’s friends left him messages and birthday wishes on his wall. One of Facebook’s notification systems automatically generates birthday reminders to all friends of the aforementioned birthday boy or girl. This alone can become a haunting remind-

er of the loss of the deceased. However, it is not the most troubling; consider this scenario, you have mourned the loss of your boyfriend or girlfriend who passed in January, nine months later you are trying to readjust to a “normal” life and are on a date with a new person. Abruptly, your phone buzzes because a mutual friend tagged your name (the process of linking someone’s name on a Facebook post which results in the system notifying the user via email, text message, or notification ping on the front page) to a belated birthday wish on the deceased’s page, and suddenly another ghostly matter has appeared.

One final haunting remains to be examined. In 2011 a *Facebook* app was introduced which boasted over 200,000 users and exponentially more to date.³⁷ The application, aptly named *IfI-Die*, claims to be, “The first and only *Facebook* application that enables you to create a video or a text message that will only be published after you die.”³⁸ Essentially what this app is promoting is a post-mortem message by the deceased (to be recorded before hand) that will be placed on their *Facebook* timeline to address the people who were on their friends list, or, if their profile was public, the world. This app allows the user to make a video or text message and assign up to 3 trustees (in the event that one trustee may have departed with the user, this allows for two other trusted individuals to alert the application to post the message) to eventually carry out this last message by logging into the app and with the click of a button, are able to post the message for the departed. Although this is essentially another haunting, the possibilities for intimacy are endless, as the promotional video itself mentions, “It can be a big farewell, a favorite joke, a long kept secret, an old score you wanted to settle, or some valuable advice.”³⁹ Although the app itself promotes the one free message, their “frequently asked questions” page on the *IfIDie Facebook* page mentions the possibility of leaving additional private messages to other individuals. This further extends the possibilities of intimacy, for example, a dying father could choose to leave his son or daughter a birthday message every year until they come of age or in perpetuity.

The Official Memorial

So how has *Facebook* addressed these hauntings, and how have they attempted to show their sensitivity to individuals undergoing the grieving process? The following section will introduce the officially memorialized pages, as well as *Facebook's* new legacy feature.

With the advent of the friend suggestion in *Facebook's* algorithm, several individuals found that *Facebook* was encouraging and suggesting to members (users/people) to

reconnect with people who have died.⁴⁰ After several users complained about this feature, and its insensitivity to those who were mourning and grieving, *Facebook* quickly rolled out a new feature, and in October of 2009, the official memorialization of a page was introduced.

The official memorialized page comes post mortem and allows a family member or friend to request that *Facebook* make changes to the page. What the officially memorialized page reflects is something closer to designation. First, it adds the word “remembering” above the name of the departed (figure 8). This clearly marks the page as one that is different from an average user; it is intended precisely for the sole purpose of memorialization. Friends are still able to post to the account and content that the deceased had shared while alive is still accessible to those who were currently on the deceased’s friend list at the time of their death. Additionally, to remedy the ghosts that lingered in suggestions and birthday notifications, the deceased is removed from the public spaces of *Facebook*, algorithms no longer return results when searching for the departed, nor are they automatically generated as “people you might know.” There are also several minor changes that are done to the page that may seem insignificant but in actuality are made to place the deceased in the past. For example, identifications of where the individual once worked and the city they resided in at the time of their death are changed from present tense to past tense.

I was unaware of these types of official memorials until I had the opportunity to speak with several *Facebook* representatives, one of whom was a supervisor in their customer service department by the name of Jennifer. While talking to Jennifer, she guided me to the request page and further introduced me to the newest feature that *Facebook* released in February of 2015.⁴¹ The legacy contact is a way for the user to designate a trustee to take over their page in the event of the user’s death. This feature allows a moderator of the user’s page to write and pin posts to the deceased’s profile, as well as share a final message or funeral arrangement information. The moderator also has the power to respond to new friend requests, update the deceased’s profile



Figure 8

picture, as well as their cover photo. However, the moderator is limited in their accessibility: they are unable to log into the account itself, remove or change past posts or photos from the

Legacy Contact

My Legacy Contact

A legacy contact is someone you choose to manage your account after you pass away. They'll be able to do things like pin a post on your Timeline, respond to new friend requests, and update your profile picture. They won't post as you or see your messages. [Learn more.](#)

Choose a friend

Your legacy contact won't be notified until your account is memorialized, but you'll have the option to send them a message right away.

Account Deletion

If you don't want a Facebook account after you pass away, you can request to have your account permanently deleted.

Figure 9

Memorialization Request

After someone has passed away, we'll memorialize their account if a family member or friend submits a request. Learn about what happens when an account is memorialized. If you'd like a loved one's account to be memorialized, please use this form to let us know.

Who passed away?

When did they pass away?
If you don't know the exact date, please approximate.

Optional: Proof of death
If you can, please provide a link to an obituary or other documentation about the death. This is very helpful to the team that reviews memorialization requests.

Figure 10

deceased's timeline, read private messages, or remove any friends from the account. The process for adding a trustee is quite simple and is found directly in the settings of the user's account (figures 9 and 10 show the memorialization request and legacy contact form).⁴²

It seemed to me at the time that *Facebook* was addressing the ghostly matters that seemed to be more unsettling in the unofficial pages. However, Jennifer then led me to a post by a former employee of *Facebook*, Kathy Chan; in her post, Kathy writes, "we try to protect the deceased's privacy by removing sensitive information such as contact information and status updates."⁴³ Why status updates would be considered sensitive information was the glaring question and I asked Jennifer to explain. Jennifer said,

If we found out for example that the person who died and is being memorialized had committed suicide, we would try to remove any posts that indicated severe depression, or photos of the person that may include a gun; at the shooting range for example. We reserve the right to remove that kind of sensitive material and anything else that may cause excess drama or grief surrounding the death of the individual.⁴⁴

Jennifer's response indicated that Facebook essentially enforced some erasure of the person's life and in my opinion may be a larger problem than one would assume. As someone who has experienced depression and has been around several individuals who have had the disorder, part of the rehabilitation comes from admitting the problems we have, and at the same time, seeking and embracing the help and support of others. With Facebook removing these kinds of posts as well as the subsequent posts of people who may have left supporting comments, they are erasing possibly some of the most intimate exchanges between the deceased and those who truly cared for them to be revisited.

Community Memorials

Community memorialization pages are often markers of national tragedies, for example, the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newton, Connecticut. These types of community pages are maintained by single individuals or a small group that wish to bring attention and a place of mourning and grief to a larger scale audience. In the case of Sandy Hook, several pages went live on Facebook almost instantly after the shootings, some focused on all of the victims while others were focused on individual children.⁴⁵

Although these pages do initially become a place where communities and groups come together to discuss and ease the grief of a tragedy, they are often plagued with issues. The most glaring problem one encounters when visiting these pages, especially after a period of time has passed and attention to the events have died down from media, is the difficulty in policing the nature of the comments being posted. Anyone who joins the community is capable of posting their thoughts and opinions, and thus the comments may range from something heartfelt to

someone's political agenda regarding the National Rifle Association (figure 11).⁴⁶ However, these community pages do serve a purpose and act as a virtual memorial where individuals can also submit virtual kitsch items like teddy bears and candles, similar to the kinds of postings that were found on Laurie's wall.

Interviews with Deathtech Users

This section will be used to discuss the various interviews I conducted with individuals who have used deathtech or plan to use deathtech and their experiences with it. Though I conducted several interviews, I will be focusing primarily on an interviewee who was associated with Kristen's *Facebook* page; this is because it included similar if not the same types of responses as well as its relevance to the case study itself. The interviewee asked to remain anonymous and therefore I will be giving them the pseudonym "Stephanie." The interviews with individuals who had used deathtech always began open-ended, the first question being, "Can you tell me your experience with deathtech?" There was no influencing of responses and only follow-up questions were asked for clarification.

Stephanie began our talk with the ghostly matters of an unofficial memorial as well as the types of comments that were left directly on Kristen's page (I was unable to access her page directly as it was set to private and I was not on her friend's list). Stephanie explains that Tim (pseudonym), Kristen's boyfriend and soon to have been fiancé had gone directly into grief counseling after her suicide. Stephanie continues, "Despite any sort of attempt to move on [for Tim], people still kept posting pictures of her... on his Facebook and tagging him in it and being like 'isn't she beautiful' and 'look at what's gone.'"⁴⁷ This situation mimics the scenario that was stated earlier regarding the date, with this continuous bombardment of tagging and posting images on someone's wall, it becomes difficult for a mourner to let go. Though this may be a way for others to grieve, it does put a strain on those closest to the deceased who have to relive each moment from the tagging of pictures.

Stephanie also discussed the difficulty for some to move on, for example, Laurie's page continued for months to include posts of her daughter, which in turn would show up on Stephanie's wall, leaving a constant flow of grim reminders of Kristen's suicide. She says, "I felt the need to unfriend her so that people tagging her in things and posting things on her wall would no longer show up on my feed... because it felt inappropriate for me to watch everyone else's grief on her



Figure 11

page.”⁴⁸ Stephanie does, however, acknowledge that there are benefits to using deathtech,

Facebook was actually the way everyone found out about her death, and also where to go for her funeral services... Since her parents were also having a hard time getting money for the funeral arrangements, they used, I think it was a Kickstarter campaign for her funeral... Everything after the announcement of her death was driven through *Facebook* to make sure everyone knew and would be there.⁴⁹

Stephanie’s response mirrored that of several other individuals who were interviewed, often times stating that the biggest benefit came from the ability to broadcast the arrangements and share in the cost for the loss of a loved one.

Additionally, Stephanie touched on some of the more frequent displays of intimacy as on-line grieving progressed. Aside from the communal response from fundraising efforts, Stephanie stated, “Tim had changed his picture to a different picture of them laughing at the beach or something. . . But now it’s just a picture of himself which I think shows the process of moving on.” She continues,

Also, several of her close friends kept posting in present tense like she was still there. The Funeral seemed more impersonal because it was just some random pastor pushing his message, but the stuff people put on *Facebook* seemed genuine, like, *genuine loss* [her emphasis]... No matter how many times they went around the funeral and asked people to tell their story they would just start crying. They can take the time to post something online.

This comment on time was intriguing; several other individuals spoke about the time it takes to write a meaningful post, versus the time it takes to go to a funeral.

Bobby, another interviewee of mine, spoke of time specifically,

It’s interesting you know, I’ve unfortunately had to deal with three deaths within the last five years and was unable to go to any of the funeral services. Two of them were school related; I was in the middle of finals and I just couldn’t make the time, um, the other was in the middle of a group project that was worth 35% of my grade. As for the third death, my job just wouldn’t let me take the day off without having to dive into my sick time. Shitty part is, I had to simply decline it because I had to weigh what was more important, like going to a funeral of a second cousin who I hardly talked to, or saving that time for a real emergency. I know it sounds selfish but that’s life... In all three of these deaths I used that deathtech stuff or whatever, posting on *Facebook* and *Twitter*. I felt I had to especially with the cousin, I spent time at home like wondering what to write, and I really did feel bad about not going but I think my comments were

enough. I did the same thing for the other two people, but I took to *Twitter* as well since they were big on that, I wanted people to know, these people were friends of mine and I was sad to see them go. Besides, it works pretty good, I got support from other friends and we even put together an event to have a bonfire for them sometime after finals were over.⁵⁰

What struck me the most in my conversations with Bobby was how he had to consider juggling time, work, and school to determine if it was possible for him to go to a funeral. In *Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-First Century* Candi Cann discusses how she sifted through a few bereavement policies from certain employers and I decided to do the same.

I asked around for several bereavement policies from both the private and public sector. For the sake of this paper, I have isolated one from each to examine. For the public sector, Jano Mattaéo, an employee at the Kern County Public Defenders Office provided me with his human resources manual. The private sector handbook I received was from *DaVita*, a medical billing company; it was provided to me by a close acquaintance, Michael Abdelsayed. Both of these policies were written in a similar fashion, and compared almost identically to others that were provided to me, only differing in the time allotted off by 1-2 days. The starkest aspect of these policies lies not only in the minimal time allotted for the sake of bereavement, but also the categorization of related individuals that one may take bereavement time off for.

While the bereavement policies for *DaVita* were a maximum of three days with pay, the government employee has the luxury of ten paid days off.⁵¹ Though this may seem a glaring contrast, keep in mind that there are caveats as to who is considered “immediate” family in these policies. Additionally one must also understand that for most, the period for grieving is likely to take more than the time allotted by the policies. Individuals that are considered immediate family for the government employee include,

Spouse, registered domestic partner, children (biological, adopted, foster, stepchildren, legal wards, or children of a person standing in loco parentis and children of registered domestic partners); and parents (biological, adopted, foster, step-parents or legal guardians. If they are members of the employee’s household: grandmother and grandfather; grandmother-in-law and grandfather-in-law; grandchildren; mothers- and fathers- in- law; brothers and sisters, and brothers- and sisters-in-law; sons- and daughters-in-law.⁵²

In the private sector, the *DaVita* handbook describes these family members as the following,

Father, mother, sister, brother, current spouse or domestic partner, child, current mother-in-law, current father-in-law, current daughter-in-law, current son-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, stepparent, and stepchild, foster child, or child of domestic partner.⁵³

Both of these policies address neither cousins, aunts, uncles, friends, great grandparents nor great grandchildren. Additionally the policy at *DaVita*, does not include foster, step, or adopted children, nor legal guardians as parents. Furthermore, the medical billing company excludes exes, therefore if one is on good standing with an ex-father-in-law, they would not be allotted time off with pay to attend the funeral service. If one chose to take time off for the funeral of one of these people, they would have to do so with accrued sick time, assuming they still had any.

Interpretation & Conclusion

My research provides a close cultural reading of the intimacy between individuals over cyberspace, in particular *Facebook*, regarding grieving and mourning practices surrounding death. I have explored several different forms of memorialization, and though my initial assumption that the detachment of human contact or lack of face-to-face exchange in electronic mourning and grieving was inferior to more traditional forms of mourning and memorialization, the *Facebook* timelines of these memorials, be it official or unofficial, has shown otherwise. Several posts provided intimate interactions and sympathetic audience to a mother who had lost her child, while other posts involved communal intimacy and charity when it came time to help raise funds to take care of the final expenses. The boundaries of the internet are limitless and in the face of national tragedy, *Facebook* has become a space and place where the nation grieves with one another over traumatic losses like that of Sandy Hook,⁵⁴ leaving virtual candles and teddy bears in their wake to be logged in an archive that will forever be cached in cyberspace.

I came into this project with a narrow mind and was briefly blinded by my bias against technology. Yet, within my first few moments of delving into the world of deathtech, I found one of the most beautiful forms of intimacy I have had an opportunity to encounter since I began seeking answers to my cultural question. Thinking back to my first funeral observation, Cheryl explicitly stated that she could not find those words in person, yet behind the ambient glow of her cell phone, in a crowded reception hall which held the wake of her uncle, she was able to produce something profound, that others could not do with their prepared speeches. She left for her uncle a memorial, and shared her memories of the man who “gave her father legs, and his daughter a ‘normal’ life”⁵⁵ with those who were closest to her, and closest to the departed.

In all of the electronic memorials examined within this essay, individuals shared their collective memory of those who had departed. They shared moments of happiness, well wishes, and sympathies. Often these individuals were practicing in the rituals of performance, holding celebrations for birthdays of the departed, and utilizing the rapid exchange of *Facebook* to invite friends and family of the departed to events; in essence, honoring them in public memory. Both the timeline of the deceased and the timeline of the mourner may, in principle, act in the same way as a time capsule or a virtual gravestone, providing a site for the leaving of messages and photos of shared memories, funny stories, well wishes, goodbyes, and other sentiments.

The features that *Facebook* added to their website, such as the official memorialization and

legacy contact, represent other spaces for public memory to reside. As official pages, there is the sense of designation that marks the page for its importance as a space that honors the person that has passed. Other features such as the *IfIDie* app, though haunting in its own way, is capable of producing other forms of intimacy, leaving that final message for all of your loved ones becomes a piece of public memory that will last forever as the video is embedded on the user's page: for all of their friends to see, and to a larger scale, the entire world wide web if the person's profile was public. These features, along with *Facebook's* timeline in itself encourage the use of deathtech as a way to mourn and grieve online, and help perpetuate the rise in this form of memorialization.

On a broader scale however, and what I felt was most relevant to this piece, was the evidence regarding the bereavement policies. Technology is not affecting intimate interactions in the way I was assuming it would. Well, it was affecting the how, but the why was far more exciting and important to understand. Looking back to my earlier research on hookup culture, there were common threads of technology, intimacy, and social power, but more often than not, the bottomline reason someone chose to participate in hook up culture was due to time. Time to finish school for example, time they needed to labor on a project for work, or for an assignment for class — time they were unable or unwilling to give up in exchange for some sort of bond to tie individuals down, or relationships that took away from potential futures, goals, and the expectations of society (ie, getting a degree and beginning a career). For the hookup world of 2013, people were participating because it was a convenient and cheap thrill to get their sexual frustrations sated and move onto more important goals without “wasting time” in a relationship.⁵⁶

Similarly, time and the social constructs that govern our use of time (such as corporations or government bereavement policies) is why several people chose to go to the internet to grieve, mourn, and memorialize. Much of our time is dictated by societal boundaries of place and time but the internet provides relief through a suspension of time *outside of place*. The individual can still leave a thoughtful message for the person they lost, or change their profile picture to one of themselves with the deceased to indicate their loss, their mourning, and their grief to the rest of the world in a matter of a few minutes, rather than taking a full day off of work or school to physically attend a service. Looking at several bereavement policies from large and small companies, all allowed between 3-10 days for grieving, but only for *immediate* family. Grieving time, however, is not allotted for friends, for cousins, for aunts and uncles, or anyone else who does not fall under the workplace umbrella of “immediate family.” The circumstances in academia parallel those of the workplace: the student who is affected by the loss of someone in his or her life often finds their grade at risk due to time “lost” grieving. Rather than take an incomplete for missing several days or weeks of schooling, electronic grieving offers students a space to still express their grief in a virtual world through a *Facebook* comment, or even a 140-character *Twitter* thread to show face, and still trudge on through their schooling.

Prior to 2013, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) listed in its fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM4) a caveat regarding Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). The DSM 4 states that MDD could be diagnosed after two weeks of impaired functioning with exclusion to individuals undergoing bereavement. However, the new DSM 5 no

longer lists this exclusion and depression, even as a result or part of grief, is considered to be an MDD if it extends beyond two weeks.⁵⁷ Cann's response to this is,

To classify bereavement as depression after two weeks furthers our stigma with grief and mourning in our society and reveals how far we are removed from a time when grief and mourning were not only accepted but expected, and one who lost a family member could wear mourning clothing and abstain for a number of months, if not years from daily social, occupational, and societal expectations.⁵⁸

These expectations are the same societal expectations that now push us to quicken the pace of our mourning, shape the time allotted from work and school in the form of bereavement policies, and develop the process surrounding our grief and mourning practices. These constructs place earning a degree and pursuing a career as cornerstones of what makes a successful American. One of the oldest American ideologies is that of the "American dream," if one works hard, then their possibilities are endless. Another ideology comes from Benjamin Franklin's well-known (capitalist) adage that "time is money." These are the underlying ideologies of societal boundaries and constructs that come into play with the use of deathtech. Those who believe their time spent on intimate interaction and human contact is wasted if used for anything other than goals of social mobility and economic gain can utilize deathtech to grieve and mourn in a more time efficient manner.

This essay introduces several potential avenues of future research on memorialization and deathtech. Its strength lies within the methods I utilized in my research, and the secondary sources that provided me with emerging knowledge and practices of deathtech as well as the study of public memory over the sixteen week period of a graduate seminar that gave me the grounding necessary to strengthen my arguments. Additionally, reflexivity in the form of addressing the biases I had coming into the project as well as how they were removed in the process proves to be another strength. My exposure to intimacy studies has provided me with what I believe to be a firm grounding in my attempts at close reading of specific postings left behind on the walls of these timelines. However, I believe that this essay brought to light many new and important facets regarding deathtech and online memorialization as public memory, including the challenges in researching technological practices that necessarily change as fast as the quickly ever-evolving technology itself, requiring constant research vigilance. The plethora of primary evidence of deathtech is both an advantage and a challenge as there were several avenues in which this research could have taken. For example, there could have been more detailed information on the community memorials, or perhaps how some individuals can use deathtech in order to help ease into their death, utilizing *Facebook* as a means to log their journey with death and inspire (or console) others. These avenues each deserve a deeper look and are likely suited as chapters for a much larger project.

Ultimately, what this essay was attempting to convey is that it is indeed possible for individuals to use electronic media to show the same kinds of intimacy that are often reserved for

face-to-face exchange. In fact, for some individuals, it is easier to do so behind a screen than in front of others. On a broader point, it is important to consider the time we have in this world as our lifetime is divided into so many avenues, school, work, family, friends, love, hobbies, and so much more. In my opinion, if we are to live fuller and happier lives, we should not allow for society to dictate how much time we give to each of these avenues. There will always be a constant push and pull between these facets of our lives, however, emerging cultural practices of “life online” allow participation across space and in concurrent time. Rather than trying to find balance between these opposing forces and trying to give up time for a funeral in exchange for more time on a project for example, one should try and find harmony with everything that comes and embrace it. Even if that means spending the extra 15 minutes to write something intimate on the timeline of someone who was special in your life in the midst of finishing that last paragraph of your essay.

¹ It is believed that Quintus dictated his epitaph to be placed upon his bust some time before his death.

² The Associated Press, “20 Children Among Dead In Connecticut School Massacre,” CBC News, December 14, 2012, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/20-children-among-dead-in-connecticut-school-massacre-1.1134782>.

³ “General Account Settings,” Facebook, accessed April 25, 2015, <https://www.Facebook.com/dyi?x=AdlBRE-sURwmjWjAv>.

⁴ Drew Bahna, “Sexual Gratification, Just One Click Away” (class research paper, California State University Fullerton, 2013), 9-11.

⁵ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), page 8.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Kenneth Foote, *Shadowed Ground: America’s Landscapes of Violence and Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), page 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹¹ Candi K. Cann, *Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-first Century* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2014) 11.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 96

¹⁷ Tim Hutchings, “Wiring Death: Dying, Grieving and Remembering on the Internet,” in *Emotion, Identity and Death: Mortality Across Disciplines*, ed. Davies, Douglas, and Chang-Won Park (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 48.

¹⁸ Lisa D. Hensely, “Bereavement in Online Communities: Sources of and Support for Disenfranchised Grief,” in *Dying, Death and Grief in an Online Universe: For Counselors and Educators*, ed. Gilbert, Kathleen, Illene Noppe, and Carla Sofka (New York: Springer, 2012), 127.

¹⁹ Pam Briggs and Lisa Thomas, “The Social Value of Digital Ghosts,” in *Digital Death Mortality and Beyond in*

the Online Age, ed. Moreman, Christopher M., and A. David Lewis (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014) 132.

²⁰ “Adolph Belasquez Obituary – Anaheim, CA | Orange County Register,” Orange County Register, accessed April 26, 2015, <http://obits.ocregister.com/obituaries/orangecounty/obituary.aspx?n=adolph-joe-belasquez&pid=174723378&fhid=20240>.

²¹ “Cheryl Johanson,” Facebook, accessed April 20, 2015, <https://www.Facebook.com/cheryl.johanson.37>.

²² “Laurie Ciantar Halperin,” Facebook, accessed April 21, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/laurie.c.halperin>.

²³ This was eluded to via the Facebook of Kristen’s mother and later confirmed by an interviewee.

²⁴ “Laurie Ciantar Halperin.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 32.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ryan W. Neal, “Facebook Gets Older Demographic Report Shows 3 Million Teens Left Social Network In 3 Years,” *International Business Times*, accessed May 6, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/Facebook-gets-older-demographic-report-shows-3-million-teens-left-social-network-3-years-1543092>.

³¹ “Kareem Elgawly Memorial | Memorials & Funerals – YouCaring,” YouCaring, accessed April 22, 2015, <http://www.youcaring.com/memorial-fundraiser/kareem-elgawly-memorial/231306>.

³² “Kristen Hopkin Final Expenses by Rod Halperin – GoFundMe,” GoFundMe, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://www.gofundme.com/jd7ad8>.

³³ “Kareem Elgawly.” Facebook, accessed April 20, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/kareem.elgawly?fref=ts>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ This image was taken directly from my own page to protect the privacy of others.

³⁷ IfIDie, *If I Die - The Digital Afterlife Application* (Press Kit), accessed April 24, 2015, 2015. <http://www.ifidie.net/presskit.zip>

³⁸ “If I Die- The Digital Afterlife Application,” IfIDie, accessed April 24, 2015, <http://www.ifidie.net>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Matthew Moore, “Facebook Introduces Memorial Pages to Prevent Alerts About Dead Members,” *The Telegraph*, October 27, 2009, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/Facebook/6445152/Facebook-introduces-memorial-pages-to-prevent-alerts-about-dead-members.html>.

⁴¹ Stephanie Gomez (friend of deceased) in discussion with author, April 2015.

⁴² “Memorialization Request,” Facebook, accessed April 25, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/651319028315841;GeneralAccountSettings>.

⁴³ Kathy Chan, “Memories of Friends Departed Endure on Facebook,” Facebook, October 26, 2009, accessed April 25, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/memories-of-friends-departed-endure-on-facebook/163091042130>.

⁴⁴ Jennifer (Facebook customer service supervisor) interview with author, April 2015.

⁴⁵ “Sandy Hook Elementary School Memorial,” Facebook, accessed April 26, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sandy-Hook-Elementary-School-Memorial/505276912827658?fref=ts>; “Sandy Hook Elementary School Massacre Memorial,” Facebook, accessed April 26, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sandy-Hook-Elementary-School-Massacre-Memorial-Page/142591449223701?fref=ts>; “In Loving Memory of Sandy Hook Elementary Victims,” Facebook, accessed April 26, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/ILMSHEV?fref=ts>; “RIP- Dylan Hockley Sandy Hook Massacre Victim,” Facebook, accessed April 26, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/RIP-Dylan-Hockley-Sandy-Hook-Massacre-Victim/215750598560389?sk=info>.

⁴⁶ “Sandy Hook Elementary School Massacre Memorial.”

⁴⁷ Stephanie Gomez Interview.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Bobby Edwards (deathtech user) in discussion with author, April 2015.

⁵¹ “DaVita Teammate Policy,” (Human resources handbook, Irvine, California), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0ByeCfOIfxqMHc0JtbmR2WHPtczQ/view> 100.; “Kern County Employee Handbook,” (Human resources handbook, Kern, California), <http://www.co.kern.ca.us/artman2/main/uploads/1/employhb.pdf> 26.

⁵² “Kern County Policy and Administrative Procedures Manual,” Kern.ca.us, accessed April 27, 2015, <https://www.co.kern.ca.us/CAO/policy/01.pdf>.

⁵³ “DaVita Teammate Policy.”

⁵⁴ The Associated Press, “20 Children Among Dead.”

⁵⁵ “Cheryl Johanson.”

⁵⁶ Bahna, “Sexual Gratification.” It is important to note that my arguments here were based on 2013 research and that the use of Tinder as well as the Tinder app itself has since evolved toward a greater emphasis on relationships as an option to hooking up.

⁵⁷ Cann, *Virtual Mourning*, 20-21.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 21.

James Earl Weaver Prize

In the spring of 1993 the American Studies Student Association established the Earl James Weaver Graduate Paper Prize to honor the retirement of Earl James Weaver, Professor of American Studies, past Department Chair, and founder of the Department of American Studies at California State University, Fullerton. With an original endowment raised from the generous contributions of American Studies students and alumni, the Weaver Prize is an annual \$250 cash award for the best paper written by an American Studies graduate student during the preceding year. Every spring, a panel of American Studies faculty reads submissions and selects the winning essay. In 2015, the Weaver Prize went to Kacie Hoppe for her paper, "The Cultural Work of Steampunk Literature in Cherie Priest's Boneshaker." The faculty committee praised Hoppe's keen ability to analyze cultural documents within their historical context. The committee was impressed by the smart connections Hoppe drew to both nineteenth-century and current concerns, including those around immigration, changing gender norms, the high cost of war, and the promise and perils of technological advancement, whether in the form of nineteenth-century mining tools or twenty-first-century drones. The committee especially appreciated the essay's impressive scope, solid argumentation, and skillful incorporation of secondary literature.

401T: Proseminar: American Literature and Culture

The Cultural Work of Steampunk Literature in Cherie Priest's *Boneshaker*

By Kacie Hoppe

This paper was written for American Studies 401T: Literature in American Culture course taught by Professor Pamela Steinle. I wanted to explore the cultural significance of steampunk literature for the modern audience. How is it that novels set in the nineteenth-century that often deal with nineteenth-century issues, are relevant to today's audience?

“If Jules Verne and George Romero got together to rewrite American history, it might go something like this.” So proclaims one reviewer on the back cover of Cherie Priest’s 2009 novel, *Boneshaker*.¹ Set in the 1880s American northwestern territory of Seattle, Washington, *Boneshaker* is a fictional alternate history in which the American Civil War continues far beyond its true 1865 end. The premise for Priest’s tale is that a deadly gas has been released inside downtown Seattle causing an evacuation and the construction of a wall around the city to enclose the gas and the gas’s byproduct, zombie-like “rotters”, inside. *Boneshaker* exhibits the defining characteristics of the steampunk subgenre of science fiction by setting the story in the nineteenth-century, prominently featuring technology, the Victorian esthetic, and commenting on and playing with history.

My personal interest in steampunk stemmed from my interest in Victorian culture and admiration of Victorian clothing. When provided with the chance to participate in the steampunk subculture at a time traveler themed day at a Renaissance festival, I took the opportunity and have been a novice participant for the last two years. Although introduced to steampunk as a performance subculture, I quickly uncovered the literary history behind it. Out of the many steampunk novels that exist to date, I choose to write about *Boneshaker* because of its inclusion of the key steampunk characteristics related to the nineteenth-century. Additionally, the novel’s exploration of the themes of the American West, dystopian reality, zombies, and its strong female characters interested me. Before reading the novel, I expected to gain a better understanding of the standard steampunk tropes and their meaning in the context of American Culture. After reading the novel, I got a lot more than that.

Given the intersectional nature of steampunk and therefore the novel, I had to look at multiple areas for my secondary sources. I not only had to consult secondary resources on the history of steampunk, but also its possible meaning within literature and its cultural significance. In my search for information pertaining to steampunk, I came across many articles and books on the neo-Victorian novel, which is a larger literary genre that has gained popularity alongside steampunk. Although that body of work does apply to understanding the popularity of the nineteenth-century in modern literature, I decided only to include a small discussion of it when it pertains to the steampunk literature. I

also limited my study of the young adult, dystopian, and zombie aspects of this novel due to the less obvious commentary that I discovered upon reading the novel and conducting my research.

Although steampunk has evolved from a literary subgenre into a participatory subculture and has since broken into the broader popular culture, this paper is limited to discussing the cultural meaning of steampunk literature. As some scholars have pointed out, steampunk allows us to examine issues relevant to contemporary life in the safety of the reimagined past. Many issues still relevant in modern society such as technology, war, immigration, and gender inequality came to light during the Victorian era. Steampunk provides a space to explore those issues. *Boneshaker*, in particular, allows for the contemporary reader to reflect on modern issues while dealing with them in the past through the retrospection of steampunk literature. The cultural work of steampunk literature is to question the ideas of history and progress.

Grounding Through Secondary Sources

What exactly is steampunk? A simple definition is that it is fiction that prominently features the nineteenth-century and is usually set in Victorian London or the American West. Nineteenth-century technology is also very apparent; sometimes a steampunk novel may not be set in the nineteenth-century, but still features steam-powered technology, hence the “steam” in steampunk.² The technological aspect mixed with the clothing styles popular in the Victorian era (top hats, corsets, tail coats, A-line bustled skirts) create an aesthetic that is featured in the literature but is more associated with the participatory subculture. Although this paper does not focus on the subculture or the non-literary aesthetics of performance, it is important to be able to identify the style of steampunk to notice its prominence in American popular culture.

From its initial existence as a literary subgenre of science fiction, steampunk grew into a subculture. The subculture is illustrated by participants dressing in the styles presented in the literature and by creating their unique styles and characters. Many people within the community take on a fictitious persona at steampunk events such as informal gatherings (including unofficial Dapper Day at Disneyland, Steampunk Days at Renaissance fairs, and meet-ups at places decided within the local communities) and official events such as conventions, symposiums, and festivals. The literature and the subculture then developed into an aesthetic that has been picked up by artists and engineers alike. The aesthetic usually starts with a Victorian base (top hat, bustle skirt, or antique furniture) and then technological, industrial, scientific, or a combination, are added to it. An example of this would be a top hat with a pair of goggles sitting on the brim of the hat, adorned with clock pieces, gears, gaskets, tubes, washers, etc. The steampunk style blends the old (Victorian) with the new (technology).

Steampunk is a relatively new phenomenon, but its roots reach back over 100 years. Although there were instances of literature that fall under the definition of steampunk as early as Ronald Clark’s *Queen Victoria’s Bomb* in 1969 and Michael Moorcock’s *Warlords of the Air* in 1971,³ the creation of the term unified the literature and solidified it as a science fiction subgenre. The term “steampunk” was coined by the writer K.W. Jeter in a 1987 letter to *Locust Magazine* and was used to describe the literature that he and his peers, James Blaylock, and Tim Powers, were creating. Their literature was

inspired in part by the science fiction and adventure writers of the nineteenth-century. An example of this is K.W. Jeter's 1979 novel, *Morlock Night*, which deals with a dystopian nineteenth-century reality where the Morlock creatures from the H.G. Wells 1895 novel *The Time Machine*, use the machine to travel back in time and destroy London (and the rest of the world). When referencing the forefathers of steampunk, H.G. Wells and Jules Verne are nearly universally accepted. Other writers that are sometimes cited as steampunk inspiration are Edgar Allen Poe, Mary Shelly, and Charles Dickens.⁴

The novels of Jeter, Powers, Blaylock, as well as the popular novel *The Difference Engine* by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling (1990) are considered to be the first wave of steampunk.⁵ Steampunk slowly built momentum throughout the 1990's and then really took off after the year 2000. A search on Amazon.com for "steampunk fiction" brings up just over 4,000 results, whereas twenty years ago there were few enough to list. Many of the second wave (2000-present) steampunk novels take on tropes created by the first generation novels, but they also add on to those tropes by, as Jess Nevins of *The New York Review of Science Fiction* points out, taking the genre in different directions. For instance, Priest's novel, *Boneshaker*, takes place in the American northwest settlement of Seattle in the 1880's and includes a female protagonist as well as zombies. So although placed in the nineteenth-century, the novel takes a different geographical and gendered direction than the first wave of novels, which are usually set in London and depicted a white male, protagonist.⁶ *Boneshaker* is part of what is considered the second wave of steampunk, meaning that it was written after the initial books that created the term and invented the tropes that became common throughout the second wave. This makes *Boneshaker* not only a stand-alone work of steampunk but also a contemporary reflection of the genre.

After answering the initial question "what is steampunk," the next question is "why?" Why the nineteenth-century? Why is steampunk popular? Moreover, why is it important? Does steampunk serve a purpose? Does it serve more than one purpose? These are the questions that some scholarship written about steampunk attempts to answer. In her article, "The Nineteenth-Century Roots of Steampunk," literary critic Jess Nevins states, "The attraction of the surface elements of the Victorians, the trappings and visual style, is obvious."⁷ Cultural critic Margaret Rose notes that one reason for its popularity is the more articulate nineteenth-century language.⁸ However, beyond the attraction to the stylish elements of the Victorian Era, there seems to be something more drawing the large audience. One literary scholar suggests that "we" carry our Victorian heritage with us,⁹ which makes it more accessible to the modern audience, thus suggesting that Victorian heritage is something that needs to be understood in order to understand modern life.

The idea of Victorian heritage is tied to our understanding of our Victorian ancestors. Historian Steffen Hantke relates steampunk's function with that of nostalgia films in that they both allow allegorical processing of the past.¹⁰ Margaret Rose picks up on the processing of the past in her article, "Extraordinary Pasts: Steampunk as a Mode of Historical Representation," where she states that that steampunk offers a critique of the way history is told. Rose explains that steampunk draws attention, "to the narrative-making processes at work in any representation of history," and that, "historians have long been concerned that such employment can distort our understanding of historical truth."¹¹ This means that what we think we know about the nineteenth-century — about the Victorians, and about our country -- may not be the whole picture. Rose continues to argue that steampunk allows

society to “...explore the intersections and limitations of the various textual ways in which we access it [history],”¹² thereby calling into question what history is being told, how is it being told, and who is doing the telling. Rose’s belief is echoed in literary scholar David Pike’s “Afterimages of the Victorian City” where he states, “At its best, steampunk simultaneously critiques ossified attitudes toward the past and pillages that same past for alternatives to a present-day status quo to which it is violently opposed.”¹³ Pike’s statement reflects the way in which steampunk literature undermines the standard narrative retold about the Victorians while also providing alternate histories.

Most scholars agree that the appeal of steampunk for the modern audience has to do with history. In his 1999 article, “Difference Engines and Other Infernal Devices: History According to Steampunk,” historian Steffen Hantke explains the “fascination” that we have with the Victorian period is that, “We recognize ourselves in a play of similarity and difference.” It is the similarity between the current period and the Victorian period that many scholars agree. Hantke’s observation that the Victorian past has “historical ability to reflect the present moment” is strengthened by his explanation of Fredrick Jameson’s idea of a “properly allegorical processing of the past” which he explains as “readings shaped by the concerns, anxieties, and preoccupations of contemporary authors and their specific historical and cultural environment.” Hantke’s position is that the present reimagining of the Victorian past can have a variety of ideological purposes. He uses the examples of the early feminist movement, industrialization, urbanization, etc., which “can be construed as variants of contemporary issues as long as the paradigm of historical continuity is upheld.”¹⁴ About ten years later, several other articles were published that shared this same belief.

In a 2009 edition of *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, Jess Nevins explains, “Historical fiction set in the nineteenth-century often makes use of the era’s ability to portray contemporary issues in Victorian Garb.” Nevins echoes my observations when she points out that “the Victorian era (1837-1901), is an excellent mirror for the modern period. The social, economic, and political structures of the Victorian era are essentially the same as our own.”¹⁵ Along the same line, literary scholar Grace Moore stated, “As the first advanced industrial nation, Victorian Britain offers a compelling template or scapegoat for present-day anxieties and tensions, contemporary debates about morality, sexuality or race relations are frequently off-loaded onto the Victorians.”¹⁶ It follows, then that steampunk literature – and specifically *Boneshaker* — can be read as a depiction of modern “concerns, anxieties, and preoccupations.”¹⁷ It is through these devices that steampunk works to interpret and critique culture.

Primary Research Description and Analysis

“Part of this need to render the Victorians familiar seems to be a coping mechanism for doubts and anxieties about the future, particularly in the context of technological and scientific developments.”¹⁸

The current year is 1888 and it is sixteen years after the drill engine called the “Boneshaker” tore up the ground under the US territory of Seattle, Washington and released a deadly gas called blight that turns some (not all) people into zombie-like “rotters.” In this alternate history, the American Civil

War did not end in 1865 but is still ongoing in 1888. Seattle is not yet part of the United States, and, because the US government is using all of its resources for the war, there is no help for survivors living inside and outside of the wall that surrounds Seattle and holds the blight gas in. *Boneshaker* follows two different perspectives: Briar, the 36-year-old mother and Ezekiel, or Zeke, her 16-year-old son. Briar is the widow of the scientist and inventor that created the deadly boneshaker drill engine and Zeke is the inventor's son. Briar is blamed for her former husband's actions, and her fellow refugees have held it against her for the last sixteen years. Adding insult to injury, Briar's father, the local sheriff at the time of the catastrophe, set jail prisoners free in an attempt to save them from the deadly gas, but was posthumously labeled a criminal for assisting in a jailbreak. Zeke has gone under the wall into dangerous Seattle to uncover the truth behind his past and redeem the names of his grandfather and father. Briar follows her son to the other side of the wall to save him before he is killed by one of the many dangers lurking inside the wall.¹⁹

As many scholars have concluded, the nineteenth-century, specifically the Victorian Era (1837-1901), is of such great interest to us due to the parallels that exist between the Victorian world and our own. *Boneshaker* is a perfect example of the way in which prominent concerns of the Victorians are featured as an allegory for issues in modern America. The nineteenth-century/Victorian Era is present in representations of technology, time, place, and the social rules governing behavior. One of the most notable events in American history, the Civil War, took place during this time. Advances in technology were showcased in the weapons used in the war as well as in the creation and expansion of the first transcontinental railroad. The frontier was explored and settled. The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 began the formal movement for women's suffrage, which underscores the position that women were in during the Victorian era. This was a time of significant change and progress, but progress does come at a cost,²⁰ at least that is the warning echoed in much steampunk literature, including *Boneshaker*.

In true steampunk fashion, technology is a very prominent aspect of *Boneshaker*, be it drills "powered by steam and coal," the steam-powered factory that Briar works in, or the airships powered by steam thrusters. Not all inventions in the novel are as relatively harmless as these. Before the story begins, Priest uses a quote from Thomas P. Kettell, a real American economist and writer living through the Civil War: "In this age of invention the science of arms has made great progress...a great power the engines of destruction can exert."²¹ Quoted from Kettell's 1863 book, *History of the Great Rebellion*, this statement is interesting because it touches on invention and science coming together to create weaponry, leading to progress and ultimately, leading to destruction. This same idea is explored throughout the inventions in *Boneshaker*.

In the prologue of the novel, a fictitious historian describes, "In 1860, the Russians announced a contest, offering 100,000 ruble prize to the inventor who could produce or propose a machine that could mine through ice in search of gold. And in this way, a scientific arms race began despite a budding civil war."²² It is through this arms race that Leviticus Blue, the husband of Briar and the father of Zeke, creates the invention that the novel gets its title from, Dr. Blue's Incredible Bone-Shaking Drill Engine. The Boneshaker is driven under the Seattle ground, which collapses buildings (specifically bank buildings), kills bystanders, and releases the blight gas. It is unclear for most of the novel

if the destruction was on purpose for financial gain or if it was an unintentional consequence of a test run.

Although Briar believes that her former husband is dead, a new scientist and inventor has taken over where her husband left off inside the walled in Seattle. Dr. Minnericht is the creator of various weapons and mechanical devices shown throughout the novel. He created the “doozy Dazer” or “Daisy” that emits loud sounds that render the zombie-like rotters motionless for a limited amount of time. He is also the creator of a metal suit and helmet that can withstand most rotter bites and also a fully functional mechanical arm, which comes equipped with a crossbow. Dr. Minnericht provides these pieces of machinery to the inhabitants inside the wall, but always with a Godfather-like price. Once a character has received a favor from Dr. Minnericht, he owns them, meaning that they have to come when he calls them or do the favors that he asks of them. In this way, he obtains and remains in power.

Dr. Minnericht does not just build the machinery for the inhabitants of the wall. Once Briar is inside his classic villain’s lair, she discovers a room full of the discarded machines from the Russian fueled arms race and comments, “There’s nothing here but things designed to maim and kill.” Later along, Angeline clarifies, “He’s turning these things into war machines, since they weren’t much use as drilling machines. He wants to sell them back east, to the highest bidder.”²³ This means that Minnericht intends to sell his killing machines to whichever side of the Civil War that will pay more. Both scientist inventors, Dr. Blue and Dr. Minnericht, create progress in science and machinery, but they also both create destructive and life-ending technologies.

As so much of steampunk literature and culture is tied to technology, it is easy to see how steampunk provides a means to express anxieties regarding technology and science. This is reflected by the observations of several scholars. Cultural critic Margaret Rose points out, “dreams of progress, both scientific and social, are revealed as dangerous drives to impose one’s own order on others.”²⁴ Both Leviticus Blue and Dr. Minnericht work towards progress, but by the end of the novel it is revealed that Dr. Blue actually did use the Boneshaker for personal gain and then wanted to run away with the money that he had stolen from the bank vaults. Dr. Minnericht creates inventions that afford progress in science and medicine to the extent that he can replace lost limbs, but he too uses his inventions to gain power and money. Rose argues that the violence made possible by science and technology is prominent in both steampunk and nineteenth-century science fiction, noting specifically that many of the inventions go wrong, and lives are lost because of them, demonstrating a lack for “care for the human.”²⁵ In this way, *Boneshaker’s* nineteenth-century narrative speaks to the 2009 context of its publication, including the debate regarding the use of drone technology by the US government since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center Towers on September 11, 2001.”

A 2012 article from *The Nation* titled, “A Brief History of Drones” has a tagline that reads, “With the invention of drones, we crossed into a new frontier: killing that’s risk-free, remote, and detached from human cues.”²⁶ Here, writer John Sifton echoes the inventions in *Boneshaker* and also Rose’s previous comment on the lack of care for human life that is reflected in the depiction of technology in the science fiction of the nineteenth-century and throughout the steampunk genre. Sifton’s article opens with his statement that, “It was ten years ago this month, on February 4, 2002, that the CIA

first used an unmanned Predator drone in a targeted killing.”²⁷ Since 2001, there has been a constant public conversation about drone use by the United States. Sifton continues to state that public attention to drone use may be because drone strikes are “suggesting something disturbing about what human violence may become... Drones foreshadow the idea that brutality could become detached from humanity — and yield violence that is, as it were, unconscious.”²⁸ Here Sifton is picking up on the anxiety regarding technology that is inherent in the retro-futurist steampunk narratives like *Boneshaker*. Since drones are not always used for death and destruction, i.e. can be used for surveillance, it is *the extra step taken to arm the drone* that can not kill as selectively as a person shooting a gun in person that opens the possibility of causing unintended death. Along with a war come weapons intended to kill. The relationship between technology and weapons is a central focus of *Boneshaker* and echoes the debate about drone use in the US since 9/11.

Although *Boneshaker* takes place in the west outside of actual combat between Civil War troops, the effects of the extended Civil War can be felt in the northwestern territory of Seattle, Washington. Multiple characters in the book mention the war, and one character is a deserter. Briar makes the repeated comment that “once the war is over” the US government will make Seattle a state and provide assistance for the people living in the “outskirts” of the destroyed city, or that there would be something to move east for. The war is also prominent in the text through stolen war dirigibles and other previously mentioned technologies. After the quote by real-life Civil War historian, Thomas Kettell, Priest includes the subtitle to his book, *History of the Great Rebellion*. The extensive subtitle (which appears in his original book and is included in *Boneshaker*) states,

From its commencement to its close, giving an account of its origin, The Secession of the Southern States, and the Formation of the Confederate Government, the concentration of Military and Financial resources of the federal government, the development of its vast power, the raising, organizing, and equipping of the contending armies and navies... the immense financial resources and comprehensive measures of the government, the enthusiasm and patriotic contributions of the people...²⁹

Because this is the real subtitle of a real book written by a real person — in other words, not made up as part of Priest’s story — she is here drawing the readers attention to a comparison between real history and the present through an allegory of the Civil War.

In addition to the drone debate, the economic cost of the “War on Terror” was also discussed publicly and heavily criticized since 9/11 up until President Bush’s term ended in 2008. As Mark Thompson of *Time* magazine stated in 2008, “Bush’s war on terrorism soon will have cost the U.S. taxpayers \$1 trillion.”³⁰ Thompson also points out that many Americans would be shocked that the high price was only the “down payment,”³¹ meaning that the price would continue to increase as the war had no end in sight. This modern debate over the high cost of the drawn out conflict is only one of the consequences of war. As the war on terror started in 2001 and stayed a heated topic of public debate throughout most of the decade, it would make sense that Priest would have absorbed some of that conversation while writing her novel before it was published in 2009. A defining American

moment, the Civil War from 1861-1865 is a subject that continues to live on in the American imagination. Kettell's subtitle points out that the American Civil war was costly, much like the US War on Terror, which was notoriously expensive in a time of great US federal deficits. Even though the real Civil War only lasted until 1865, Priest draws it out into the 1880's, perhaps as an expression of anxiety over the length of the current War on Terror. In this way, *Boneshaker* speaks to current issues but in the safety of the past.

Priest's novel begins with a passage from a fictional historian, which details the draw of the northwestern frontier:

Unpaved, uneven trails pretend to be roads; they tied the nation's coasts together like laces holding a boot...in California there were nuggets the size of walnuts lying on the ground — or so it was said...in 1850 another rumor, winged and sparkling, came swiftly from the north. The Klondike, it said. Come and cut your way through the ice...a fortune in gold awaits a determined enough man...this meant very, very good things for the last frontier stop....Seattle....became a tiny empire nearly overnight³²

This passage provides a little history and context for the version of Seattle that the modern reader may not be familiar. The Northwestern territory of Washington did not become officially a US state until 1889 and was considered part of the American frontier. When the American frontier is traditionally discussed, anyone other than a white male or Native American is excluded. Although Chinese immigrants had a large part to play both in establishing the western frontier during the gold rush and connecting it to the rest of the country through working on the transcontinental railroad, their image is largely left out of the picture. Literary scholar Grace Moore suggests that neo-Victorian literature has been, "vital for the recovery and reclamation of marginalized voices;"³³ I believe that Priest does the same through her novel in more than one way.

In *Boneshaker*, the Chinese foreigners work in the underground inside the wall, bringing clean air down from above. The Chinese men work in furnaces covered in soot and have to wear tinted goggles due to the bright fires. Before going over the wall, Briar is warned about the potential dangers waiting for her on the other side:

There's a madman named Minnericht who runs part of the city, and big quarters of Chinese folks who might or might not be friendly to a strange white woman. And your friends the crooks will be the least of your problems. Have you ever seen a rotter? A real hungry one?³⁴

In this passage, the Chinese "folks" are being lumped together with a madman scientist with power issues and flesh eating hungry zombies, however, there is never an explanation as to why the Chinese folk "might or might not be friendly."

When Zeke goes under the wall a man named Rudy offers to be Zeke's guide inside the wall. To avoid being eaten by rotters, Rudy and Zeke have to travel underground, which takes them right past

the Chinese workers. At this point, Rudy offers some explanation: the Chinese men are not liked or trusted because they keep doing the loud and dirty work in the furnace rooms and because he doesn't understand why they put up with the conditions. He does not trust them because "it don't make a lick of sense to me why they just don't go back to their women and children."³⁵ Rudy continues to inform Zeke that the Chinese workers don't have their women and children with them because,

There was a law, years ago. It kept them from bringing their families here from China. Those folks breed like rabbits, I swear to God, and they were taking over the west. So the government figured it'd be an easy way to keep them from getting settled. We don't mind having them here to work, but we don't want to keep them.³⁶

What Rudy is saying here is similar to the actual history of Chinese immigration and the way that the Chinese were talked about during the nineteenth-century.

The large majority of the Chinese who came to the United States for the Gold Rush in 1849 and to work on the transcontinental railroad in the 1860's were considered cheap labor. After the railroad was completed, public opinion turned against Chinese laborers, and Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. The law "barred immigration of Chinese contract laborers for ten years. It was the first time that Congress had ever barred a particular racial group from entering the country."³⁷ The previously noted passage from the novel along with this historical basis gives insight into the way that Chinese workers may have been thought about during the nineteenth-century. The seriousness of the assumptions made by the white characters about the Chinese is shown through Rudy's later murder of a Chinese worker. He murders the Chinese man before he knows if the worker is an enemy and does not give himself a chance to find out. This history and its portrayal in the novel may serve as a contemporary allegory for ongoing and current debate over Mexican immigrants and immigration.

According to a Pew Research Center report, the United States hit peak illegal immigration in 2007 during the Bush administration.³⁸ Prior to hitting the peak, President Bush proposed some immigration reforms on national television in 2006,³⁹ highlighting the immigration issue as a national topic of debate. Immigration reform was a platform in the highly publicized 2008 presidential election and a contributing factor to President Obama getting elected.⁴⁰ Historian Steffen Hantke's observation that the Victorian past has "unique historical ability to reflect the present moment" comes into play here. The immigration debate is a polarizing issue that would have been hard to ignore while Priest was writing *Boneshaker*. By including the Chinese men in the story and providing the various character commentaries, Priest is giving a voice to the often marginalized historical Chinese immigrant and their history as manipulated labor while highlighting the similarity of their experience to the view of some contemporary Americans.

Priest also includes the narrative of another underrepresented character in the memory of Victorians. The "True Woman," characterized by the virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, was the popular image of the middle-class women in nineteenth-century America.⁴¹ While Briar is referred to as a lady and consistently warned that Seattle is "no place for a lady," she is shown

to fall consistently short of the Victorian female ideal. Briar is not a “True Woman”: she is a poor working class single mother and, therefore, the doctrine of the “True Woman” does not apply to her. The Victorians are known for their rigid expectations of behavior consistent with gender and social class, which Priest juxtaposes with the ideas of the lawlessness and freedom of the American Frontier.

From the beginning of the novel, Briar points out her shortcomings as a mother. She further distances herself from the image of the Victorian lady when she seeks out her son’s friend to find out where her son went. The exchange between them is violent on Briar’s part: she storms into the orphanage that the friend lives in, pushes past a nun, manhandles the boy, and threatens him with violence until he gives her the information that she wants. She also seeks out the help of airship pirates to get over the wall, shoots her way through rotters with a rifle, and is able to stand up to Dr. Minnericht unlike most of the men in the novel. She dresses in masculine clothes including pants and her father’s sheriff apparel and carries his rifle. This contrasts the popular image of women as depicted in actual Victorian novels and in America’s collective memory of Victorian women.

Briar’s behavior is not the only instance of a woman dressing in men’s clothing in Priest’s novel. Another character, the Native American Princess Angeline, lives inside the wall and also dresses in men’s clothes. When Zeke asks her why she dresses in men’s clothing, Angeline responds, “Because I feel like it” and when Zeke says that its weird, Angeline says, “good.”⁴² Angeline not only contradicts the popular image of a woman, but also popular conceptualizations (the past and present) of the “princess.” Angeline is shown as capable of aggression and through the course of the novel she stabs, shoots, and kills. The only other female character in the book is Lucy O’Gunning, who is the barkeep at an underground bar. While “ladies” are often depicted as being banned from bars in the old west, “saloon girls” of suspect morality were occasionally present. Even so, to be the owner and bartender is even more unusual. Lucy is missing both of her arms, which were cut off to prevent her from turning into a rotter after she suffered rotter bites. Angeline describes Lucy as, “one arm or many, she will break down doors or men or rotters. She’s a tough old bird.”⁴³ All of the images of the women in *Boneshaker* contradict the familiar picture of the Victorian Lady.

With regard to the steampunk plotlines, Steffen Hantke observes that, “Identities, whether determined by gender, race, or social class, begin to slip and slide at the first opportunity, transforming the social order into a fluctuating, explosive mixture, constantly on the verge of explosion or disintegration.”⁴⁴ Briar’s identity changes by the end of the novel. The people living in the “outskirts” outside the wall blame Briar for her husband’s and father’s perceived misdeeds. At the time when both of the incidents took place, Briar was only 19 years old and was 25 years younger than her husband. She married Leviticus Blue when she was very young without her father’s approval. At the end of the novel, Briar explains to Zeke what happened after she discovered that her husband intentionally used the Boneshaker to steal the money and then was going to run away without her. She says, “He never did think I was worth a damn...He thought I was young and dumb, and pretty enough to look nice in his parlor. He thought I was helpless. *Well, I wasn’t.*”⁴⁵ At this point, Briar reveals that she shot and killed her husband before he had a chance to make a getaway in the Boneshaker, leaving more destruction in his path. Briar’s identity is changed through this experience and her identity in her son’s eyes is changed through this knowledge.

Cultural critic Grace Moore believes that, “Those who would have found themselves marginalized and without a voice in nineteenth-century Britain have been particularly drawn to the Victorians, often seeking the historical origins of their oppression and sometimes trying to attribute blame and responsibility.”⁴⁶ I believe this also applies to contemporary Americans. When one thinks about the American West or the frontier, the image of a cowboy on a horse comes to mind, not a woman shooting zombies. However, Priest makes a woman the protagonist of a novel set in a time that oppressed women and not only that, she contradicts the popular image of women during this time. Briar is an independent, unafraid, badass, just as Princess Angeline and Lucy O’Gunning are also shown to be. Consistently portrayed as strong and independent; all three female characters in Priest’s tale mark the potential of steampunk as feminist fiction.

Conclusion

“Steampunk takes this impulse to heart in order to create an imaginative engagement between the present and the past that makes possible a challenge to the totalizing narrative of historical progress.”⁴⁷

As shown throughout this paper, much of the scholarship written about steampunk (and neo-Victorian fiction in general) agree that this type of literature deals with certain elements of history. Some question the authenticity of history, some allow for a better understanding of the past, and some link the present to the past as a way to reflect on modern society. Jess Nevins explains the possibility that “Steampunk, like all good punk, rebels against the system it portrays...critiquing its treatment of the underclass, its validation of the privileged at the cost of everyone else, its lack of mercy, its cutthroat capitalism.”⁴⁸ She also states that second wave steampunk is not steampunk at all as most of it has removed the punk elements. Although *Boneshaker* is second wave, I do believe that it lives up to its steampunk name, and does in fact contain the same analysis that the first wave of Steampunk is credited with.

Priest critiques the role that technology plays in progress and wars. Both scientists use their inventions for personal gain. The narratives of the two scientists and the destruction that they cause reflect a modern concern about the ethics of science, technology, and the anxiety about the possibility of weapons created from them. The most significant event in recent American history was the terrorist misuse of airplanes to kill thousands of Americans. This then leads to armed drones being used by the U.S. to kill America’s enemies, sometimes at the cost of civilian lives. In *Boneshaker*, the machines being created by Dr. Minnericht are shown to prolong the war, which only causes more death and suffering. Although there are also good uses for technology in the novel, Priest’s narrative critiques the intended and unintended consequences of war and technology.

Priest also questions the treatment of the Chinese workers and links their treatment to that of modern beliefs about immigrants. She provides the reader with an allegorical confrontation with the danger of making assumptions based on race when Rudy kills a Chinese worker for no reason other than that he didn’t know if he was a threat or not. Rudy tells Zeke, “He would’ve handed us over as

fast as he would've said, 'Hello.' A few pages later Zeke reflects on what has just happened: "all's fair in war and self-defense, wasn't it? But in the back of his mind a small foreign man with glasses was bleeding and confused, and then dead for no reason at all except that he'd once been alive."⁴⁹ The inclusion of other characters' assumptions about the Chinese questions whether progress has been made considering how closely the rhetoric mirrors contemporary assumptions often made about Mexican laborers and immigrants, race, and women.

By showing women in a different light than what was common for the Victorian era, Priest is removing the restrictions that are still placed on women today. There are currently areas of life and society where women are underrepresented, from physically demanding jobs of law enforcement, military, and firefighting to executive positions in businesses, to political offices. The debate surrounding women in the military gained much public attention and discussion during the war on terror. *Boneshaker* not only shows that women can fight in a battle, but they can excel, survive, and win. Briar's declaration that she was not helpless extends to the women of our current age.

One of the significances of steampunk is its relation to what is considered Victorian. "By labeling racial, economic, gender, or any other form of discrimination 'Victorian' we deny its continued existence in our own society, and it is therefore essential to examine our own ideological position when we engage in reinventing or reconfiguring the Victorians."⁵⁰ The punk element of Cherie Priest's *Boneshaker* is that it does question how far America has come (or not) in beliefs about war, immigration, and the roles women are expected to inhabit. Are we, in fact, post-racist? Are we, in fact, post-sexist? Do we have equality in America? As evident is Cherie Priest's *Boneshaker*, steampunk gives the contemporary American a way to not only process the past, but also to process the present, and provide cautionary tales for the future.

¹ Cherie Priest, *Boneshaker* (New York: TOR, 2009).

² See David L. Pike, "Afterimages of the Victorian City" and Margaret Rose, "Extraordinary Pasts: Steampunk as a Mode of Historical Representation" for more detailed descriptions.

³ Jess Nevins. "The Nineteenth Century Roots of Steampunk." *New York Review of Science Fiction* 21, no.5 (2009): 3.

⁴ Jess Nevins. "The Nineteenth Century Roots of Steampunk." *New York Review of Science Fiction* 21, no.5 (2009): 3. And Michaela Sakamoto, "The Transcendent Steam Engine: Industry, Nostalgia, and the Romance of Steampunk." (Proceedings, The Image of Technology Conference of the Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery, Pueblo, CO, 2009). And Margaret Rose, "Extraordinary Pasts: Steampunk as a Mode of Historical Representation," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 20, no. 3 (2009): 319-333.

⁵ Nevins, "Nineteenth Century Roots," 3.

⁶ This observation is also made by Lisa Goldstein in her book review of *The Inexplicables*, the 4th book in Priest's series.

⁷ Nevins, "Nineteenth Century Roots," 5.

⁸ Rose, "Extraordinary Pasts," 322.

⁹ Grace Moore, "Twentieth-Century Re-Workings of the Victorian Novel," *Literature Compass* 5, no. 1 (2008): 134.

¹⁰ Steffen Hantke, "Difference Engines and Other Infernal Devices: History According to Steampunk," *Extrapolation*

tion 40, no. 3 (1999): 252.

¹¹ Rose, "Extraordinary Pasts," 323.

¹² Rose, "Extraordinary Pasts," 319.

¹³ David L. Pike, "Afterimages of the Victorian City," *Journal Of Victorian Culture* 15, no.2 (2010): 265. <http://dx.doi.org/lib-proxy.fullerton.edu/10.1080/13555502.2010.491662>

¹⁴ Steffen Hantke, "Difference Engines and Other Infernal Devices: History According to Steampunk," *Extrapolation* 40, no. 3 (1999): 245.

¹⁵ Nevins, "Nineteenth Century Roots," 5.

¹⁶ Moore, "Twentieth-Century Re-Workings," 136.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Nevins, "Nineteenth Century Roots," 5.

¹⁹ Priest, *Boneshaker*.

²⁰ David Pike, "Afterimages of the Victorian City," 263.

²¹ Priest, *Boneshaker*, 11.

²² Priest, *Boneshaker*, 16.

²³ Priest, *Boneshaker*, 371-2.

²⁴ Rose, "Extraordinary Pasts," 328.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ John Sifton, "A Brief History of Drones," *The Nation* Feb. 7, 2012. <http://www.thenation.com/article/166124/brief-history-drones>

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ The rest of this quote can be found in both Cherie Priest, *Boneshaker*, 11 and Thomas P. Kettell, *History of the Great Rebellion* (Worcester: L. Stebbins, 1863), title page. Kettell's text is available for free download on Google books.

³⁰ Mark Thompson, "The \$1 Trillion Bill for Bush's War on Terror," *Time* Dec. 26, 2008. <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1868367,00.html>

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Priest, *Boneshaker*, 15-6.

³³ Moore, "Twentieth-Century Re-Workings," 136.

³⁴ Priest, *Boneshaker*, 89.

³⁵ Priest, *Boneshaker*, 128.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Kenneth M. Holland, "A History of Chinese Immigration in the United States and Canada," *American Review Of Canadian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2007): 150-1.

³⁸ Ens Manuel Krogstad and Jeffery S. Passel, "5 facts about illegal immigration in the U.S.," *Pew Research Center* Nov. 18, 2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/18/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>

³⁹ Josh Hicks, "Obama's failed promise of a first-year immigration overhaul," *The Washington Post* Sep. 25, 2012

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Barbara Welter, "Cult of," in *Locating American Studies: The Evolution of a Discipline*, ed. Lucy Maddox, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 54-55

⁴² Priest, *Boneshaker*, 210.

⁴³ Priest, *Boneshaker*, 211.

⁴⁴ Hantke, "Difference Engines," 251.

⁴⁵ Priest, *Boneshaker*, 406.

⁴⁶ Moore, "Twentieth-Century Re-Workings," 142.

⁴⁷ Rose, "Extraordinary Pasts," 328.

⁴⁸ Nevins, "Nineteenth Century Roots," 5.

⁴⁹ Priest, *Boneshaker*, 158.

⁵⁰ Moore, "Twentieth-Century Re-Workings," 140.

