The American Papers

Journal of the
American Studies Student Association

On Being and Becoming: Constructing Identities

Identity is the fluid and transitory nexus of interrelations that plaits personhood with culture, the individual with the social, the nation with the globe. It is through the examination of identity's diverse expressions and manifestations that we are allowed a peek inside human identity construction and the reticulate veins that bond individual expression to cultural phenomena, free will to social context, personal significance to the filmy abstract. Ultimately, we seek to learn how culture and self mutually inform and transform one another over time—the process of being and becoming.

In this year's American Papers we present a range of identities-under-construction. From furry fandom to contemporary bloggers, from The Big Lebowski Achievers to Disney's Tomorrowland, from whiteness racial construction to race representations in film, our objective is to demonstrate the myriad processes through which identity is constructed, manipulated, metamorphosed, and reconstructed. Each essay represents not only some of the best undergraduate and graduate research writing in Cal State Fullerton's American Studies Department, but also provides a deep and diverse analysis of individual, social, and national identities—further fleshing out the conceptual American kaleidoscope with its individual glass gems forever in rotation, forever shifting.

The American Papers

Journal of the American Studies Student Association

Volume 28 │ 2009 – 2010 │ Published Annually

Contributors

Heather Andrews is a graduate student in the American Studies program. She received her B.A. in English and Ethnic Studies at UC Riverside. Her interests include white American masculinity; colonization and land use; race and racism; and literature and literary identity. She hopes to find a PhD program that will allow her to study all of these things.

John M. De Carlo received his Bachelor's degree in American Studies and African-American Studies from the State University of New York at Buffalo in May 2004. He is currently a Master's student at Cal State Fullerton. His major research interests include race, politics, sports, and transnationalism. JD hopes to pursue a Ph D at New York University. In his spare time he is either playing sports or watching them.

Christian Gunkel is enrolled as a graduate student at the University of Tübingen in Germany, and spent the academic year 2008/09 as an exchange student at the California State University in Fullerton. Back in Germany, he intends to finish his MA in American Studies in 2010. His research interests include countercultures, especially American Transcendentalism and the Beat Generation, as well as consumer culture.

Bridget Kominek is a graduate student in American Studies. Her work as an English teacher has spurred her interests in the history of higher education in America and the intersections between race, language, gender, class, and education. In addition to her professional and academic pursuits, she enjoys vegan cooking and watching movies.

Nathan J. Kuntz is a second year graduate student in American Studies. He hails from the frozen north-central plains of this great land. Typically, if you engage him in conversation he will be railing against nuclear proliferation or ranting about the particulars of some grand utopian social reform. He believes in communal type dwellings where beards are truly celebrated, he also longs for revolution, but only if he can dance to it.

Jennifer Moore is currently studying for comprehensive exams to complete her M.A. in American Studies. Her research interests include television and film, gender, literature, philosophy, and social movements. She holds undergraduate degrees in History and Communications from the University of Idaho. Much of Jennifer's inspiration for her work comes from her two great loves – her life partner JJ and son Augustus.

Kevin Prewitt is a undergraduate senior in American Studies. He was born and grew up in Orange County. He would like to thank his parents, Christopher and Katherine, for their putting up with him, supplementing his finances and still loving him for nearly 30 years now; his wife, Theresa, for emotionally supporting him through all his school courses; HappyWulf and Changa Lion for being excellent study partners/interviewees; and Dr. Carrie Lane for being and exceptional instructor and inspiring him to be the best ethnographer he could be.

Anita Rice received her BA in American Studies from CSU Fullerton in May of 2009. Her very diverse interests include cultural radicalism, women and families, love and sex, film and media, pop culture, postmodernism, the built environment, advertising, honky-tonk music and barbeque. She wishes to express her sincere thanks to her professors, to her husband Greg, and her kids for supporting her and making sure she never gave up.

Scott Simons hopes never to enter a world of pain, knows what happens when you find a stranger in the Alps and is always on the lookout for a cash machine. As an undergraduate animation major. For Peter, or anyone else who's interested, Scott recommends Animal Collective's Strawberry Jam, Lungfish's Feral Hymns, Bill Hicks' Philosophy, and the Black Keys' cover of Captain Beefheart's "I'm Glad."

Christina L. Stern received her BA degrees in the fields of American Studies and Sociology from Cal State Fullerton in May 2009. She plans to further her education with a Master's degree in Sociology. Her academic interests include cultural analysis, social movements and revolutions, and race/class/gender studies. Christina would like to thank her family and friends for their unending support and her professors.

Leif E. Trondsen is currently a second-year student in the Single Subject Credential Program in Social Studies at CSUF. He was born in Lillehammer, Norway and raised in Southern California. Leif received his B.A. in History from California State University, Long Beach and his M.A. in History from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Leif plans to pursue a Ph.D. in History and eventually to teach in higher education.

Editors

Mary T. Anderson might you what the T stands for. She is a third-year American Studies graduate student and hopes to pursue a PhD after completing her MA in the spring. Her research interests include (but are not limited to) queer studies, the intersections of race and sexuality, and on a good day the life and work of Susan Sontag. She would like to express her undying gratitude and affection to her best AMST pals Goose and Balls. She lives in awe of her wonderful partner Rhonda, with whom she can frequently be found ogling other people's dogs. If anyone is looking for a drummer, she is available.

Heather Andrews is a graduate student in the American Studies program. Heather stumbled upon some good luck this year and was able to edit as well as write for the American Papers; to learn more about Heather, please see the authors' biography section.

Heather Brown is a senior in her final semester of the undergraduate American Studies Program. Ever the frequent coffee drinker, Heather can usually be spotted in various on campus coffee spots enjoying a latte and a good book on a range of topics including suburban culture, minority relations, and contemporary film. Though the arduous question of "what next?" has currently taken hold of her thoughts as graduation draws nearer, she is sure that the pursuit of an advanced degree is in her immediate future. What that degree will be in…only time will tell.

Patrick Covert is a first year graduate student at Cal State Fullerton. He recently moved to Long Beach where he enjoys riding his bike and looks forward to nights were he finds parking. He is currently researching the photography of Bob Mizer.

Jonathan Cummins is a second-year graduate student in American Studies. His interests are in economics, philosophy and the West. He has worked in newspapering, banking, and is constructing a list of graduate programs for life after American Studies. He is currently working on a thesis for the MA degree, tentatively titled "The Imagined Economy: Consumer Culture and the Great Depression of 2008.

Connie Nhami Huynh was raised in the San Gabriel Valley of the Greater Los Angeles area, and has experienced some of the best Vietnamese cuisine in the U.S. But, when she's not eating great food or studying diligently, she's most likely to be found outdoors at the farmer's market or at the art walk. Connie is currently a second year graduate student and her research interests include race, gender, music and forms of resistance.

Paul Saiedi is excited and feels privileged to be part of the editorial staff of the American Papers for a second year. Through his time in the American Studies department he has been challenged and inspired to continue to pursue a PhD. after he graduates in the of Spring 2009. His research interests center on uncovering the place of Middle Eastern peoples in American and Transnational History through the lens of gender, sexuality, place, community and class communicated through material productions.

Emily Starr received her bachelor's degree at the University of La Verne in sociology and is currently a second-year graduate student in American Studies. She is particularly passionate about gender studies, sexual politics, pop culture, dark coffee, her lifelong passionate love: books, her outdoor patio (where you can generally find her if missing), her best friend/significant other/constant companion/guy who brilliantly copes with her range of neuroses, travel, and muenster cheese on water crackers. Future plans remain opaque but haloed by a hopeful brightness!

About the Courses

AMST 300 –Introduction To American Popular Culture: An historical exploration of popular culture in America as it both reflects and contributes to the search for meaning in everyday life. Themes include heroes, myths of success, symbols of power, images of romance, consumerism, race and sexual identity

AMST 350 – Theories and Methods: To provide an understanding and appreciation of methodology, theories of society and images of man as they affect American Studies contributions to scholarship. Fulfills the course requirement of the university upper-division baccalaureate writing requirement for American Studies majors

AMST 401T –American Culture Through Social Science: Explores the earliest efforts of American sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and political scientists to study American culture, and the ways that they understood urban life, racial and ethnic identity, and the role of the individual in modern society.

AMST 401T – American Culture and Nature: Analyzes the meaning of nature in American culture, past and present. Traces the development of environmental attitudes as reflected and shaped in such cultural landscapes as the frontier, countryside, city, suburb.

AMST 401T – The Body: Concentrating on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, examines the relationship between American culture at large and shifting definitions of the healthy and appealing body. Issues include gender, race, disability, weight control, and bodily alterations.

AMST 409 –Consumer Culture: This class explores the politics of consumer culture in America, from the Boston Tea Party to today. Topics include commodification, the "American standard of living," social movements, and consumerist identity formations.

AMST 413 –American Male: The effect of economic, social, political and cultural changes on American males. Emphasis on the 19th and 20th centuries.

AMST 443 –Visual Arts: This class examines visual phenomena in America as they reveal changes in recent American culture. Areas covered include: the "high" arts (painting, sculpture) as contrasted with the "low" arts (advertising, television); the artist as innovator; alienation; the business world; and American values in art.

AMST 447 – Race & American Popular Culture : Explores American racial ideologies through the lens of popular culture. Examines theater, music and film, and asks: how has popular culture contributed to the social construction of race and ethnicity; how has it challenged and transformed racial and ethnic stereotypes?

AMST 502T –Theorizing Race and American Studies: Advanced analysis of the ways in which Americans have constructed, defined, represented, and negotiated racial identity and racial hierarchies from the seventeenth century to the present. Although this course takes an historical approach, it is not meant to be a survey. Instead we will pursue an in-depth analysis of how different cultural historians with differing interdisciplinary specialties have approached the study of racial formation and interracial interactions. It attends to substantive conclusions as well as theoretical and methodological considerations.

HIST 572 –Seminar in American History:
Seminar in which students will utilize primary sources in writing research papers in American History. May be repeated once for credit when covering a different sub-field.

Born to Bowl:
Understanding Fandom from The Dude to The Boss

Scott Simons

This paper was written for Asst. Prof. Adam Golub's 300 level
American Popular Culture class during the Spring of 2009. The
goal of the paper was to metabolize Daniel Cavicchi's ethnographic
fan study *Trams Like Us* and apply Cavicchi's theories of fandom
to a different fan base than he did, namely fans of the Coen
brothers' film The Big Lebowski. Comparing interview responses
to Cavicchi's theories, this paper finds many similarities in fan
activity between the two diverse groups, strengthening Cavicchi's
assertion that participation in fandom is an enriching way to help
navigate our way through the world.

This paper looks at similarities and differences in fan behavior between two fairly
different populations of fans—fans of rock artist Bruce Springsteen and fans of the
1998 Coen Brothers film *The Big Lebowski*. For reference on Springsteen fans (also
known as Tramps, taken from the line "tramps like us, baby we were born to run"
from the Springsteen song *Born to Run*), the sole source is the book *Tramps Like Us* by
Daniel Cavicchi, a Tramp himself and a scholar in American Studies. For reference on
Lebowski fans (also known as Achievers, taken from the fictional youth program The
Little Lebowski Urban Achievers as well as the rich Lebowski's dialog from the film *The
Big Lebowski*), sources include the film itself, online fan groups, websites dedicated to
the film, and my own research: responses to a questionnaire (modeled after Cavicchi's
and included at the end of this paper), interviews with Achievers, and ethnographic
experience at a gathering of Achievers. I have no personal experience as a Tramp, and
as much as I love *The Big Lebowski*, I would probably be defined by most Acheivers as a
"fuckin' amateur,"—casual fan—or possibly "not exactly a lightweight"—somewhere
between a casual and serious fan. Using an approach of understanding to debunk the

negative associations typically ascribed to fandom, Cavicchi humanizes fan activity and demonstrates its important role in our lives. This paper closely follows Cavicchi's text and tests his conclusions on a substantially different fan base. It is my hope that in doing so, I will similarly humanize Acheivers to the uninitiated.

The book *Tramps Like Us* by Daniel Cavicchi looks at how fans of Bruce Springsteen view their own participation in fandom. Cavicchi tries to determine why they are fans and what impact that fandom has on their lives. He gathers his information straight from the source, by direct interview. Most of his interviewees were found via online Springsteen fan networks, and all those he interviewed responded to the same questionnaire, so Cavicchi had a similar frame of reference for every individual he spoke with. He did his best to let the fans speak for themselves, preferring to draw conclusions from their thoughts rather than shape their responses by asking pointed questions which would enable him to categorize them in ways previous studies of fandom had.[1] At the heart of Cavicchi's text is a desire to humanize fan activity frequently represented in popular culture and opinion as "unhealthy and dangerous… At worst, fans are characterized as pathological and deviant…At best, they are amusing and quaint."[2] A pop-cultural example of the former can be found in the 1996 Tony Scott film *The Fan*. In *The Fan*, Robert DeNiro plays a baseball fan whose psychotic obsession with a player from his favorite team leads to job loss, divorce, kidnapping, extortion and murder. A similar reference of the latter opinion of fandom can be found in William Shatner's December 20, 1986 appearance on Saturday Night Live. In a sketch, Shatner plays himself during a celebrity appearance at a Star Trek convention. Perplexed by obsessive fans, Shatner ultimately questions the validity of their activities, shouting, "Get a life!" Aside from popular opinion, Cavicchi notes that critical opinion of fandom, often "Characterized fans as living in fantasy worlds…one step away from pathological delusion."[3] Cavicchi's desire to let fans speak for themselves stems from concerns about the "elitist and negative views" previous scholarly works on fandom attribute to fan behavior, noting that few conductors of said studies have "ventured out to speak to fans and ask them about their fandom."[4]

Cavicchi theorizes that fans use the object of fandom to "get through each day… understand the fluctuating and contradictory experience of daily life and to make connections with other people around them."[5] He explains that fan activity is engaged in to "release tension, reaffirm values, create a sense of self and meet others."[6] And although fandom begins with an external person, object or cultural text, "fandom is not some particular thing one *has* or *does*. Fandom is a process of being, it is the way one *is*."[7] In defining fandom, Cavicchi notes that, "Fandom is a phenomenon of public performance…not generally attributed to other kinds of cultural behavior like religious

devotion, intellectual study or personal relations."[8] Cavicchi further defines fandom by stating that, "Fandom is a phenomenon of Western industrialist capitalism since the late 1700s."[9] Changes in technology allowed for new methods of content distribution and capitalism.[10] Publishing, for instance, allowed for the dissemination of cultural text beyond the elite scholarly realm and industrialization exposed women to social spheres that were previously strictly male.[11] Fandom was a way to understand these newly-available cultural texts. In his interviews, Cavicchi found a lot of commonalities among fan experiences.

First off, sharing the story of becoming a fan was a unanimous act, and although religion does not fall under the umbrella of fan activity, language akin to religious conversion was used very often to describe becoming a fan.[12] Discussions regarding the degree (or seriousness) of one's fandom are common, and for Springsteen fans, there are four debates that establish one's legitimacy as a fan: age (many older fans feel younger fans haven't had the life experience necessary to fully appreciate Bruce), region (since Bruce is from New Jersey and often sings about the city, fans from N.J. draw some credit from their similar surroundings), attitude (the difference between casual appreciation and overboard obsession), and behavior (how one acts at a concert—paying attention or partying and being disruptive to others).[13] Similar debates exist for all fan activity, and each instance of fandom has debates tailored to its specific catalytic text.

Cavicchi found that for Springsteen fans, there are four major themes of attraction between the fans and the aesthetic qualities of the music itself: political associations with the issues of social injustice Springsteen commonly sings about; biographical associations with Springsteen himself or the towns he writes about; and personal associations fans draw from the relation of his lyrics to their own lives.[14]

In understanding the role fandom plays in identity, Cavicchi states that, "By studying fandom, I have…been studying people and who they think they are."[15] Therefore, fandom acts as a catalyst towards understanding the myriad ways in which fans associate with music (or more broadly, the object of fandom) to help shape their thinking, ideology and identity. Cavicchi's first category related to identity is the process of collecting—acquiring physical memorabilia related to Springsteen that "act as confirmers or reminders of [fans'] identities."[16] Similarly, and sometimes more importantly, bootleg tapes of live performances are often collected, offering records of Springsteen's inter-song repartee.[17] The second category is recognition of self—seeing similarities between elements of the fan's life and the text of Springsteen's lyrics.[18] The final category is self-continuity—involvement in fandom acts as a constant through all the changes life brings (such as beginning a new job, moving to another town, dressing differently) and can act as a photo album or "map… with which to mark the passage of

time and organize one's perception of oneself within it" (for example: "remember the apartment I lived in when *Born to Run* came out?").[19]

Finally, Cavicchi notes that participation in fandom often leads to the formation of communities revolving around that fandom. Although fans can come from wildly different backgrounds or demographics and start off as strangers to one another, fans often express, "A strong affinity for one another and a sense of belonging together."[20] Cavicchi lists a number of methods fans use to interact with each other, namely fan clubs (often online), fanzines (made by fans for fans, often with low budgets), concert events (fan interaction associated with a coming concert, for example: talking while waiting in line for concert tickets to go on sale), and other social events (informal or fan-initiated gatherings, such as the parties advertised on the *Luckytown Digest* discussion board).[21]

In concluding his argument, Cavicchi restates his belief in the personal importance of fandom and its ability to help fans understand the world around them. He expresses his hopes that others studying fandom will attempt to understand the fan experience from a more personal stance than the texts that paint fans as non-individuals, subject to the manipulations of corporate content producers, or as guerillas resisting such attempts. Although he still sees the value in more objective fan studies, he feels that continuing to ignore personal meaning could be a detriment to his field's credibility.[22]

In keeping with Cavicchi's hopes, I have attempted to employ similar methodology and perform an equally personal ethnographic study of fans of one of my favorite cultural texts, *The Big Lebowski. The Big Lebowski* (*TBL*, for short) is a comedy that has attained cult classic status and has generated a rather large and diverse fan base, crossing lines of gender, race, religious affiliation, sexual preference and geographic location. It was written by the Coen brothers, Joel and Ethan, and directed by Joel. The film is a product of personal stories shared with the Coens, as well as their love of crime stories and film noir, and draws its name from a reference to Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*.

Similar to film noir tales, *The Big Lebowski* is set in Los Angeles, populated by a diverse cast of eccentric characters and has a truly convoluted plot (if it has one at all). The protagonist, nicknamed "the Dude," is about as unconventional as heroes get—he's a lazy, unemployed pot smoker and habitual drinker, caught up in the swirling chaos of the plot by a case of mistaken identity. It turns out there's a wealthy man who shares the Dude's real name, Jeffrey Lebowski, and that man's wife has incurred a major gambling debt with a known pornographer. The pornographer, unaware of the shared name, sends some thugs to the Dude's house for a forceful collection, and before the Dude can convince them they have the wrong man, one thug defiles something very dear to the Dude's heart. To quote the film: "They peed on my fuckin' rug," a rug that,

"really tied the room together."[23] A bowling partner of the Dude convinces him to seek compensation for the rug from the wealthy Lebowski. In this way, the rug becomes the catalyst for the Dude's involvement in numerous outlandish situations, resulting in the destruction of the Dude's car, repeated forced entry into and vandalism of his home, and ultimately the death of his close friend. But focusing solely on the similarities to noir or viewing it only as a response to the noir genre does not do it justice.

The film is a strong character piece, and all of the main characters are portrayed with very human qualities the viewer can easily identify in people they have encountered. Though some are blown out of proportion for comedic effect, they never seem to cross over into the realm of the flat-out unbelievable. Even inconsequential characters are interestingly developed, like the seemingly mute Larry Sellers, a punk kid who steals the Dude's car and apathetically refuses to communicate when interrogated about the theft. Although he is only a plot device in the film for one scene, memorable details of his life are fleshed out: his father, a retired television writer, is trapped in an iron lung, which adorns the living room like furniture. When questioned if the father still writes, Larry's thickly-accented mother makes the brilliant understatement to guests: "Oh no… he has health problems."

The Big Lebowski was released in early 1998 to a lackluster domestic response, both critically and financially, and barely cleared its $15 million production budget by $2 million.[24] Nonetheless, the film has gone on to become a huge hit in terms of DVD sales and fan appreciation. The DVD has been re-released six times in response to its ever-growing fan base, and the most recent release even included documentary footage of the fan-generated phenomenon known as Lebowski Fest. Lebowski Fest began in 2002 by two friends, Will Russell and Scott Shuffitt who always threw lines from the movie back and forth. Russell and Shuffitt were engaging in their dialog swap while operating a booth at a tattoo convention, when, to quote lebowskifest.com's "history" page:

> The other vendors around them began to join in, creating a sense of bonding and camaraderie between complete strangers. Amidst this swirl of neck tattoos and piercing enthusiasts came a revelation: If they can have conventions for tattoos and God knows what else, why not a convention for people who love 'The Big Lebowski'?[25]

Already there are similarities between this story and Cavicchi's text, both in the use of potentially religious language ("revelation" is religious enough, but could have easily been swapped for "epiphany") and in the bonding that fandom can foster between complete strangers. Since the first gathering in 2002, in the founders' hometown of

Louisville, Kentucky, Lebowski Fest has gone on to take place in numerous states across the country, and even a U.K. Fest in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2007. Lebowski Fest even inspired a copycat festival in London called The Dude Abides. Actors who portrayed minor characters often make appearances at Fests, delivering their lines from the movie to masses of appreciative fans (the highest number of attendees at a single Fest I've found is roughly 4,000). Even some major characters have made appearances, most notably the Dude himself, Jeff Bridges, who thrilled Achievers by showing up to the L.A. Fest in 2005. The real-life inspirations behind the film often make appearances as well. This year marks the Fest's most prolific achievement, at least in terms of numbers. The Speed of Sound tour (like just about everything Fest-related, the tour draws its name from a movie line) will bring the Fest to sixteen cities, in twelve states and one in Canada (prior to 2009, the highest number of Fests taking place in a year was four). According to the site and forums, there is interest in the Fest from even more cities.

In attempting to understand Achievers better, I ran into some speed bumps. I posted the Cavicchi-inspired questionnaire on numerous fan groups found on social networking sites like Myspace and Facebook, as well as the movie section of Craigslist the week before Lebowski Fest, yet none of those sites yielded results. I emailed it to all the friends I knew who loved the movie, which provided plenty of feedback, however I still wanted at least one respondent who I did not know. I also wanted someone who was more than a casual fan, and none of my friends had ever been to a Fest. I finally posted it on the forum at the Lebowski Fest website, but I found out about the forum pretty late in the game—I had been to the site numerous times, however I never noticed the forum link. Although I fell short of the numbers I was hoping for, I did manage to interview a stranger, and a big fan at that. The data from three respondents follows.

My first interviewee was Sam, a married 58 year-old high school educated retired piano technician. Sam is a self-proclaimed Coen brothers fan. He has held that self-applied title since he saw "*Raising Arizona*.":

> We saw it when it first came out, and I can honestly still remember how I felt when it was over: I kind of sat there with my mouth hanging open in a delighted shit-eating grin, and had three reactions: What the fuck was *that*?! Who the fuck *are* these guys?! I want to see every movie they make.

On the topic of Lebowski fandom, Sam stated he became a fan, "From the moment I saw it, the day after it was released on DVD." Citing his appreciation of the Coen brothers, I was surprised he had not seen it sooner. His explanation: "I don't like

crowds." Noting his distaste for crowded venues, he said that he was interested in the Lebowski Fest, but probably would never go to one. As for memorabilia, he has bought a Dude action figure for a friend, but he only owns the film, a copy of the original script, and a book on the Coens.

Of all my respondents, Sam is most likely closest in life experience to the Dude. The two grew up in the same era, developed some similar traits, and enjoyed a couple of the same pastimes. The two also share a lightning-fast, razor-sharp wit (except Sam does not have the benefit of a script). He responded to the question about whether the film had an influence on personal philosophy with the reply, "No, I was already there." Much like the Dude, Sam was a frequent pot smoker in the 60's who leaned well to the left. On the subject of Vietnam, a recurring element in the film, Sam was opposed to the conflict. Also a fan of the Joseph Heller novel *Catch 22*, Sam was pretty much opposed to any involvement in a situation that would get him killed, especially for a purpose he didn't believe in. Sam thought he was next in line for duty and was ready to cut his losses and move to Canada, but the Army stopped drafting just before he was called. Although he stopped smoking in the 80's, his outlook is still similarly left-leaning. Aside from the attributes he and the Dude have in common, Sam states he was also, "Already tuned in to the Coens' wacky perspective on things."

When asked to expand on his "yes" response to the question, "Do you exchange Lebowski quotes with others?" he replied, "Having revealed ourselves to be Achievers, we experience a palpable moment of kinship, that arrogant self-satisfied smugness of the true cognoscenti." I told you he was funny. He also replied that the ability to keep up with quote exchange definitely had an effect on his opinion of people. About the film's lasting significance, he cites humor, the Coens' perspective, brilliant casting, terrific acting, and states, "Overall it's a virtuoso display of moviemaking, especially considering that it barely has any plot at all—the picture is so well-conceived and executed that it hardly needs one."

In comparing Sam's responses to Cavicchi's theories of fandom, there is an element of personal association, as displayed in Sam's familiarity with the Dude's formative times (although he doesn't explicitly identify with the Dude). Sam displays a similar faith in the authors of the text, the Coens, that Springsteen fans have in Bruce, not just love of the text itself. The fact that he was an instant fan upon exposure corresponds with Cavicchi's examples of epiphany, or the sense of being struck by lightning when exposed to a new text. Citing Sam's responses about quote exchange, as well as the aforementioned text from the Lebowski Fest website, I think this is one of the major debates over degrees of fandom among Achievers.

My next respondent is Juliane, a 31 year-old college graduate who works full time in emergency room registration at a hospital near her home. She is pursuing a masters in art with a concentration in fiber, textiles, and weaving arts. Juliane is an independent young woman, well educated, opinionated, very political, but more likely to be active for charity than political purposes.

She fell in love with *TBL* at first sight, proclaiming that she has been a fan, "Since it was born on the big screen." She is a pretty emphatic Coen fan as well, citing *Raising Arizona* as another favorite. "Yeah, I had heard they had made a new film and was pretty excited to see it." Although she has yet to attend a Lebowski Fest, she has been to a "Lebowski themed Bar-B-Que." She lists being with friends, partying, and an excuse to get together as the most important things to her when watching the film:

> When watching the film it reminds me to simply just chill out. That there are some things and some people that are important, but for the most part it's fine to be, and interesting to others to be, simply yourself. Bathrobe, purple pant suit, bowling rule/ideology obsession, meek personality, ex-porn career, poor decision making regarding cutting off body parts for cash, it is, essentially and will eventually, all be cool...and hopefully you will get a new rug.

She had this to say in response to the question on identifying with characters:

> I always feel really into Maude. I love her character, not that I technically identify with her, but I understand her. I mean the following is genius [pasted in lines from the first meeting between the Dude and Maude about "vaginal" art], and not unlike the kind of conversation I would have simply because I never think about what might be an uncomfortable subject for people to discuss.

Her response to the question on quote exchange was:

> I usually stick my big toe in to see if they have seen the film, if not I try and get them to watch it first and then when the part comes up I was going to reference, I point it out. If people have already seen it, they like, already know man.

Juliane's desire to initiate the uninitiated relates to Cavicchi's observation that fans will often try to convert non-fans to their numbers, not through a desire to gain

numbers, but through a love of the cultural text that fans feel compelled to share. Her response to the philosophy question is similar to some Tramp responses, and indicates proof of Cavicchi's argument that fans draw ideology from a cultural text. She is a very laidback person and takes life as it comes, but I doubt this is a direct result of exposure to the film. She does state that *TBL* serves as a reminder, and I am sure there are Tramps for whom Bruce's sung ideologies served as reminders rather than catalytic inspiration (although there definitely are those cases). While she says she does not necessarily identify with Maude, she clearly has some recognition of self in that she understands Maude and has similarly unorthodox conversations with people.

My final interviewee is Peter, a 30 year-old single male with a four-year college degree. Peter is employed full time as a marketing analyst. Peter is the first interviewee presented whom I do not know personally, but lists himself as an avid Coen brothers fan. He is one of the people who responded via my Achievers forum post, and he ranks himself, "In the top tier of Lebowski fans." He backs this up by stating that, "Not too many people would go to a LF alone (like I did, and will again this July)," and he has even been allowed to blog on the lebowskifest website—not just in the forums, where anyone can post, but on the site itself (the "leblogski" link).

Peter has been a fan since the film hit theaters. "I instantly enjoyed the movie—which I guess is not common. My friend and I instantly notified others when they were out of their element." Peter is the only respondent who has attended a Fest—both the original Louisville Fest and the Chicago Fest. He thinks about the film daily and injects quotes in all possible communication, even inappropriate situations. In response to the philosophy/ideology question, Peter replies "Not really. I enjoy the film, and it's a great source of happiness. I often go to it when I need to feel better, but don't intentionally consider the film in a WWDD philosophy." WWDD is short for "what would the Dude do?"—a play on a similar acronym for Jesus Christ (WWJD), and a reference to the official religion derived from *TBL*, Dudeism.[26] I asked if he knew anyone who lived by the WWDD credo, and what he thought of any who did, and he replied that a fellow forum member probably did, and that, "Everyone's got to have some sort of credo to live by, I'll abide people living the WWDD lifestyle." Peter owns quite a bit of Lebowski-themed memorabilia and knows many other Achievers, mostly through the forum, but he has met plenty personally who he looks forward to seeing again at Fests. When asked about the exchange of quotes, Peter replied:

> Yes, I believe it establishes common ground. And if someone who considers themselves a huge fan misquotes the film, it's similar to "nails on a chalkboard" for me. I don't expect casual fans to have it down verbatim.

But when LF attendees yell "-CROSS!" it's upsetting, they should know Walter only says, "YOU DO NOT-" before he corrects the Dude on the proper nomenclature.

On the film's lasting significance:

I think it's a super-cult movie that is able to intersect with multiple crowds that feature a certain level of dedication or stasis (i.e. potheads, bowlers, Coen fans, carpet pissers). Also, it's a funny movie, which will give any comedy legs. LF is just fortunate enough to have capitalistic fans. If I was a young man when Caddyshack first came out I would've started a Caddyshack Fest golf outing. Not to mention, the Internet makes it easier for people to find like personalities.I'm afraid to ask if girls I am romantically interested in have seen the movie, I don't know how to explain my admiration and don't know if I can handle it if they hate it.

Interviewer: I like the comment about sharing your interest with potential lady friends. I wonder how many Achievers have broken up/not gone out again with people who didn't like the film. Do you know of any stories like this? Have you ever hoped to meet a special lady at a Lebowski Fest? (I met some pretty cool people last week and it occurred to me it wouldn't be a bad place to look for a partner, not that I tried.)

Peter: I can't remember which one of the founding dudes said this—but one has a wife that won't allow him to watch *TBL* anymore in the house. It's rather funny. You can always get a girl to watch it once... But to find someone willing to watch it at least five times to start "getting it" takes a special lady indeed. I hate to say it, but Hot Women at LF are there with their significant other. Don't get me wrong, I pray that there are packs of single women going there for a zesty enterprise [a quote reference to sex]... But that's just not the case.

Since Peter gave such great feedback and offered to talk more about it, I asked him a few more questions:

Interviewer: Do you think there are Achievers out there who take things too seriously? Do you have any examples?

Peter: Spend about two months on the Achiever Forum and you won't have to ask me this question again. It's in everybody's best interest to not point those out... It's okay if they're a bit reactionary—somebody's got to restore some order sometimes.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the capitalism behind the Fest? When I was standing in line for an hour to get into the bowling party last week, I couldn't help but think "all these people shelled out over $30 a head to people who had nothing to do with the film, only the foresight to cash in on it." I don't think they're bad guys or anything, obviously I bought the ticket and had a blast, and a party like that has to cost some money, I just wonder what other fans think about that.

Peter: I honestly believe Will and Scott just wanted to rent out a bowling alley and post some flyers back in 2002. I've seen video from the first Fest (*The Achievers*) and it genuinely appeared they were worried if anybody was going to show up. Now they have people from every State pleading for them to throw a party in their town. This year they're actually doing it! I feel they try to keep costs down as much as possible. I think they could have those tickets priced at $50 and still get a sell out. I think they make their money through the merchandise—and more power to them for that. I'm not sure they are at the point when they can fund their entire life through LF, but they're certainly living the dream. I'm pretty sure Will and Scott have to have day jobs in order to get insurance and all.

I also asked if he felt pot use was common among Achievers and if he enjoyed the Dude's favorite illicit drug:

I've never smoked and never plan to. It's kinda odd that I'm this into Lebowski because I honestly don't mind pot, but ABHOR potheads. I think marijuana should be made legal, but public intoxication should have very harsh penalties... But that's another topic. My friends know that I think this, and don't know how I lovingly dive face first into a LF event. It's difficult for me to explain, but I just abide.

Peter demonstrates that Achievers aren't one-trick ponies, "I look to Lebowski

Fans for recommendations elsewhere in pop culture. The best conversations at LF aren't the ones that start with Lebowski talk."

Though Peter's proclamation of top tier fandom does not specifically relate to any of Cavicchi's observed debates over degree of Tramp fandom, it shows that fans often feel the need to prove their status and degree. Similar to the previous two respondents, Peter's instant affinity for *TBL* ties to Cavicchi's discussion of epiphany or instantaneous admiration, and Peter's comment on "notifying others when they were out of their element" speaks to conversion, or possibly defense of the text to those who don't understand it. The extent to which Peter utilizes film dialog in his own conversation ties into Cavicchi's thoughts on debates over degree of fandom, and possibly into Peter's identity. The fact that he sees the film as a "source of happiness" and uses the film to feel better ties into Cavicchi's discussion on using text for the release of tension. His collection of Lebowski-related memorabilia parallels the collecting part of Cavicchi's discussion of identity. Peter's comments on reactionary Achievers closely mirror Cavicchi's debates about attitude and behavior. His comments on the Fest's capitalism seem in line with Cavicchi's suggestion that fans are neither puppets manipulated by corporate greed nor guerillas bent on resisting capitalist oppression. And Peter's concerns over exposing his fandom to potential sexual partners clearly relates to Cavicchi's suggestion that fandom can affect our relations with others.

In looking at the responses of all of my various interviewees, the biggest similarity was their ability to accurately quote dialog, acting as a gateway to cultural currency. This practice is clearly one of the film's specific debates over degrees of fandom. There seems to be an overall response that the film proposes that people should take life easier, which could tie into an attitude debate. *TBL* clearly has a diverse fan demographic, although the majority of the Fest attendees I saw were probably between 20 and 40, and at least half were Caucasian. Marijuana use isn't a signifier of an Achiever, but many Achievers use or have used marijuana. There appears to be a loyalty to the authors of the film, that leads many fans to see this film.

It is important to note that none of the respondents prove Cavicchi's theories on all fronts. Although he's happy to discover that a friend loves *TBL*, Sam has no desire to be considered a member of a fan community nor does he go out of his way to meet others. Peter doesn't remotely identify with a single character in the film. Juliane doesn't own any collectibles. None of those who replied made mention of *TBL* with any sense of self-continuity. Yet in these differences from Cavicchi's specifics, they prove the greater message that Cavicchi is working to broadcast: that fandom is a very personal act, and that fans are individuals who can't be lumped into one easy-to-dismiss category. One cannot assume, for instance, that because a person is an Achiever, that said person must

be a pothead, or owns every Lebowski Fest t-shirt, or knows all the lines from the movie. Fans come in all shapes, sizes, depths and degrees, and assuming anything specific based on affiliation would be prone to the weakness of any other baseless assumption.

Before attending the Fest, I was nervous about encountering obsessed fans who might turn me off one of my favorite movies. But when I was there, I found that Achievers are intelligent, funny, creative and welcoming folks out to have a good time with like-minded people, and that, to quote the Dude, "My thinking...had become very uptight." I have newfound respect for people who remain serious fans in the face of public humiliation. I think Cavicchi's book does a great job of portraying fans as genuine people (which they are, but it is easy to separate oneself from the negative fan portrayal Cavicchi is so ardently attempting to disprove—I also feel he's successful at disproving it). Even some of the more eccentric stories are still human, and I like the fact that he shows how the fan community attempts to police itself, calling people out when they step over the line. Though his subject of fandom probably is not listened to by most college kids today, Cavicchi's sincere portrayal of fandom and dedication to expressing the fans' thoughts rather than twisting them to meet his goals is commendable and possibly hard to find in texts on more recent subjects. I find these qualities far more valuable than familiar subject matter. As for my own (comparably minimal) work on the subject, I have attempted to follow in Cavicchi's footsteps and deduce conclusions from fan feedback rather than manipulate responses to support Cavicchi's arguments. It is my hope that in doing so, I have shed some light on Acheivers and portrayed them as more than two-dimensional archetypes. I hope as well that my own change of opinion on fandom will encourage readers to keep their minds limber. And I would be remiss in my duties, even as a fuckin' amateur, if I failed to take this opportunity to recommend the film to those of you who have not seen it.

NOTES

1. Daniel Cavicchi, *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning Among Springsteen Fans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 10.
2. Ibid., 6.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 8.
5. Ibid., 185-186.
6. Ibid., 10.
7. Ibid., 59.
8. Ibid., 5.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 42-43.
13. Ibid., 96-105.
14. Ibid., 116-121.
15. Ibid., 135.
16. Ibid., 138.
17. Ibid., 78.
18. Ibid., 139.
19. Ibid., 150.
20. Ibid., 158.
21. Ibid., 161-165.
22. Ibid., 184-189.
23. *The Big Lebowski*, DVD, directed by Joel Coen (1998; Burbank, CA: Polygram Filmed Entertainment, 1998).
24. *The Big Lebowski (1998),* http://www. boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=biglebowski.htm
25. *History—Lebowski Fest,* http://www. lebowskifest.com/InformationMan/tabid/115/ Default.aspx
26. *Dudeism—The Church of the Latter-Day Dude,* http://www.dudeism.com

A Mini-Ethnography on the Furry Fandom

Kevin Prewitt

> I was presented this assignment in my Theory & Method of American Studies course. When I first heard what an ethnography entailed, it excited me and made me a bit uneasy at the same time. I felt that being an outsider would give me the best perspective, but being a "participant-observer" meant that I was essentially a small part of the group I would be studying. Before reading this, I would like you to know that the furries are, at their core, members of a vast fan club. Most live what would be considered normal lives. Many also prefer their anonymity. Upon finishing this ethnography, I would like you to know that like other groups of people they are members of a stereotyped group and are generalized by the few radicals in their ranks.

"Once you open Pandora's Box, everything happens all at once…"

Imagine, if you will, a house that seems innocent... almost too innocent. A suburban Orange County neighborhood hides this secret dwelling. This house is known as the Prancing Skiltaire (a.k.a. The P.S.). It is home to a half dozen residents who live there on a daily basis. Once a month it becomes Mecca for those known as "furries." I visited on the second Saturday of April, 2009. More than one hundred other people visited as well. What is a furry, you ask. Well, asking that same question in multiple interviews yielded surprisingly similar answers. Put simply, a fur or furry is a member of a fandom of people who appreciate anthropomorphic art. But there is much more complexity to it, and I was in the right place to find out how complex the definition of a furry and their culture were.

As I approached the house, I really didn't know what to expect. The house is in a quiet suburban Garden Grove neighborhood. The only marker identifying the P.S. from the street is an illuminated sign on what was once a large tree, but is now a large stump. The sign is adorned with the house number and (you guessed it) a prancing skiltaire on it. Walking up to the house, I noticed the lawn was worn down. Where the grass stopped, some dirt patches took over. A large number of cars were already

parked along the street. Some, I gathered, were from the neighbors. Other cars, with personalized license plates such as KUPOCAR, CHANGA3, and MUSLCAT, I knew belonged to attendees at this event. With only a two car garage, and a two car driveway, I had the feeling many more cars would be lining the streets by night's end. The house still had icicle-style Christmas lights up around the eaves. Trash and recycle bins were stationed at the side of the building. From the outside, you might not know what was in store for you.

I arrived to the P.S. shortly before the 7pm scheduled start time of the official event, but the house already had about two dozen people in it. Housemates were making sure all the snacks were ready, others were setting up the video options for the night, and a few early arrivals had begun their night by engaging in various conversations with other furs. It was a very informal setting, with the front door already open, greeting all comers. As you walk in, the first thing you notice is all the anthro-art. They have animation cels of personified cartoon characters (think Warner Bros. or Disney cartoons), figurines and other knick knacks of many different species of animals, and sketches of their own various fursonas. The house wasn't in disrepair, but several spots on the ceiling indicated water leaks, though some were covered up and painted over. There were spider webs and dust on much of the books and trinkets that were higher up on bookcases. The carpet was a coffee brown color and had definite signs of being worn down and thinned out in the high traffic areas. With as many people as there are every month, it's a wonder there aren't any visible holes.

The backyard was not kept well, with areas of weeds and lots of overgrowth of the plants and trees in the back corners. There were tables and chairs, though not a uniform set, strewn about the open patio and in the grass. Some furs were practicing their infantry skills by shooting airsoft guns at a target about 20 feet away. There is no smoking inside the house, so quite a few people were already lighting up in the back. A couple smelled of marijuana smoke. They were all engaged in carefree conversations and seemed to not notice, or not care about what or who was around them. And they were smiling. They were happy. They didn't need to pretend they were something else. Everyone around them knew what they were, and were completely fine with it, since they were all at the house for the same reason.

The demographic of the group I observed was mostly white, males, with a median age in the late-20s or early-30s. There were some blacks and some Asians, some older and some younger furs. And about 10% of the group was female. I estimate that about half of the attendees wore glasses. Furs admittedly are affectionate, too. During my observation, one person poked my stomach with his finger (like the Pillsbury Doughboy), one gave me a hug, and one female fur wearing a trench coat flashed me…

though she was fully clothed underneath. But nobody propositioned me to get dressed up in a costume and have sex. That is a negative stereotype of furries.

As the night went on, I tried to tally what events were going on simultaneously. The airsoft firing range had closed as the sun went down. There were lights, but it was too dim to accurately aim. There were about a dozen or so people watching <u>Beverly Hills Chihuahua</u> in the living room. A section of the house seemed to be dedicated to those online with their laptops. There was a chess game going on. Patrons drew on a makeshift art wall, made from butcher paper over cardboard. In one bedroom, one of the residents was showing various sci-fi and comedy video clips from TV and movies. Some were gathered around the snack table, or in the kitchen, where the drink coolers were. Overall, most were just enjoying the company around them and having conversations. I noticed a few people with synthetic fur tails, some pinned to pants, some tied onto belt loops, and some affixed to belts. Some members of the fandom began to don their full attire, and in came the fursuiters.

Now this is where the media latches on. Episodes of "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation", "The Drew Carey Show", and MTV's "Sex2K" have mainstreamed the furries as oversexual people. As Changa Lion pointed out, "when people (put) down furries it's like, 'oh my God, they're sick, twisted freaks. They're sexual deviants.'" In one story he told me, someone equated the furry fandom with a cult. Many furries dislike attention of any kind, but it seems the media only gives them negative attention. Print outlets such as UK's <u>Metro</u>, the Washington University in St. Louis' student-run newspaper <u>Student Life</u>, and <u>Vanity Fair</u> have depicted, unfairly as the furs see it, their common activities as sex in fursuits, plushophilia (sex with plush animals) and zoophilia or bestiality.[1] While there is a small percentage of the furry community who do engage in such activities, The Sociology of Furry Fandom survey found that 2% engaged in zoophilia, and less than 1% in plushophilia, by and large they are not that stereotype.[2] Being in the fandom for more than fifteen years, Changa says he doesn't even know anyone who actually has had sex (or tried to) while in a fursuit.

A typical full fursuit, similar to what you might see on a sports mascot or like the characters at Disneyland, would cost around $600. More intricate features, such as an articulated jaw, realistic eyes, and a wagging tail add to the total. So why then would anybody want to pay so much money to dress up in a fursuit and, among the more daring, compete in activities such as bowling, hoola hoop contests, running races and obstacle courses, even on a hot day in summer? "There's something to that," Changa admits. You get to "put on a mask and run around and be somebody else." I can see where he is coming from. While dressing up in fur doesn't suit me, I can understand the identity issue. Sometimes you just want to be somebody else. Or as some furries see it,

sometimes you just want to be who you were really meant to be.

Then the question in mind becomes why a person becomes a furry in the first place. Happywulf says even before he was on the internet, he has always been a wolf. He describes his introduction to the fandom as stumbling across the FurNation website, which hosts personal pages for furries in general, and furry artists and writers, and that it was like opening Pandora's box. Changa says he had known about furry art and cons through a friend. It really wasn't until Disney released Lion King, though, that he was pushed in the direction of the fandom. "That film hit me," he begins, "I couldn't explain it. I just kept seeing it. I saw it like 27 times in the theatre. It became like this bizarre obsession. Part of it was trying to understand the feeling I got watching it." These are only two examples of how a furry becomes a furry. I think that if I was to interview more fandom members, I would be able to write an entire compilation book on the topic.

I took the time to observe the furry fandom in one of their venues, because one of my friends is a part of the group. I reflected upon what it all meant to me. Then my focused shifted to what it means to them and which niche they fill in society. These furs are hardly normal people. Yet at the same time, they are more normal than some of my friends and acquaintances. There are Goths, social outcasts, and even jocks among their ranks. The majority of furs tend to be geeks, though. Their fandom was born on the internet, they meet and talk through the internet, they share ideas and stories and art on the internet, and they even interact on games and programs such as World of Warcraft and Second Life among many others. So why are they so into these real-life parties?

Perhaps it's the one social interaction that the internet cannot fully simulate. I interviewed two of the furs. According to one of my interviewees, named HappyWulf, "it's like an extended family, almost." They give their members a sense of belonging. So the parties and cons are just types of social gatherings and family reunions. Only this family's numbers at a single "reunion" can go upwards of 3,000, says Changa. And that's not mentioning the furry groups in Europe, Australia, South America, Japan and Russia. As the outsider in a group of a mere 100, I shudder to think what 30 times that number would be like. At the same time, though, it would definitely give an exciting new perspective and allow for more comparing and contrasting with interview responses, survey data, and regional differences. Changa mentioned that during the largest convention, the business owners around the AnthroCon venue welcome the $3 million the con brings annually to the Pittsburgh area. Some even put up signs in the window or outline paw prints in chalk on the sidewalks to draw in visitors.

I heard so many stories from Changa and HappyWulf, that it opened my eyes to more interesting topics. I could do stories about furries with alcohol or drug problems,

furries with histories of mental disorders, straight furries, gay furries, furries who have furry children, gamer furries, furry sports, furry porn, anti-yiff furries, furries in the media and anti-media furries.

Short of the finger poke and the hug (I'm not that comfortable with strangers) and the pornographic furry art, including some of the new work on the art wall, I didn't really find that anything affected me negatively. I was surprised that this seems like a party I may have attended through college friends or co-workers. The interviews went well. Scheduling wasn't really a problem. The difficulty I had was that Changa is often interviewed, so he had long, detailed answers and had a couple of time where he would get off topic. HappyWulf, though, doesn't have much interviewing experience under his belt, so I needed to guide him more into giving a full answer, instead of a single word or short sentence. Though I don't share their fervor for fur, I did understand how negatively society sees them. I think they felt more comfortable with me as an interviewer, and knew I was trying to be more objective – as much as you can in the participant observer role – and not depict them in a bad light.

"Furries tend to stick to their own kind, and never venture out" of the fandom. When HappyWulf said that I thought it was out of fear of being social outcasts. Now I realize that it's just because when a "mundane," a non-fandom member does hear about the furries, it's usually something negative. The furries do reply to the authors and editors of negative, stereotypical press. But it seems the easiest way to avoid negative feedback is to avoid all outside interactions. Some, like Changa, just prefer anonymity. "Plus, I don't want to explain this sh--, this stuff to people at work," he explains. "They already think I'm weird enough as it is. Having to explain furry…? No. It's just too difficult. I think I'd probably have an easier time saying, 'hey, I'm gay' than saying 'I'm furry.'"

Class, as Marx would have it, does play a role in the fandom. You have such a broad spectrum of income levels, from those who commission fur suits at around $600 each, to the slackers who live from couch to couch. But they aren't the bourgeoisie. They are not the people who make the laws. Nor are they the homeless beggars on freeway offramps. They are typically middle-class, hourly wage workers. Some are trying to escape the boredom of their everyday lives. Some are trying to feel that sense of family and community. Many, though, are just trying to be themselves.

If I was to do another ethnography on the furries, I would choose different (at least more) interview subjects to gain more perspective on how the fandom collectively thinks. I might also choose to go to a con, instead of a party. I think doing an ethnography is much more enjoyable than just doing interviews or being a silent fly-on-the-wall observer. There are certain ways where what you saw can determine which questions

you ask. This could potentially be bad (tainting the evidence), but I see it mostly as an aide to help you learn about the group. The transcribing of the interviews is a real tedious task, too. I did find that I can omit the "ums," "uhs," and the "likes" without jeopardizing the overall message of the interview. And by not transcribing the off-topic material, I can save a lot of time. I feel that I learned a lot about doing this mini-ethnography. I also learned probably more than I ever wanted to know about the furry fandom, including the fact that in this country furries number in the thousands. In summary, I will quote Changa when he said, "I guess 'furry' is just too weird for some people to completely grasp."

Furry Vocabulary:

Anthro:	Shortened form of anthropomorphic; animals possessing human-like traits, such as walking upright, wearing clothes, speaking in their native tongue, etc.
Citra:	A fictitious, recently created weasel- or ferret-like character (by Adam Wan) that is associated with citrus fruit and comes in the colors of the fruits.
Con:	Shortened form of the word convention.
ConFurence:	Started in 1989, and now defunct, this was the first Furry con in the Western region of the U.S. Today, cons include AnthroCon, CaliFur, EuroFurence, and Further Confusion.
Fandom:	A community of people with a shared experience or appreciation.
Furgonomics:	Theory of how ergonomics of chairs, cars, etc, would have to change, if furs truly existed (e.g. a centaur, a naga – humanoid sea serpents).
Furries:	(simply) People in real life who like artwork of furry people.
Fursona:	Literally, a furry persona; it refers to an anthropomorphic character that a real person becomes in the furry fandom.
Furvert:	Literally, a furry pervert; some media outlets use furries and furverts interchangeably, though furvert holds negative connotations.
Homebrew:	Originates from home. Typically refers to underground or illegal software or activities.
IRC:	Internet Relay Chat; the first form of instant messenger or chat room.
Meme:	(Rhymes with dream) An idea that self propagates though the minds of people, like a virus in idea form; especially, an online fad/trend.
MMORPG:	Massively multiplayer online role playing game, sometimes abbreviated to MMO.

Furry Vocabulary Cont...

Muck: Text-based environment created by its users.

Mundanes: Fandom term indicating people not in the fandom; similar to the term "muggle" in the Harry Potter universe.

OMG: Online acronym, meaning "oh my gosh" or "oh my God."

Skiltaire: A created species (by Mark Merlino) of intelligent weasel-like aliens. The Prancing Skiltaire (or P.S.) house is named for this species.

Troll: noun. A negative heckler. Verb. The act of heckling that a troll does.

WikiFur: Internet site, like WikiPedia, where users edit pages specifically about the furry fandom

Yiff: Term most commonly used to indicate sexual activity or sexual material within the fandom—this applies to sexual activity and interaction within the subculture.

NOTES

1. http://furry.wikia.com/wiki/Category:Media_coverage

2. http://www.visi.com/~phantos/furrysoc.html

Nostalgia for the Future: The Quest for Utopia in Disney's Tomorrowland

Anita Rice

The assignment was to analyze American cultural representations of nature. Readers should consider the concept of nostalgia and utopia, our relationship with nature in utopian ideals and consider whether we are headed in the right direction today. There was a time when the idea of the future was hopeful; however, it also included an almost complete withdrawal from nature and the elements. Today, we seem to be more apt to look back at a simpler time when the future was simple, clean and easy. Instead of looking forward from here, we are looking back at old ideas of what the future held. Disney is a master at nostalgia and Tomorrowland is no longer futuristic, but retro.

"But Humanity, in its desire for comfort, had over-reached itself. It had exploited the riches of nature too far. Quietly and complacently, it was sinking into decadence, and progress had come to mean the progress of the Machine."

-E.M. Forester, The Machine Stops

Once upon a time, the future was a wonderful place. Even as the future became the present and new visions of the future took the place of old visions, many, if not all, people believed the future should be better than the present. Walt Disney had a knack for packaging fairytales and fiction into something that seemed real and packaging history into its most idealized form so that it virtually resembled a fairy tale. With Tomorrowland, Disney and his park Imagineers™ created an idealized, technological utopia for park-goers which was meant to inspire and challenge people to innovate and invent ways of life that would be cleaner, easier, and more, for lack of a better word, perfect. The future as Disney envisioned it would not stay intact, nor could it. The future is not so easily dismantled and the images Disney created in the 1950s remain popular today – but not as a dream for the future, rather as a symbol of nostalgia and our atomic ranch past. Legend says that when the original Monsanto-sponsored House of the Future was being demolished in the late 1960s, the wrecking ball bounced off of its plastic polymer exterior and the house had to be dismantled by hand using hack saws.[1],[2] Today's House of the Future, renamed "Innoventions Dream Home" opened in 2008, desperately tries to imagine another, more evolved, more advanced home for a nuclear family but fails to inspire anything but boredom and

dread. Does Disney's Tomorrowland represent a hopeful tomorrow? Or does it reflect a dystopian reality?

Walt Disney was a dreamer and a perfectionist. No detail is overlooked at Disneyland. A trip to Disneyland, or any of the Disney theme parks, is a trip into the imagination. Everything within the park is manufactured to be perfect and magical. In Disney's attempt to "imagineer" a Magic Kingdom, he has actually informed the attitudes about culture and nature for generations of Americans and non-Americans alike. Not content to mold his park out of the land as it was, he chose to erase all natural features and start from scratch, manufacturing the entire piece of Orange County real estate into an experience unlike any other. From the fairy-tale castles to the Enchanted Tiki Room, from Tom Sawyer's Island and images of the frontier, to Adventureland and Fantasyland, Disney recreates the mythic dreams we share. Disney wanted a trip to Disneyland to be better than reality and he wanted his guests to feel free from the world in which they live.[3] Tomorrowland was envisioned to show the ways that technology coupled with a free enterprise consumer-driven society could make real life even better than it was. Disney's dissatisfaction with reality, even with his own work[4] drove him to create a better amusement park – with the help of countless designers and engineers, of course. But it was his dedication to utopian ideals that transformed the area known as Tomorrowland into a fanciful and imaginative place.

In order to provide a "magical" experience, every part of the park is carefully controlled. For park guests to truly escape the madness of everyday life and enjoy the adventures that lie beyond the front gate they must suspend disbelief and they must never be allowed to see how things work; they are simply supposed to trust, relax, and enjoy[5]. One could say that this is precisely what Disney's dream of the future entailed for real life as well.   In the future machines will do one's bidding and life will become extraordinarily easy.   Computerized homes of tomorrow will take care of almost every task we desire. Preparing and serving a fully balanced, healthful meal for the whole family would be as simple as the push of a button. The press release for the current House of Tomorrow, now known as "Innoventions Dream Home" says the new home is designed not to predict the future but to "let people play with emerging technologies and imagine how those technologies might enhance everyday life".[6] The home resembles a typical upscale suburban home and is more infomercial than inspiration. As a joint venture between Microsoft, HP, and other companies, it is a showcase for existing technology and unlike the 1950s House of the Future, it is not designed or intended to be mass-produced or be easily accessible for all. As P.J. O'Rourke said in his article on the new House of the Future, it is

"furiously unimaginative".[7] But that is now; there was a brief period of time where Tomorrowland was futuristic. How far into the future would one need to go for it to not become outdated? As we know, it became outdated rather quickly and the most recent incarnation had to go back in time to find inspiration. It's a paradox that cannot be resolved at the moment. The most recent remodel of Disneyland's Tomorrowland in Anaheim has gone retro. Designers borrowed from Leonardo Da Vinci, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells for an old school, Renaissance, steampunked, Victorian theme.

        Tomorrowland today is a re-imagination of the original using bronzes, golds and greens in addition to the stark white and blue plastic and steel of yesterday's Tomorrowland. What was once primarily focused on science – Disney wanted to base Tomorrowland on science-fact not science-fiction – is now focused more on entertainment with only minor hints at how technology can improve our daily lives. As for nature, only four of the current attractions are outdoors. Of the four outdoor attractions - Astro-Orbiter, Finding Nemo, and Autopia – only one is arguably based on notions of the "future". Astro-Orbiter is a rocket ride that greets guests with a retro Jules Verne-esque design of bronze and gold rocket ships that orbit an artistic representation of a galaxy of planets. Finding Nemo is a submarine ride based on the animated film of the same name and uses 3-D film technology and special effects to transport guests under the "sea" in a man-made lagoon. As with most Disney rides, the action is to be viewed and experienced but not participated in. It is a story-telling experience but rather than challenge riders, it merely provides an entertaining escape from their everyday reality. Other than the Monorail, the only other ride that takes place outdoors is an updated version of Autopia, a tribute to the highway system that in 1955 was making its debut in postwar America and thrilling then-aspiring suburbanites. Fiberglass cars with a speed-governed gasoline engine allow youngsters to experience the thrill of driving a paved roadway through a landscaped section of the park.   There are outdoor areas in Tomorrowland including a giant marble ball that children can roll in place with the aid of water, but there is little about the outdoor area that is futuristic.

        There is one unique feature, not specifically futuristic, but unique, which appears to be missed by most guests who are not botanists or horticulturists: all the plants in Tomorrowland are edible.   Ornamental and edible plants include espaliered apples, cute rows of peppers, strawberries, artichokes, dwarf pomegranates and a perfectly sculpted persimmon tree.[8] Other than space- and science-themed rides and attractions and a video arcade called "Space Port", there is nothing particularly futuristic about the area today. The "Star Tours" ride is based on a pop culture mainstay, Star Wars, but it has also become quite dated.

Despite the edible plants, compared to other "lands" in Disneyland, Tomorrowland is still a place where the synthetic prevails over the natural. Every area of the park has a unifying theme and the cast members (park employees) wear period costumes reflecting the theme of the land. Tomorrowland cast members are outfitted in polyester blend clothing that is reminiscent of Star Trek uniforms or the cartoon The Jetsons.

The entire park is highly innovative and on the cutting edge of technology, but it is only in Tomorrowland that the technology is brought to the forefront. Even in the 1950s, Disney's use of animatronics was high tech and impressive. Where technology is always hidden from guests throughout the park, Tomorrowland was meant to highlight how technology can improve our lives. In the beginning, Tomorrowland was conceptualized as a confident and hopeful place where technology would enable humanity to live better, more easily, and one imagines, more peacefully. Disney's utopia is based on a highly controlled plan which is executed seamlessly from most park-goer's perspective; it is sleek and technological, but to quote Gertrude Stein, "there is no 'there' there". Where other parts of the park are mentally mapped in our psyche and in our collective history, Tomorrowland is nowhere because it didn't exist yet. Main Street, USA, Frontierland, and Fantasyland may be sanitized and white-washed versions of the real thing, but they are, culturally-speaking, parts of a collective past that we share. Likewise, Disney dared us to dream of a shared future. Rather than a specific place to dream of, he provided the things to put in that place. The history was meant to evoke excitement, adventure and perhaps pride in our past, but the future was meant to inspire excitement, adventure and hope. This would seem an impossible task. How does one create a place that is not a place?

Within the public spaces of Tomorrowland, there is not an abundance of nature present. Mostly concrete, steel, fiberglass and plastic it stands in stark contrast to other parts of the park where "nature" is sometimes the main character, such as in the Jungle Cruise or Tarzan's Tree House in Adventureland. Tomorrowland's lack of nature as an important component to the land is a commentary on nature itself. Throughout history, humankind has worked and manipulated the land to suit its needs. Whether for shelter, or agriculture or leisure purposes, people have always found a way to exploit the land for the benefit of the inhabitants, be it a single person or an entire community. Men, in particular, have long sought to conquer the landscape and perhaps even the elements. If Disney was presenting a vision of the future where mankind has created technology which has finally gone to work for the benefit of all people, there would be no need for nature to be prominent at all. In the future, so the utopians might say, Man will conquer Nature and master Technology. The dystopian

school of thought is that Technology will have conquered Man.

From a psychological perspective, Yi Fu Tuan[9] would say Disney indeed satisfied his rage for control. Space age technology would pave the way for Earth's citizens to finally live simply and purely without any struggles associated with living off the land. Finally, a day would come (and soon!) where man and environment would live in concert. The most ideal environment it seems is not the natural environment – it is, unabashedly, a built environment.

Tomorrowland may be a segment of the park but Disney's love of technology and progress in the built environment went much further. At least as far as Disney was concerned, Tomorrowland was not created for leisure enjoyment alone; he would go on to develop and build EPCOT in Florida, an actual Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow which builds even further on his utopian views of a quasi-socialist city. It is clear that he envisioned the built environment as the most vital element toward creating a utopian civilization. Without such an environment, there is just too much chaos and mess. It hampers the possibility for people to live harmoniously. The park format was for entertainment and escape, to be sure, but Walt held a firm belief that "science-fact" be combined with entertainment to keep it interesting for park guests and, in the case of his television show, audiences should be informed as well as entertained. EPCOT however was the "real thing" and not just another park attraction. He wanted to keep fantasy out of Tomorrowland and EPCOT altogether. According to J.P. Tellotte, Disney insisted that "fantasy" be kept for … Fantasyland.[10] Disney was serious about the future and his ideal "utopia" was part of the great big beautiful tomorrow extolled by the Carousel of Progress.

Progress was the dominant theme in Tomorrowland of yesteryear and on prominent display was Disney's affection for conveniences such as electricity, powered people movers, and the joys of living in a modern home. One cannot appreciate the future without contrasting it to the past and in the Carousel of Progress, nostalgia was indeed present as guests view a non-specific (but decidedly white, and middle-class) family progress from 1900 to the present day. Originally created for the 1964 New York City World's Fair,[11] the attraction was constantly updated to include the latest technology and for many years was sponsored by General Electric. (In fact, many of the features and attractions in Tomorrowland have been and are sponsored by corporations – a subject that could support an entire paper in itself.) Progress was inevitable and Disney embraced it with fervor. Episodes of his television show devoted to progress and tomorrow "placed techno-science within a cultural context" but Disney did not treat techno-science as something "culturally constructed" rather as "something solidly objective".[12] In doing so, Disney established himself as a sort of

authority figure on futuristic visions of progress.   He made science accessible and tied it into our desire for adventure, which put a positive spin on a topic that was often the subject of considerable fear and anxiety during the middle of the 20th century.

In the past, Tomorrowland was a nice counterpoint to the nostalgia of Frontierland. During the 1950s and 60s there was a preoccupation with both the past (Frontierland) and the future (Tomorrowland). Steiner eloquently states, "Progress and nostalgia reinforced each other nicely"[13] in the early days of the park. What about now? It is very likely that the current generation of American youth doesn't know much, if anything, about Davy Crockett or Flash Gordon. They are far more familiar with Captain Jack Sparrow and Buzz Lightyear.   In the mid-twentieth century, space was the "final frontier" to quote the opening of Star Trek, Gene Roddenberry's sci-fi television series in the 60s. Despite the infinite nature of space and the unfathomable area yet undiscovered by man, these days space doesn't seem like much of a real frontier anymore. Today's attitude towards space exploration is almost a blasé "been there, done that" mentality. In 1969, every American with a television set gathered round the television to see the broadcast of the Apollo lunar landing and the first ever moon walk.   Contrast that to today, when a NASA space shuttle mission scarcely gets any television or news coverage at all and the entire shuttle program is soon to be retired. Ask a random person on the street if a space shuttle mission is underway and you would most likely get a blank stare followed by a "Hmmm, not really sure." Sadly, we seem to only pay attention now if there is a tragedy such as the 2003 Space Shuttle Columbia disaster where the shuttle disintegrated over Texas upon re-entry, killing all seven astronauts aboard.

In general, today "people are wary of space-age wonders"[14] and in fact often see the future as more like the Disney-Pixar motion picture "Wall-E" than perhaps they are comfortable admitting.   Wall-E, like EM Forster's 1909 short story, "The Machine Stops" envisions a dystopian future where humanity has become far too dependent on technology and far too removed from nature to even recognize it or survive in it.   The cost of progress resulted in the degeneration of people and society to a large degree.

The fears and anxieties that propelled the atomic age are quite different today and, environmentally speaking, we have collectively learned much about the damage our "progress" has caused. Of course, technological advancements have been remarkable since the furious innovation of the last half of the 20th century. Back then, the 21st century looked like it would be a sparkling megalopolis, clean and easy to navigate. We would live in high-tech homes where everything was within reach and within control. Our hopes were high with the promise of clean nuclear energy,

rapid transit, and shared prosperity. The atomic age would benefit the nuclear family which would then benefit society as a whole.   Like the fantastic Monsanto House of the Future, plastic was going to revolutionize the world. Everything could be made of plastic – it was cheap, durable and infinitely moldable.   Due to mass production, comfort and convenience it would be accessible to everyone.

We know now that plastic is a major contributor to global climate change and is taking an enormous amount of landfill space.   We also know that the rise of comfort and convenience has not benefitted all of society equally and many of our present day situations are remarkably similar to EM Forster's prediction in his dystopic tale "The Machine Stops".   We are depending more and more on machines. People are less active and far more sedentary. We drive more, we eat more processed food, and we exercise far less. At the same time, technology allows us to connect to millions upon millions of people and infinite sources of information from around the globe are at our fingertips. As quickly as we can think of a question, we can have an answer via the magic of the internet and broadband, high speed connections. I would argue that Wikipedia has now replaced the encyclopedia as a repository of information accessible to most people in America. In developed nations today, there are hundreds of channels of television to watch 24 hours per day.   We need not go farther than our computer keyboard or our television screen to see something we want to see. As fast food and the sedentary lifestyle proliferate, America is witnessing an obesity epidemic. We consume and consume and we give little back to our physical selves or the earth.

In the Disney-Pixar film, "Wall-E", humans have left the earth which has become uninhabitable due to over-consumption, excessive disposal of goods, and no respect for the earth whatsoever. While a lone, solitary robot (Wall-E) follows his program of compacting unimaginable amounts of human garbage into space-saving cubes, people are orbiting space on a luxury cruise-ship / space-ship. EVE is a programmed space probe sent to earth to discover if life has returned to earth. Wall-E follows EVE back to the ship and discovers he is not alone in the universe. The film depicts humans as obese, unable to walk or use any muscles at all, receiving all of their nutrition via liquid delivered through a straw, doing nothing but passively viewing entertainment all day every day.[15] Satirical, perhaps, but it is getting closer and closer to reality all the time. This is the future, not as envisioned by Walt Disney and his contemporaries, but the future as envisioned by EM Forster and it is frightening to think that the "Wall-E" type of future is happening right before our very eyes. We have become accustomed to comfort and although mainstream America is becoming more and more cognizant of the environmental implications, we

currently have a lot of damage to undo, and our addiction to comfort continues almost unabated at this time. Progress has given us much in the way of amazing technology – technology that in fact saves lives such as in medicine and safety. But we have also become far too comfortable exploiting the resources of the world, rarely questioning what happens behind the scenes.

Behind the scenes, Disney was the maestro. He was incredibly prescient in designing the Tomorrowland of the past. The original House of the Future included microwave ovens, electric toothbrushes, and videophones several decades before they became a reality in most homes. Disney saw the future as pleasant and easy. Commercial space travel was clean and available to everyone (unlike today – it is available only to multimillionaires and costs more than $10 million to take a ride up to the space station).[16] Mass transit in the Disney version of the future was cheap, clean and available. He saw us able to live and work in a clean and beautiful city of tomorrow. Our reality so far is that mass transit is costly and no one is willing to front the costs of that transit to make it more available or clean.

Before we wind up like the humans in "Wall-E", we should really stop and consider what a real sustainable future will require. I am not sure Disney considered that one day we would be buying consumer good en masse in large quantities a la Buy 'N Large or if he considered where we would put all the waste we produced from consuming all those goods. Perhaps Disneyland's use of edible plants in Tomorrowland is a clue (albeit, subtle) that we are becoming more nature-conscious and are looking for sustainable ways to live. Let's hope one day we do not need to depart the earth's surface in a space-age Noah's ark and wait to start over after the machines clean up our mess. Walt Disney saw hope where many saw disaster. I would much rather see the Disney version of tomorrow come true.

NOTES

1. PJ O'Rourke, "Future Schlock." The Atlantic. December 2008. http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200812/disney (accessed December 1, 2008).

2. Werner Weiss, Yesterdayland. 2007. http:www.yesterland.com/futurehouse.html (accessed December 10, 2008).

3. Alexander Wilson, The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez (Toronto; Between the Lines, 1991), p 160.

4. Michael Steiner, "Frontierland as Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Architectural Packaging of the Mythic West" Montana, the Magazine of Western History, (48, Spring 1998) 7.
Steiner says that Walt Disney was "an insatiable perfectionist, perpetually fussing and fretting and never pleased with a finished product…". Walt said "I worry about pictures. But if anything goes wrong in the park, I just tear it down and put it right".

5. Adelaide H. Villmoare, and Peter G. Stillman. "Pleasure and Politics in Disney's Utopia" Canadian Review of American Studies 32 (2002): 81 – 104. P .

6. Disneyland Media Relations Press Release, 2008.

7. O'Rourke, "Future Schlock".

8. Tony Kienitz, "Happiest Landscape on Earth", Los Angeles Times, September 6, 2007 , Section F-3

9. Yi Fu Tuan, Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1977)

10. J. P. Tellotte, "Disney in Science Fiction Land," Journal of Popular Film & Television 33 (Spring 2005): 15. P12-20.

11. Disney. Carousel of Progress. http:disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/magic kingdom/attractions/walt-disneys-carousel-of progress/ (accessed December 1, 2008).

12. Tellotte, p 15-16.

13. Steiner, "Frontierland as Tomorrowland", 15.

14. Steiner, "Frontierland as Tomorrowland," 15.

15. Andrew Stanton, Wall*E, 2007.

16. John Schwartz, "Google Co-Founder Books a Space Flight", 2008. The New York Times. June 11, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/technology/11soyuz.html?_r=1&hp (accessed March 30, 2009).

Female Alcohology: The Role of Women in the United States Alcohol Movement

Christiana Stern

This paper was written for Leila Zenderland's Spring 401T course: American Studies and the Social Sciences. The purpose of the assignment was to examine two primary academic sources from the 20th century -- one published before 1950, and another published after 1950 – that discussed two different approaches to dealing with an American social issue, compare and contrast the approaches used, and analyze the reason for the shift in scientific approaches. The paper analyzes the works of psychologist George B. Cutten and sociologist Ramona M. Asher, who researched the topic of alcoholism in America. Using various supplemental sources, it postulates that the changing role of women during the 20th century study of alcohol and alcoholism accounts for the shift in scientific approaches from Cutten's biopsychological study, to Asher's social-psychological study.

"Wives, maidens and mothers, to you it is giv'n, To rescue the fallen and point them to heav'n. With us for your guides you shall win by this sign, The lips that touch liquor shall never touch mine." These lyrics, written by Sam Hooth, were sung by women during the Temperance Movement.[1] Although much history has taken place since the time of the Temperance Movement, there is still a tendency to link women, whether consciously or subconsciously, to this attitude of abstinence. However, women have played varying roles in the 20th century regarding the study of alcohol and alcoholism. The book The Psychology of Alcoholism, written by George B. Cutten in 1907, offers an early view of alcoholism. Cutten's work offers a biopsychological study of alcoholism that virtually ignores women. In contrast, Women with Alcoholic Husbands: Ambivalence and the Trap of Codependency, written by Ramona M. Asher in 1992, offers a social-psychological study of alcoholism by interviewing wives of alcoholics. An important question to ask here is "what has contributed to the vast difference in approaches of these two books written in two very different times?" The answer lies heavily in the role of women in society. Although women may be consciously, or subconsciously, stereotyped as having a primarily temperance-laden attitude toward alcohol, they have played varying significant roles in social

movements that have taken place around the culture of alcohol, and have substantially accounted for broadening the scientific approach of the study of alcoholism from biopsychology to social psychology.

In order to understand the shift in these approaches, it is crucial to set the context in which it started first. In his 1913 publication, John Barleycorn, Jack London heavily emphasized alcohol as a social vice.[2] At the turn of the 20th century, the death of the Victorian Era gave birth to a new, modern culture of leisure. Historian Gail Bederman elucidates how this cultural shift further facilitated a paradigm shift of true manliness that originated in the 19th century, transforming Victorian, reserved ideas of middle-class manliness, to rough and tumble forms of working-class masculinity.[3] Drinking was not left behind in this shift, and a rise in the culture of leisure opened up even greater acceptance to social drinking, and more arenas in which to serve alcohol. Lori Rotskoff explains how saloons were, historically, breeding grounds for male masculinity and camaraderie since they offered a place for men to gather and discuss their lives, bond through games and sports, and form social ties through the practice of "treating" each other to rounds of alcohol.[4] Although saloons were primarily areas for working-class men to gather, more affluent men tended to gather in other upscale, saloon-like milieus, such as expensive hotels, upscale restaurants, and private clubs.[5] As one might postulate, spending more time in these arenas meant spending less time at home with the family, a key factor exploited by the Temperance Movement. Jean Kinney writes that the Temperance Movement coincided with the rise of social consciousness, was part of the humanitarian movement, and originally only condemned excessive drinking of distilled liquor.[6] However, as the movement progressed, this original distilled liquor condemnation grew to include all alcohol. Prior to, and during, this movement, drunkenness, especially public drunkenness, was considered a moral sin.[7] In a conversation between evangelist Major Cole and a group of women Temperance crusaders, knelt praying in front of a saloon, Major Cole asked the question "Why did the women choose such a strange method of carrying on this reform?" One woman answered, "They did not choose it…it was the work of God marked out for us, and we simply did it, according to orders."[8] This quote ultimately sets the tone of the Temperance Movement as a whole. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1874, was one of the most influential reform groups involved in the movement, and placed the family at the forefront of its crusade.[9] Rotskoff writes, "As one writer observed in 1930, 'the prime symbol of the Prohibition campaign, from 1830 to 1930, [had] been the picture of the drunkard's wife."[10] By indicating that the most detrimental effects of alcohol lay within the drunkard's family, the WCTU was able to successfully win over sympathetic hearts

and minds. Although their campaign focused on alcohol as the evil agent dividing the family, their argument still subtly plays upon the idea of drunkenness as a moral sin on the part of the man/husband. Although Temperance crusaders were right in their idea that alcohol was a vice that largely drew crowds of men, they failed to recognize that women also found solace and sociality in alcohol. Rotskoff writes,

> Contrary to the dry belief that most women were inherently abstemious, many Victorian women drank alcohol in the form of patent medicines and other supposedly curative tonics. They also drank moderately at home, with meals, and at banquets and weddings.[11]

The tendency to focus solely on the male drinker in an age of mixed-sexed drinking was not the only failure of Temperance reformers. Tracy writes that "the pledge and pleadings of temperance organizations were at best naïve, and at worst the source of much information."[12] Despite the fact that the WCTU, as well as other Temperance reformers, may have spread misinformation to the mass public, they eventually succeeded in their attempt to outlaw alcohol, at least for thirteen years.

At the same time that the Temperance Movement was in full speed, biological and social scientists worked vigorously researching alcohol and its effects. Sarah Tracy states,

> These physicians held that professional and scientific expertise might help society adjust to the waves of social, economic, technological, and political change that swept over the nation at the turn of the century.[13]

Thus, it was vitally important for various researchers to study alcoholism from a scientific viewpoint. Some social Darwinists contested that alcohol would act as a variable of elimination, and that drunkards would die out.[14] Others called for negative eugenics, opting for vasectomies so that alcoholism could not be spread to posterity.[15] These various viewpoints reflect the idea that alcoholism is a genetic flaw, and should be studied biologically as such. At the close of the 19th century, however, Tracy writes that it was more common to hear viewpoints, such as that of social worker Lillian Brandt, who argued that it was naïve to consider alcoholism as a means for weeding out the unfit from society.[16] The Committee of Fifty, organized in 1893, was a group of fifty scholars drawn from various professions—university professors, physicians, clergymen, and politicians—who came together to study alcohol and alcoholism from an objective, secular standpoint.[17] It was formed partially in reaction to the misinformation spread by the WCTU.[18] Although scholars from

various professions came together to organize the Committee of Fifty, Rotskoff writes that "Psychoanalysts…were the first twentieth-century writers to advance a medical interpretation of chronic drunkenness."[19] This leads to the work of psychologist George B. Cutten.

Cutten's The Psychology of Alcoholism, published in 1907, is a biopsychological study of alcoholism that focuses almost entirely on men. Although Cutten writes "In using the title The Psychology of Alcoholism, we mean it to be an account of the mental changes brought about by the continuous and excessive use of alcohol, and an attempted explanation of the changes," there are heavy biological elements running throughout the book, such as the lack of nutrition and blood flow in the alcoholic.[20] This could, perhaps, be attributed to Cutten's possible underlying eugenicist ideals.[21] These ideals, in turn, relate heavily back to the idea that habitual drunkenness was a characteristic of the working class, often immigrant, drinkers. Cutten continuously describes the mental states and changes of an alcoholic, but rather than explaining them with clear cut psychological theories, he describes the biological components responsible for them. He also relies heavily on former research conducted by religious officials, doctors, and psychologists, as well as police, prison, psychiatric hospital, and Committee of Fifty records, to make his points. As aforementioned, Cutten focuses primarily on men in his analysis, but when women are mentioned, they are referred to under the direst of circumstances. One example is where Cutten states, "In women there is a diminution or total loss of shame, and in both sexes there is a lack of pride in personal appearance and cleanliness."[22] The fact that Cutten discusses a loss of shame only in women does not make much sense since most of his arguments are based around male alcoholics, and it can be assumed from other parts of his discussion that there can be a loss of shame among any alcoholic. Cutten goes on to say that "Women are often led to drink by neurasthenia, brought about by overwork and lack of nutrition."[23] In contrast to this explanation of why women drink, Cutten offers no one distinct supposition as to why men drink. Biased views of women alcoholics were not unique to Cutten's book. Tracy writes that psychoanalysts of the time "often regarded alcohol as a marker of sexual deviance for both male and female patients;" however, she goes on to say that psychiatrists, such as Karl Abraham, noted that alcohol could reveal repressed homosexual tendencies, but that men also turned to alcohol to increase their feelings of manliness.[24] Tracy states,

> A careful psychiatric examination of the individual was crucial to
> diagnosis and treatment, although for Abraham at least, the situation was
> less complex for women. Those women 'who show a strong inclination for

alcohol always have a marked homosexual component in them…'[25]

In other words, male alcoholics may harbor homosexual components, but they could just be asserting their manliness through drinking. Women alcoholics, however, always harbored homosexual components. Although Cutten holds some biased views in the aforementioned quotes from his book, his study as a whole virtually ignores women. The lack of women in this book indicates that women alcoholics were not viewed as much of a social problem as men. Perhaps women of the time were automatically linked to the Temperance movement. In either case, women played a crucial role in the study of alcohol and alcoholism of the time. Their role would expand even further during the Prohibition years.

　　　Prohibition opened up many new elements in the world of alcohol. The Volstead Act of 1919 ushered in a new, alcohol-free era, or at least this was the hope of the many Temperance reformers, especially the women in the WCTU. In reality, the Volstead Act only banned the manufacturing, transportation, and sale of commercial alcoholic beverages; this left open the possibility of producing alcohol for self-consumption in the home, and the lucrative option of bootlegging.[26] Thus, American saloons moved into the home.[27] As the home was, and continuous to be, a female domain, it is only natural that more female involvement in the world of alcohol would take place. Moving the barroom into the home created a new social phenomenon: the cocktail party, which ultimately lured more women into the drinking atmosphere.[28] Rotskoff writes,

> With witty titles such as Giggle Water, The Saloon in the Home, and Wet Drinks for Dry People, cocktail manuals winked self-consciously yet dismissively at the law of the land. Moreover, they facilitated the feminization, or domestication, of drink…'The cocktail provided hard liquor, but softened, feminized enough to remove hard liquor's most opprobrious male associations. Women who would never think of consuming straight gin could ask for a dry martini without fearing for their reputations. The cocktail provided a neatly packaged, suitably disguised, fashionably dressed shot of liquor.[29]

Women, especially middle-class women, now had a dignified way of consuming alcohol, and a new public life right in the middle of their homes. It seems ironic that Prohibition greatly facilitated that which it sought to eradicate in the first place, and not only did it see continuous drunkenness, but it opened up the acceptability for women to drink too. This completely contradicted the previous Temperance Movement's viewpoints of alcohol, as well as pious women abstainers, who were

largely white and middle-class. As groups such as the WCTU began to lose favor
and credibility in the 1920s, new repeal movement groups, such as the Women's
Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR) began to emerge and shift
the role of women in the alcohol movement from ardent abstainers to accepted
drinkers by claiming that alcohol consumption was part of modernity; naturally, any
truly modern, intelligent woman would accept this new part of modernity and adapt
it to their fashionable lifestyle.[30] Groups such as these, as well as economic pressures
brought about by the Great Depression, caused the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, and
created a new world of study for the social sciences.[31]

The social sciences began to play a significantly crucial role in the scientific study of
alcoholism starting in the 1930s and 1940s. Rotskoff states,

> Soon after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the public discourse on
> excessive drinking was no longer structured as a wet-versus-dry debate
> over legal proscription; rather, it stemmed from the concerns of doctors,
> psychiatrists, social workers, and lay therapists—a diverse body of
> experts whose claims to authority were rooted not in a mission of moral
> uplift but in privileged access to scientific knowledge, spiritual insight, or
> therapeutic technique.[32]

The Yale Research Center, headed by Howard Haggard and E.M. Jellinek, produced
some of the most fruitful work on alcoholism that aided social research and awareness
on the subject.[33] In discussing numerous research sessions carried out by the notorious
Yale Research Center, Schneider writes,

> These sessions also provided an established organizational foundation
> for the rise of that National Council on Alcoholism, the leading voluntary
> association in the United States devoted to public education about the
> disease (Chafetz and Demone, 1962; Paredes, 1976). The National Council,
> known initially as the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism,
> was established in 1944 by three women: a former alcoholic, a journalist,
> and a psychiatrist.[34]

Clearly, the social awareness of the role of alcohol and alcoholism in American life
had begun to rise during this period. Rotskoff explains that sociologists were aided
by the government to conduct research on all aspects of social life during the Great
Depression, drinking included.[35] Further, she states that "during this period some
psychiatrists worked directly with alcoholics' wives, but caseworkers (and, eventually,

academic sociologists) were the most prolific professional writers on the topic."[36] Social work, an arena that was heavily dominated by women, aided greatly in the study of the alcoholic marriage — a subject of research that was largely ignored prior to this period — and social worker Gladys Price published one of the earliest studies on the alcoholic marriage.[37] Hence, the role of women in social scientific research of this time was greatly increased, and heavily influential in studying alcohol and the disease of alcoholism. An important question to ask, however, is "what caused this massive upsurge of the social sciences in the study of alcoholism?" Of course the massive sociability brought about during Prohibition played a large part in this increasing social interest in the field, but surely something else must have occurred following Prohibition if the social sciences continued to study this subject, and the role of the wife and family in the life of an alcoholic in particular, in later decades. What occurred were the formulations of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups.

Alcoholics Anonymous, a mutual self-help movement of alcoholics, greatly influenced the social scientific study of alcoholism because of its prominence and rapid growth throughout the world. Although the group had a modest start of only two members in 1935, it grew to almost two million by 1990.[38] And while Alcoholics Anonymous was, and continuous to be, a male-dominated arena, women were ever-present from the start. Alcoholics Anonymous was founded on June 10th, 1935 by William "Bill" Griffith Wilson and Dr. Robert "Bob" Holbrook, two recovering alcoholics.[39] Originally, Alcoholics Anonymous was a family affair; wives and children of alcoholics would all attend meetings together, and the women would often serve coffee and cake to their husbands.[40] However, while the men talked with each other over their alcoholism, the women found themselves discussing their own problems amongst each other, and realized that they and their families needed their own self-help group to recover as well.[41] This would be the birth of Al-Anon Family Groups.

Al-Anon Family Groups was officially established in 1951 by Lois Wilson and Ann Smith — the wives of Alcoholics Anonymous founders Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith.[42] Although it initially started with only 56 groups in 1951, it grew to almost 24,000 groups by 2004.[43] The role of women in Alcoholics Anonymous, as well as establishing Al-Anon Family Groups, demonstrates another changing role of women in the study of alcoholism: active participation reform. What separates these women from Temperance women is the fact that they were not trying to outlaw their husbands' drinking, nor alcohol in general; they were focusing on healing themselves and their families. Clearly the role of the wife and family in the life of an alcoholic had become more tantamount and visible than ever, and gave cause for a new field of

social scientific study. As it turns out, this female-dominated field would continue to be explored for decades to come.

In 1954, sociologist Joan Jackson developed a model of alcoholism and the family that centered the husband and father as the alcoholic.[44] Jackson postulated that the family of the male alcoholic passes through six stages while dealing with the disease: denial, attempts to eliminate the problem, disorganization and chaos, reorganization in spite of the problem, efforts to escape, and family reorganization.[45] Jackson's model of alcoholism further highlights the expanding field of study on the effects of the male alcoholic on women and families involved in their lives. The fact that Jackson is a female also underscores the growing female scientific involvement in the study of alcohol and alcoholism.

Women continued to take an active role in alcohol affairs up through the 1980s, plotting new crusades, and establishing new groups to deal with alcohol and alcoholism. According to the Reagan Foundation, 1980 marked the beginning of Nancy Reagan's drug information and prevention crusade, not only across the United States, but across the world, inciting the "Just Say No" campaign.[46] Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), also founded in 1980, took familiar actions to prevent alcohol-related transgressions, and launched several programs such as "Operation Prom/Graduation, the Red Ribbon campaign, designated driver programs, court monitoring, and victim assistance programs" and provided "support for federal, state, and local legislative changes…"[47] Likewise, Kinney states, "the efforts of community- and state-level organizations—such as MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) and its derivative, SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving)—continue."[48] The Betty Ford Center was founded in 1982 by former chemically-dependent first lady Betty Ford and Ambassador Leonard Firestone.[49] The center offered a new arena for chemically-dependent women to receive treatment, reserving half of its space for women and the other half for men, and provided gender-specific rehabilitation.[50] This center was a much more evolved treatment organization than the informally gender-segregated Alcoholics Anonymous. Women's work in the alcohol movement even spread prominently to television during this time.

The Roseanne show, which endured a run from 1988-1997, was an ABC network comedy about a working-class family in the Midwest.[51] Roseanne, the matriarch of the family, was a clever, witty, authoritative ruler, who always felt the responsibility to educate others and keep them in line. Throughout its run, the Roseanne show dealt with the issue of alcohol usage. In several episodes, alcohol and alcoholism were portrayed in a negative light, and it was always up to Roseanne to deliver the moral messages speaking out against drinking. Jeremy Butler states "Often we suspend

disbelief and imagine that television characters are real persons, with tangible pasts and a future toward which time is carrying them…It seems as if we just happened to drop in on these TV people and witnessed a slice out of their lives."[52] Accordingly, since television had grown to be a major socializing agent by this time, the Roseanne show was a powerful tool used to educate viewers about what was right and wrong. As Butler states, those viewing the show could develop an interpersonal connection with the characters on the show, and probably be more likely to take their messages to heart. Women had evolved their role in the alcohol movement even further, spreading their messages across electronic mediums. As it turns out, the role of wives and mothers — such as Nancy Reagan, the founders of MADD, Betty Ford, and Roseanne — in alcohol affairs did not diminish in the 1990s.

Ramona M. Asher's Women with Alcoholic Husbands: Ambivalence and the Trap of Codependency, published in 1992, is a social-psychological study of alcoholism through the wives of alcoholics. Asher's research in this book — personal interviews with wives of alcoholics — is solely her own, and she attempts to display the ambivalence wives of alcoholics experience in labeling their husbands as "alcoholics." Asher's book differs from Cutten's in several ways. She incorporates numerous social theories into her book, but does not rely as heavily on secondary sources to make her points. Although the background subjects of her study are the male alcoholics, the main focus is on their wives, also a huge difference from Cutten's work. Finally, Asher's book is steeped in the social-psychological rather than the biopsychological. An example of this socially-theoretical approach is demonstrated where Asher writes,

> Cooley's (1902) concept of the looking-glass self describes how one's view of one's self is filtered through one's interpretation of others' views… accordingly, these negative valuations reflect the wives' self-sentiments based on their perceptions of how their husbands and others viewed them.[53]

This passage from Asher's book displays the sociological theories that outline her argument. It also demonstrates her ability to merge previous sociological theories with her own research. Asher's book places strong emphasis on the wives' recoveries from their husbands' disease of alcoholism, and does not treat the women as passive victims, but as active participants in the disease. She contends that it is up to the women to help facilitate their own recovery and move on with their lives, rather than focusing all their energies into their husbands' issues. The fact that Asher chose

to study alcoholism from the viewpoint of wives of alcoholics further solidifies the importance that the changing role of women in the study of alcoholism has played during the 20th century.

The irony of Asher's study, however, is that although it took place more than 100 years after the start of the Temperance Movement, after the role of women in the study of alcoholism had shifted numerous times, and after social scientists had studied alcoholism in a variety of ways, it still holds elements in common with the Temperance Movement: the first great social attempt to eradicate alcoholism. Although Asher's study portrays women as active participants in their husbands' alcoholism and their own recovery, it is still fundamentally about wives who are affected by alcoholic husbands. Even though these women may not be singing "The Lips That Touch Liquor Shall Never Touch Mine," or praying in front of saloons, they still struggle with the same predicament as their Temperance sisters, and share the common desire to heal themselves and their families. This demonstrates that even after all that women have done to abolish alcoholism — all the reforms, laws, preaching, scare tactics, and research — it still continues to be a prevalent problem that requires further scientific research and social education reform.

It is clear that the role of women in the study of alcoholism has evolved numerous times since the days of the Temperance Movement. When it comes to studying alcoholism, the role of women has transformed from piously-singing Temperance abstainers, to virtually invisible drinking extremists, to social hostesses, to active participants in the study of, and recovery from, alcoholism. From the Temperance Movement, to Prohibition, to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups, to social awareness spread by prominent public figures, women involved in these massive social movements have given social scientists new reasons and viewpoints from which to study alcoholism in the United States, shifting the focus from biopsychology, to largely social-psychology. The social sciences, which have evolved right alongside the alcohol movement, have opened the gateway for women researchers to enter and create prominent social scientific research that has shaped the research and knowledge conducted and discovered to this very day. Social work, an area largely dominated by women, has also greatly helped to shed light on various aspects of alcoholism. If not for the crucial role of women when it comes to the alcohol movement, who knows if more socially-driven research on alcohol and alcoholism would be as prominent today?

NOTES

1. http://www.temperancetantrum.com/ The%20Lips%20that%20touch%20Liquor%20 Will%20Never%20Touch%20Mine.htm (accessed April 10, 2009).

2. Lori Rotskoff, Love on the Rocks: Men, Women, and Alcohol in Post-World War II America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 17.

3. Gail Bederman, "Remaking Manhood through Race and "Civilization, " in Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917, 1-44 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

4. Rotskoff, Love, 19.

5. Ibid., 23.

6. Jean Kinney, Loosening the Grip: A Handbook of Alcohol Information 8th Ed (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), 9.

7. Joseph W. Schneider, "Deviant Drinking as Disease: Alcoholism as a Social Accomplishment," Social Problems 25, no. 4 (1978): 361-372. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/800489 (accessed April 10, 2009), 3.

8. Rev. W.H. Daniels, Temperance Reform and Its Great Reformers (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1878), 251.

9. Rotskoff, Love, 27.

10. Ibid., 28.

11. Ibid., 37.

12. Sarah W. Tracy, Alcoholism in America: From Reconstruction to Prohibition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 78.

13. Ibid., 64.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 65.

16. Ibid.

17. John S. Billings, Charles W. Eliot, Henry W. Farnam, Jacob L. Greene, and Francis G. Peabody, The Liquor Problem: A Summary of Investigations Conducted by the Committee of Fifty 1893-1903 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905).

18. Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, and Ian R. Tyrrell, Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia (ABC-CLIO, 2003), 169.

19. Rotskoff, Love, 69.

20. George B. Cutten, The Psychology of Alcoholism (New York: Walter Scott, 1907), 37.

21. "Brief Commentary: Playing It Safe," National Vanguard, March-April 1997, 117.

22. Cutten, Psychology, 155.

23. Ibid., 234.

24. Tracy, Alcoholism, 76.

25. Ibid., 77.

26. Kinney, Loosening, 10.

27. Becky M. Nicolaides, My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 86.

28. Rotskoff, Love, 38.

29. Ibid., 38.

30. Ibid., 39.

31. Ibid., 2.

32. Ibid.

33. Schneider, "Deviant…", 6.

34. Ibid.

35. Rotskoff, Love, 54.

36. Ibid., 152.

37. Ibid., 150-153.

38. Klaus Mäkelä, Ilkka Arminen, Kim Bloomfield, Irmgard Eisenbach-Stangl, Karin Helmersson Bergmark, Noriko Kurube, Nicoletta Mariolini, Hildigunnur Ólafsdóttir, John H. Peterson, Mary Phillips, Jürgen Rehm, Robin Room, Pia Rosenqvist, Haydée Rosovsky, Kerstin Stenius, Grażyna Światkiewicz, Bohdan Woronowicz, and Antoni Zieliński, Alcoholics Anonymous as a Mutual-Help Movement: A Study in Eight Societies (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 26.

39. Ibid., 19.

40. Al-Anon Family Groups, Living With an Alcoholic with the Help of Al-Anon (New York: Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., 1966), 1.

41. Ibid.

42. Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters Inc. "How Al-Anon Came to Be," Al-Anon Suffolk Information Service, available at http://www.al-anon-suffolk-ny.org/History.htm (accessed 17 May 2009).

43. Ibid.

44. Kinney, Loosening.

45. Ibid.

46. "Mrs. Reagan's Crusade," Reagan Foundation, available at http://www.reaganfoundation.org/reagan/nancy/just_say_no.asp (accessed 17 May 2009).

47. "How MADD Did It," The Results Accountability Implementation Guide, available at http://www.raguide.org/RA/madd.htm (accessed 17 May 2009).

48. Kinney, Loosening, 129.

49. Betty Ford Center. "A Brief History of the Betty Ford Center." Betty Ford Center. Available at http://www.bettyfordcenter.org/about/ourhistory.php (accessed 23 May, 2009).

50. Ibid.

51. Tv.com, "Roseanne: Summary." Tv.com. Available at http://www.

NOTES

tv.com/roseanne/show/54/summary.
html?q=roseanne&tag=search_results;title;1
(accessed 17 May 2009).
52. Jeremy Butler, "Narrative Structure:
Television Stories" in Television: Critical
Methods and Applications 2nd Ed.

(London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates,
Publishers, 2002) 13.
53. Ramona M. Asher, Women with Alcoholic
Husbands: Ambivalence and the Trap of
Codependency (Chapel Hill: University of
North Carolina Press, 1992), 62.

Cartesian 2.0: I blog, therefore I am

Nathan Kuntz

This essay was written for Dr. Ibson's 401 The Body and American Culture seminar. We were instructed to examine and closely analyze an issue that dealt closely with the body. During the course of the semester I became fascinated with the myriad ways in which people attempt to represent, or even misrepresent, themselves to others through their bodies. This fascination with the body as a readable text led me to consider representations of the body on social networking websites such as Myspace or Facebook. This work deals entirely with Myspace, yet application of its major themes easily applies to other social networking websites. I'm hoping that this work leads readers to consider the deeper implications in human interactivity that use of these websites hold.

Although social networking websites were only developed in recent years, they have had a dramatic impact on the way in which people communicate and interact. It simultaneously brings numerous individuals together yet it also isolates them, as the community itself is based on and meets in cyber-space, a location with no physical setting. What makes MySpace so distinct, and accounts for much of its popularity, is that it allows users to interact with other users through self-created, self-styled profiles. The content of these profiles is chosen by the user and is intended to represent their true, or even desired, self. More importantly however, is that many other users accept this content as an accurate and truthful representation because they desire their profiles to be accepted as valid, as well. Through close inspection of the application of the MySpace network, this paper will use the social and philosophical implications of this new form of human interactivity in order to argue that MySpace has not only impacted the way individuals interact with one another, but that it has altered public and personal definitions of the self.

HISTORY OF MYSPACE

Social networking websites are a relatively new creation. Their main intention

is to create a network of and for users, connected through the Internet, purposefully allowing users the ability to meet and communicate with other users in a relatively easy and efficient manner. In 2002 a new social networking site was launched, the website Friendster. It was one of the first sites that allowed users to create their "profile" and connect to other users, both known and unknown. A group of computer programmers employed by a company called eUniverse were impressed with this site; they began developing and eventually released a more fulfilled version entitled MySpace. MySpace was launched in August of 2003, mimicking yet improving on the social networking blueprint that Friendster had created. Its ease of use, the ability to personalize one's "profile", and ease of linking to other's profiles, among many other personalities of MySpace, quickly garnered it incredible popularity. In July 2005, less than two years after its creation, it was purchased by News Corporation, Rupert Murdoch's media and advertising behemoth that holds among its assets the Fox News Corp., for $580 million. This move has drawn much criticism that MySpace has become an advertising entity and no longer a social networking site. On August 6, 2006 approximately three years after its inception, the 100 millionth account was activated.

Cartesian Dualism on Myspace

        MySpace's slogan is "a place for friends". It is the intention of MySpace to create a virtual community, one in which users link their self created profiles to other users' profiles, thus becoming "friends". This is merely one of the myriad ways in which MySpace attempts to emulate the connections and interactions that take place in the outside world, done so in order to provide users a less virtual, more reality-based community, imagined or otherwise. What makes these interactions and connections, and the allure and popularity of MySpace, so unique is the ability to envision and create a virtual representation of one's body and mind in any manner desirable to the user. One of the more ironic elements to René Descartes' most famous of philosophical statements "cogito, ergo sum" (I think therefore I am) is that his body was necessary for the transmission of this statement to others; his body was required to substantiate his claim.[1] Still, the voice Descartes gave to the age-old dilemma of consciousness and existence is one that still resonates today. The dualism, whether imagined or real, between an immaterial mind, or that which Descartes considered the essence of existence, and the material body has become central to any discourse concerning the phenomenon of self representation on social networking websites. To Descartes the mind was the true essence of the self, that which, "doubts, believes, hopes, and thinks", and the body practically an unnecessary vessel.[2] What is most fascinating about the social networking website MySpace is that it offers users

not only the ability to create a fictitious representation of the body, through self-selected self-modified photographs, but also that it offers users the ability to create a representation of the mind, through self-selected self styled descriptors of "doubts, belie(f)s, hopes and (thoughts)" among other more detailed self-prescribed descriptors of an immaterial essence. What makes this representation of the mind and body so unique, even above the ability to conceive of and implement a desired representation, is the ability for this representation to exist outside of the day-to-day life of the user, its ability to emulate autonomous existence.

When a user first creates a MySpace account they are asked to "load" photographs of themselves onto the MySpace database in order to "post" pictures of themselves on their profile. With the relatively recent advent of affordable digital photography equipment as well as the ability to easily manipulate photos either on the camera itself or through the use of computer software programs such as Photoshop, which allows users to recreate the difficult and time consuming photo editing tricks practiced in the past by experts in darkrooms in mere nano-seconds with simple clicks of a keyboard or mouse, the photograph has witnessed a new transition in its evolution. While the snapshot or candid photo has enjoyed relative popularity since the advent of the personal camera, the ease created by digital cameras and Photoshop styled software has led to a surge in self portraiture, especially by those whose sole purpose in photography has become posting their portraits on MySpace as profile pictures, the representation of the body in cyber-reality.

The body, as represented in the photos section of the profile, is chosen by the user and can be placed into various self-created photo albums. Often these are photos in the vein of self-portraiture but just as often these are photos of the self, interacting with other bodies in motion. These are photographs of people at parties, people interacting with other bodies, dancing, drinking. They are photographs of people at play, people travelling, at the beach, outdoor activities. These are photographs proving that the body represented is not static, not passive, but active, adding to the illusion and emulation of life. These photos are not mere happenstance but are, in fact, carefully selected representations of the body, or more accurately the desired body. In the same way that Gladys Bentley "chose to undergo hormone treatments precisely because she equated medical rehabilitation of her body with social rehabilitation of her identity" the MySpace user carefully manipulates their chosen profile pictures, it is the software rehabilitation of the represented body that becomes equated with social (networking) rehabilitation of a desired, or unfulfilled, identity.[3] So, through careful manipulation of self-portraits and active and interactive portraits with others the MySpace user is able to create a representation of self-identity

that more closely aligns to internal desires than to external realities. Considering the relative ease and affordability provided by digital photography and photographic manipulation, paired with the acceptability by the viewer that the MySpace profile represents a true representation of the user that has created said profile, there has been created, perhaps, a more effective form of body engineering. Unlike Gladys Bentley or Christine Jorgenson who used hormones, medical surgery, style of dress, and mannerisms to express their desired identities externally, the MySpace user need only Photoshop and post photographs of him or herself to create the desired outward appearance, reflective of the inner self.

After a new user has decided on and posted their profile pictures they are lead to create a representation of their immaterial self. While much of the "interests and about me" section of the profile is simply musical preference of favorite movies, there are many elements that relate the "doubts, belie(f)s, hopes and (thoughts)" of the user. After the "about me" section of the profile, in which users can, and often do, relate their inner selves, the blog section is the most vital element for immaterial transmission. Blog, a compound of Web log, is little more than a journal of inner dialogue, desire, or complaint that has been posted publicly, for any MySpace user to view. It can provide an outlet for commentary on the complexities, frustrations, and joys of living, as well as the very intimate details of the individuals "doubts, belie(f)s, hopes, and (thoughts)".

What makes the publicized and self-described mind so unique and quite contrary to Descartes idea of the immaterial is twofold. First, the mind is the essence of existence in traditional Cartesian dualism. The mind was the only thing Descartes could not nor did doubt existed. It was not created, not by God, nor in the sense that he himself did consciously mold his mind, the mind simply exists, hence the simplistic philosophical beauty of the phrase "I think therefore I am" requires no elaborative substantiation. This is not to say that his mind, or that of any other, is not malleable; the mind is, of course, alterable, through thought, mental exercise, or various substances. It is simply to say that the mind exists. In the cyber reality of MySpace the representation of the mind is just that, a static representation. It cannot think in the truest sense of the word. It does however represent the immaterial in a new way. It is a self-created self-actualized representation of the inner. It offers the ability to create, in an almost godlike manner, the image of oneself. The only standard of accuracy this image must stand against are self-imposed; therefore the ability for inner desire to match perceived reality becomes achievable.

Through thoughtful manipulation of the "about me" and "blog" sections of ones profile a more complete representation of the whole becomes possible. There

is however one more difference in the immaterial representation of MySpace to Descartes. Beyond a static representation of the mind is its ability to independently exist. Once a representation of the immaterial has been created and posted it becomes viewable by other users, and at any time of day. So again, while the representation of the mind on MySpace may not posses the ability for thought, it does mirror the ability possessed by its user, and does so at all hour of the day and night. This allows for the further emulation of the inner or desired self. For example, if and when a MySpace users dies their profile continues to be viewable, allowing other users the ability to interact with a representation of that persons mind, even after death. But most importantly the provision of the mind on the profile provides the illusion that a representation is being interacted with. Without the context of the immaterial, MySpace, and indeed all social networking sites, would be reduced to an endless cycle of contextless photographs simply to be viewed, a sexless pornography in which the viewer would most certainly lose interest. But this brings up an important issue and question, who is this context for? Why post the immaterial as well as the material, is it simply the vanity of the cyber age or does it represent a shift in the way people interact? It appears that voyeurism and narcissism have melded together in a new and profound way in the increasing cyber reality that the modern human is faced with. By emulating human interaction and connection more people are socializing, finding jobs, houses, even mates on the Internet. So who, if not for an unknown and unknowable audience is the social networking website for?

Elements of Scopophilia on MySpace

By considering personages like Gladys Bentley or Christine Jorgenson, who through hormone therapy and surgery attempted to amend their inner longings and desires with their outward appearance, we must also ask, who is the act of transfiguration or hormone therapy for? If it were truly an act of pure reconciliation of the inner with the outer we would not know the names Bentley or Jorgenson. It is the act of public performance that is most apropos when comparing Bentley's Ebony piece, Jorgenson's post-operation press conference in New York, and the publishing of ones profile on MySpace.

Once a profile is published on MySpace the user is asked to connect to friends, or other users. It is through the addition of friends that the profile becomes much more than simple fictitious representation of self, indeed it becomes a representation that is intended to be viewed by others. Just as Jorgenson or Bentley's transformation was incomplete until others viewed them enacting their public performance, so to does the MySpace profile gain validity as a representation only upon being viewed. In answer to Descartes "I think therefore I am" the MySpace user, and perhaps Bentley

and Jorgenson as well, should respond, "I am seen as I desire to be seen therefore I am". It becomes a qualification for existence that takes place through the eyes of another, a necessity to be viewed, a desire so strong that it carries with it implications of existence. When Sigmund Freud first discussed scopophilia (pleasure in looking) in 1905 he "associated (it) with taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze".[4] Unfortunately Freud was so obsessed with the phallus that he reduced curiosity with the private lives of others to a desire to establish the presence, or lack of, the penis. But as with most of Freud's work, upon deeper reflection, there is intellectual value in the concept of scopophilia.

        It would be easy to trivialize the allure of viewing a MySpace profile as a cyber-age Peeping Tom show; the audience sitting in a dark anonymous room viewing a hapless victim. But the profile has been self-produced, giving examples of the life of the users, a representation not only of themselves but also of their lives, their friends, their activities, portraits of them in action, at rest, a virtual window into their daily lives that lends the "illusion of looking in on a private world", even one that has been self-published.[5] It is for the fulfilment of the "voyeuristic fantasy" of the viewer that the profile is posted, one in which the audience is allowed virtually unfettered access into the intimacies and happenings of the performer's world, and at the performer's invitation is the audience allowed this access.[6] But there is a further element of scopophilia that is satisfied with the creation and posting of the MySpace profile; the element of narcissism.

        There is pleasure in viewing the MySpace profile, but more importantly there is pleasure in being viewed. According to Jacques Lacan there is a critical moment in ego development that occurs when a child first recognizes its reflection in a mirror. This moment of "recognition of themselves is joyous in that they imagine their mirror image to be more complete, more perfect than they experience in their own body".[7] The reflectivity of the image of oneself on a MySpace profile acts in much the same way. Upon examination of a completed MySpace profile a "more complete, more perfect" representation of the self looks back. The body, as represented in the profile pictures, is presented as more beautiful, more athletic, more of any other self-chosen version of the self. It becomes a self-chosen reflection of the inner, and there is joy in the recognition of the reflected image on MySpace, more so because it is a self-chosen, self-reflective version that can more accurately reflect the "more perfect" image desired by the self. MySpace provides its users much more than simple body narcissism, for it also provides them with narcissism of the mind.

        A reflection of the mind becomes apparent for, perhaps, the first time. This reflection of the mind imbeds and presents itself in the self-styled entries and

descriptors in the "about me" and the "blog" sections of the profile. It is the pleasure in these reflections that is so poignant; it is a mixture of voyeurism and narcissism, a pleasure in being viewed and a pleasure taken in that which is being viewed. It is pleasure in a self-realized, self-created fictitious reflective representation of the material and immaterial, both truthful and desired.

The structure of MySpace itself gives reinforcement to the cyber-ego. Through the profile view counter, blog view counter, total friends tally, and comment sections. When a user first logs onto their MySpace account they are taken to their home page. One of the first visible items is the profile view counter. This displays how many times the profile has been viewed, but does not let the user know which profile, or more accurately which user, has viewed his or her own. This does at least two things; one, it allows the user to feel confident that they have the protection of anonymity when they view the profiles of others. But more importantly it allows the user direct confirmation that their representative "more perfect" reflection of self is being viewed. This not only reinforces the pleasure taken in being looked at but reinforces the pleasure others are receiving by looking, affirming their profile has worth, that it is something that others want to and should want to view. It reinforces that their self-chosen representation is desirable. There is also a blog view counter, which offers similar reinforcement by showing the user that the representation of the immaterial is also being viewed. This view counter also helps to reinforce and confirm that others take pleasure in viewing the mind of the user, therefore allowing the user to take pleasure in being viewed.

As friends are added to a users profile a visible tally is shown, both on the private home page of the user as well as the public profile. The "friends" section serves at least two purposes; first, the public positioning of friends on the MySpace profile reinforces the illusion of the profile as a true representation of the self through the demonstration of attachments and relationships to supposed truthful representations of others. The public display of friendship, or relationship, continues the mimicry that MySpace is not simply a virtual or cyber reality, but is indeed "a place for friends". What the addition of friends to the profile also does, and perhaps more importantly than furthering the illusion of truthful representation of connection, is that it causes the profile to transform from a static, viewable object, to an interactive entity. Once a link of friendship occurs between MySpace users the ability to leave comments on profiles also takes place. It is this ability to leave comments, on photos, blogs, and the profile that finalizes the reinforcement of the aspects of scopophilia on MySpace.

Without the reinforcements of the profile view counter, blog view counter, and

friend tally the pleasure in being viewed would quickly fade and the MySpace user may never again check his or her profile. But it is the comment section that provides the strongest reinforcement for the MySpace user. It is not only a reinforcement of the body being viewed but also a reinforcement of the immaterial. There are three areas in which comments can be posted; the profile pictures, the blog entries, and on the main profile itself.

Each time a new profile picture is added the users friends are automatically notified on their home pages in a section called friend updates. This announcement encourages the user to view the friends' new picture, which often leads to the viewing or reviewing of the entire profile. When a picture is posted on MySpace other users have the option of commenting on the picture. These comments further reinforce the self-chosen and often manipulated representation of the body. Not only that, but they also offer the poster direct proof of others pleasure in looking, further reinforcing their own pleasure in being viewed. When a user posts a blog entry there is the option for readers to place comments on the blog. This ability for users to interact with the representation of the immaterial on MySpace does two things. First, it reinforces the illusion of existence and representation of the mind on the profile by allowing what appears to be interaction between two minds. Second, it reinforces scopophilia of the immaterial in a more complex manner. It represents the viewers' pleasure in looking at the immaterial, causing, in turn, the viewed to both desire the viewing more and to continue the behavior that elicited the comment, and logically the viewing as well. Finally there is the ability for a user to place a comment on the profile itself. The previous two commenting abilities take place on subsequent pages from the profile, which are viewed less than the primary profile page. These comments are not nearly as specific as those elicited by the material or immaterial representations, but are thereby, in nature, more akin to conversation, inside-jokes, or banter. This element further adds to the illusion of relationship between cyber-reality users.

Once the desired representation of the users material and immaterial have been created and implemented on the MySpace profile, a cyber-reflection of the inner desired self occurs. In order to exist the profile must be viewed by a curious audience that receives pleasure or reward in their looking. This viewing also gives pleasure to the user being viewed; hence the circle of scopophilia becomes complete. MySpace reinforces the voyeurism and narcissism of the profile user by providing the ability for users to know how many times their profile has been viewed, by providing a quantifiable number of friends, both for their benefit and their viewers, and by providing the ability for virtual or cyber interaction between users through the use of the "comment". These elements of reinforcement have another purpose as well; they

create a virtually imagined community.

Imagined Community on MySpace

According to the Random House dictionary community means "a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists". The community formed by MySpace users is a social group whose sole shared common characteristic is that they are a community comprised of individuals or groups who have access to a MySpace account. It is a community that exists solely in cyber-space. What is most fascinating about the MySpace community is that it is a community in opposition to the definition of most other communities. It has no borders, citizens, or bureaucracy such as the nation-state. It has no spiritual leaders, worship services, or holy texts such as a religious community. It possesses no government officials, legislative branch, or party leaders such as a political community. It is a truer more accurate description of Benedict Anderson's imagined community than he envisioned the nation-state to be. The nation-state actually possesses physical characteristics and markers yet the community of MySpace users exists only "in the minds of each member" truly acting as an imagined community.[8] Anderson continues by claiming, "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined".[9] The MySpace community is not only distinguished in the manner in which it is imagined, its existence and realization lie in its imagination as well.

If we consider the MySpace user, and only his or her interactions within that community, we perceive only imagery interactions, these interactions are not physical, but cyber. In this manner users can never "know" their fellow users in the most traditional sense of the word, but will instead be privy only to a voyeuristic vision of a self-created representation of their fellow community members. It is this bodiless communion that is most intriguing, it is a community of lone individuals staring at computer screens imagining they are interacting with, or getting to know, other people. It is the computer they interact with, the computer they have communion with, and the computer acts as a surrogate that represents social community with other individuals. The community offered on MySpace both mimics and represents human interaction while simultaneously further isolating the user from authentic human interaction and places him or her behind a computer screen instead. But the computer screen helps equalize the interactions between MySpace users, where in past communities strong inequality can exist between members, MySpace helps members achieve a "deep, horizontal comradeship".[10] This is not to claim that users have achieved some utopian equality simply by logging on to their account. While

classification and inequality based on gender, ethnicity, religion, etc still takes place on MySpace these do not represent the focal point for membership, so the manner in which these groups represent inclusivity or exclusivity has been, to a degree, lessened.

There is another important element to the MySpace community; the creation and use of its own language. The style in which MySpace users commune has been largely shaped by the language they use to connect, especially considering the communication that occurs when comments are posted on one another's pages. According to Anderson, communities are "imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script".[11] As there is no physical connection or non-verbal communication possible due to the nature of the cyber community, it is arguable that language is the only medium of connectivity possible between members of the MySpace imagined community. If we consider language as a manner or method of communication than we must also consider, outside of simple written or spoken language, the format and contents of the entire profile to represent the language of the MySpace user. This language includes, but is not limited to, photographs, emoticons (small, smiley face type cartoon figures that are representative to the users current mood), comments, blogs, and bulletins. This method of communication, taken together, creates a form of MySpace hieroglyphics, filled with symbols, letters, and semiotics that first time users may find indistinguishable. Long time members of the MySpace community, however, need no Rosetta Stone to plunge into and decipher the communiqué of fellow users. The vernacular of the MySpace user is most strongly rooted in Text or SMS. This language is, similar in form and lack of poetry or alternative meaning, akin to George Orwell's Newspeak, it is a simplified and speedier form of communication much the same as the telegraph; a shortened linguistic form in order to be a more cost and word effective manner to communicate.

The Older and more sacred communities placed great value and significance on new members learning their language, for many, a new member to the community was admitted only upon mastery of the sacred language. While membership to the MySpace community is not precluded to mastery of the shared language of users, acceptance and the ability to actively connect with others does require it. In order to communicate to other members of the community one must understand the culture of that community as well as the language; there is perhaps no better method of cultural understanding than mastery of the vernacular. While Benjamin Whorf's theory of linguistic relativity is much debated, there is some element of truth that individual thought and shared community beliefs are, at least, in some way, influenced by the shared tongue. As with any community, aspects of control and power present themselves. What makes elements of hegemony on MySpace so interesting is that the

aspects of control and power are self-inflicted as opposed to forced. There is a self-policing taking place on MySpace.

Panoptican on MySpace

In the age of reality television, and celebrities who are famous for being famous, there has been a proclivity toward self-surveillance. Almost as if the fears of surveillance by Orwell and Ray Bradbury have been replaced with the celebration of surveillance in television programs named, ironically enough, Big Brother and Survivor. The normalizing, in fact the celebration, of self-surveillance is most apparent on MySpace, it is a self-placed telescreen, it is a self-erected Panoptican. As the popularity of MySpace grows, as it becomes more consistent and acculturated, so to does the language and make-up of its community. Self-surveillance is integral to the language of MySpace, the blog is a public display of the immaterial, what once was treasured as private, what was Winston Smith's ultimate rebellion against surveillance is now willingly committed. The photo section of MySpace is a clear record, for public consumption, of what occurs/occurred in the life of the user. It is in the community of MySpace itself that hegemonic forces become evident.

It is through the picture comment, the blog comment, that the MySpace users friends exert their power "through gratifications, accomplished with rewards and privileges for good conduct. The effects of these disciplines are internalized within the individual as "common sense"…or "good habits".[12] So self-surveillance becomes "common sense", it becomes normalized for the young to post pictures of themselves in provocative positions or partying or even family portraits. It is not so much the activity that matters, but it is the ease with which self-revelation becomes normalized. This is the way in which hegemonic powers operate, they do not need to be centralized or even controlled, but once they become self-internalized their control becomes less obvious and more efficient. Many times it acts regardless of the health or benefit of those who are subjugated. It is the MySpace community at large that controls it, and that "power is realized when the internalized community standards operate through and within the individual".[13] It is this internalization of the power structures that is so fascinating and it is through consideration of the Panoptican that it becomes most apparent.

According to Michel Foucault, the major effect of the Panoptican was "to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the functioning of power".[14] It is this awareness by the MySpace user that at any time their profile is visible, that it is "permanently visible" that creates the power of and similarities of the guard tower to the MySpace community. It is the "gaze" of the prison tower, the anonymity of the guard and the prisoner's total awareness of the

possibility of constant surveillance that compels the prisoner to self-regulate their lives. Much in the same way the MySpace user self-regulates their profile, for it is under the "gaze" and anonymity of the MySpace community that the user is ever aware of, and self-regulatory because of. What is most fascinating about the "participatory Panoptican" is that while it is currently, and has been, until now, largely self-chosen, it is becoming increasingly difficult to choose not to take part in it.[15]   As new generations are raised in the age of self-surveillance it becomes more and more normalized, it becomes "common sense". As younger users more willingly self-surveille they become a "docile body that may be subjugated, used, transformed and improved".[16]

      While it is impossible to say what the tendency toward self-surveillance will lead to, there is, at least one major aspect that is becoming apparent. After the purchase of MySpace by News Corporation the amount of space on the website dedicated to advertising absolutely sky-rocketed. Not only advertising on MySpace increased but also the use of companies called, interestingly enough, "Little Brothers" has increased as well. MySpace is a public website, meaning there is little privacy, and information culled from users by so-called Little Brother companies, which use that information to create more exact demographics, thus generating a more effective advertising campaign that can then be placed on MySpace. Under Capitalism, control of individuals tends to focus on control of structure much more than influence over superstructure. In the case of MySpace, it appears that by cataloguing uses and users of particular aspects of superstructure, corporations can more effectively create and commodify, and all within a self-regulating, self-monitoring market research group. So perhaps Orwell was a prophet and his character, Winston Smith, will make a resurgence and encapsulate rebellion in the future, and the simple act of keeping a private journal will amount to absolute resistance.

      After a MySpace user has become familiar with the representation of self, they find that they become part of a community, the virtually imagined community of MySpace. While this community is imagined in the truest sense of the word it is one that carries its own language and therefore culture and customs. But it is also a community of self-surveillance, one filled with elements of control and power, and one that is becoming increasingly profitable. Where there is profit there is struggle for control. It is fascinating to witness the effects that the outside world has on cyber reality, but cyber reality has its effects on the outside world as well, this is most apparent in the cases of MySpace celebrities and the horrific suicide of Megan Meier.[17]

Influence Outside MySpace

      There exists the intriguing phenomenon on MySpace known as the

MySpace celebrity. This occurs when the representation of the self becomes so popular, in that it takes on an incredible number of friends and millions if not tens of millions of views take place, that they become cyber famous. What makes this phenomenon so incredible is that the MySpace celebrity becomes famous for their chosen representation of their mind and body.   Much in the same way that Christine Jorgensen only achieved media attention after she publicly displayed her transformed body the MySpace celebrity so to only appears after their chosen representation becomes public. There is perhaps no better example of this than "Tila Tequila".

Tila Tequila's profile (http://myspace.com/tilatequila), as of the writing of this paper, has been viewed over 170 million times, many of her 70 or so profile pictures, most of which have obviously been professionally manipulated, have over five thousand comments, and she has over 3.5 million MySpace friends. In 2007, she announced, on her MySpace blog of course, that she would be filming a dating show genre reality based television series, where she would be the prize. It was through the direct manipulation of her body, by way of (mis)representation of herself on MySpace that she was able to enact the leap from cyber reality to reality television. It would be easy to cynically attribute this to the crossover of two vacant forms of pop culture, but close examination reveals deeper implications about the body and manner in which it is viewed. Her body, or rather the viewing of her body, became so prevalent in cyber reality that it became only natural that the viewing of her body would transfer from the computer screen to the television screen. What makes this so apropos is that 16 men and 16 women were to compete for the returned gaze of that in which they had all previously taken pleasure in viewing. Not only were they competing for her returned gaze, but also to possess her body in a way that MySpace would not, could not, or could only allude to. However, this physical demonstration was enacted with what could charitably be described as impure motivation. Both the contestant and their prize vied for the viewing attention of each other while simultaneously vied for the gaze of the viewer. More than a manifestation of the pleasurable voyeurism of reality television or the self-created cyber representations of the MySpace celebrity, examining Tila Tequila begs for attention to be placed not only on the effects scopophilia has on the psyche but what effects the self-created representation has outside the sphere of cyber-reality.

There is perhaps no better, or worse, case to describe the ramifications and impact of the cyber body on the actual body than the tragic case of Megan Meier. Megan, a 13-year-old female from Missouri, met a male named Josh on MySpace. They began correspondence, solely through the medium of MySpace, and eventually initiated a relationship akin to dating. This relationship lasted for little over a

month when Josh began leaving cruel comments on her page and eventually ended the relationship. The next day Megan, who suffered from depression, committed suicide. The reality that eventually surfaced was that Josh never truly existed. He was a fictitious person created by a neighbourhood family in order to, according to the family in question, discover if and what Megan was saying about a friend behind her back. Regardless of the reasoning behind the complete fabrication of a person on MySpace, the impact remains. The impact this fictitious person had on Megan Meier was the same as if the person truly existed. For her, Josh was a real person, who, through material and immaterial representation as presented to her on MySpace was able to effect her real life decisions, even as far as influencing her decision to take her own life. It is only through the profiles ability to emulate both a seemingly viewable and seemingly knowable person, by acting as if the representation of the self is in fact the self, in which we see acceptance of the MySpace profile as a real person.

It is, through complex representational techniques, such as photos, blogs, and the imagined community that MySpace impacts the world around it. The transcendence of the profile from representation to actuality in the mind of the viewer exemplifies the power of the illusory nature of MySpace. It can be represented in ways seemingly trivial, such as the phenomenon of the MySpace celebrity, exemplified by Tila Tequila and her reality television show. It is also illustrated in a shocking manner such as the case of Megan Meier, where, to her, a MySpace profile and the relationship that existed only on MySpace became reality, and carried with it devastating results.

Conclusion

The social networking website MySpace is unique, as it allows users to envision, create, and implement a representation of themselves, both the material body and the immaterial mind, in the guise of the profile, and present it to a community comprised of other users and profiles that were created in the same manner and with similar aims. MySpace users accept the validity of other profiles as accurate representations as they desire others to do the same for them. MySpace users have created an imagined virtual community, one with its own language, its own form of communicating and reading the profile as one communicates with and reads the body. During this cyber age filled with reality television, the MySpace user is a part of a self-regulated, self-surveilling community, and one that views intimate documentation as a positive growth, it is a community that celebrates the end of individual privacy with thunderous applause. It is a community filled with self-obsessed members who take just as much pleasure, if not more, in being viewed as they do in viewing themselves, it is the pleasure of unchecked narcissism. Through

NOTES

1. René Descartes, Descartes' Meditations and Selections From the Principles of Philosophy. Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1920., 132

2. Descartes, 34

3. David Serlin, Replaceable You : Engineering the Body in Postwar America. New York: University of Chicago P, 2004., 114

4. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." The Critical Tradition : Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends. By David H. Richter. New York: St. Martin's P, 1997. 1444-453., 1446

5. Ibid., 1447.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities. London, New York: Verso, 1983, 1991. 1+., 6

9. Ibid., 6.

10. Ibid., 7.

11. Ibid., 13.

12. Jessica R. Johnston, ed. The American Body in Context : An Anthology. Danbury: Scholarly Resources, Incorporated, 2001., 178

13. Ibid., 179.

14. Ibid., 200.

15. Jamais Cascio, "The Rise of the Participatory Panopitcon." Worldchanging. 4 May 2005. 8 Dec. 2008 <http://www.worldchanging.com/archives//002651.html>., 1

16. Johnston, 178, Foucault

17. Christopher Maag, "Megan Meier." New York times. Web. <http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/m/megan_meier/index.html>., 1

The 'Unbranded' Brand

Christian Gunkel

> This Paper was written in Spring 2009 for Elaine Lewinnek's AMST 409: Consumer Culture. I chose American Apparel as the subject of this paper, because I believe that this company represents two exceedingly opposing aspects. A capitalist company that appeals to countercultural rebels appears utmost paradoxical. I am fascinated about the fact that in a time of mistrust in global corporations, especially the garment industry, on the part of consumer activism American Apparel could get away with its capitalist ideology. Hence, the question emerged, if there is really such a big difference between what both sides represent, consumer activism on the one hand and capitalistic enterprises on the other. Or are both just mere parts of the whole?

We live in a time where it seems as if brands and large corporations have taken control not only of consumers and consumerism, but also politics. Corporations, it appears, are not only omnipresent but also omnipotent. They have taken absolute power, and everybody seems to kneel down in front of the "Swooshtika"[1]. Apparently, we are facing capitalism in its worst form of appearance. Globally operating corporations like Nike have been accused repeatedly for human rights violations, child labor, and the exploitation of its garment workers in Third World countries. So far, it seems, not much has changed, the corporations still make big bucks. Most garments we can purchase in expensive and fancy stores are still manufactured in sweatshops under the poorest working conditions, where terms like minimum wage and health care don't even seem to exist. However, in recent years consumer activist groups have started taking the power back from the corporations and taking matters into their own hands again. Sweatshop-free manufactured garments and other consumer goods is just one out of countless examples what consumer activism has been fighting for since the 1990s.[2]

When American Apparel, which was actually founded in 1998[3], appeared on the brandscape by opening its first retail store in 2003[4], it first seemed like it was a lonely little buoy floating in a sea of exploitation, human rights violations, outsourcing and

child labor. By clinging to its principles of sweatshop-free garment manufacturing and vertically integrated production, the company has achieved a permanent position in the global capitalist economy. However, if we take a look at global capitalism, we will still find that there is lots of room for improvements, and that American Apparel might just be the beginning. There are still too many unanswered questions regarding what must be changed and how. Consumer activists certainly have a point when they name capitalism as the source of all evil, but does it mean we have to smash capitalism? Or would it maybe be better to simply reform the system and turn it into a better one? The dispute about these questions is probably not going to be settled anytime soon, but in the end everything on which consumer activism is based comes down to one simple question – the question of choice.

It is certainly not true that we as consumers have absolutely no choices left in today's consumer society. However, the question whether we can choose what to buy and what not is intrinsically connected to the question of whether we can afford it or not. Food is probably the prime example to explain this assertion, because it is a consumer good everybody needs, and is available in many different forms and prices. Nowadays, for example, it is increasingly difficult to get comestibles at decent prices that don't contain corn in any form. But why? Corn is incredibly cheap to produce, and its multiple uses make it a perfect additive for all kinds of foods, like for instance as a sweetener in soft drinks. This allows quite high profit margins, and hence Michael Pollan is right when he aptly refers to corn as "the protocapitalist plant"[5]. As a result, the only choice that consumers have left if they want to buy corn free-food is to buy organic. And again, organic food is a luxury, which is only accessible to those who can and want to afford it. Thus it is not truly a choice, and Naomi Klein admittedly has a point when she proclaims that there is "no choice"[6]. Nevertheless, this quasi-choice provides a principle that also applies to all other consumer goods like garments or sneakers – cheap production allows high profits. And in order to choose not to purchase Nike sneakers, we have to be able to afford them in the first place, otherwise we could not be speaking of choice. Now, how does American Apparel fit into this?

In a way, American Apparel represents both what Naomi Klein propagates and what she criticizes in No Logo. First of all, there is no brand logo on any of American Apparel's products, because they are not intended to serve as status symbols[7] and yet we can find American Apparel's fashion "all over the pop landscape"[8]. I think this is what qualifies American Apparel as the prototype of an unbranded brand – it has no logo, but it is omnipresent throughout the very fashion-conscious urban hipster scene of the 21st century.[9] Furthermore, this company does not employ "brand builders" like Nike does, and which Klein describes as "the new primary producers in our so-called

knowledge economy."[10] Dov Charney, American Apparel's founder and CEO, made it his very own task to be the number one promoter of his company. He designs the ad campaigns himself, instead of employing a whole bunch of marketing experts to do the job. Besides, the advertisement campaigns never feature professional models, but ordinary young people who are cast and photographed by Charney himself. These very unconventional ads appear "mostly in alternative newspapers"[11] and magazines such as VICE[12]. This also means that the company's expenses for advertising, and brand building respectively stay comparatively low, and since less money is spent for the brand image, the company is able to spend more money on other ends, namely the production itself.

With the money saved on brand building the company can pay not only for the sweatshop-free production of garments, but it can also pay its workers "nearly twice the minimum wage" on average, and provide for their healthcare.[13] Obviously, Charney, like many other garment manufacturers, has noticed that "human rights are good for business."[14] However, there is one major difference, which is that Charney has made it a central concern of his enterprise, whereas companies like Nike only use human rights as a means to brush up their image. And for the same reason American Apparel has not outsourced its production to contractors or subcontractors in Third World countries. This would probably be a very pleasing fact for Naomi Klein and many other critics of consumerism, but I am convinced they would certainly find something else to criticize.

It is actually not too difficult to find something to criticize about the company if we take a closer look at American Apparel. Something that Klein bashes in her book is the fact that many corporations strive to prevent unionization of their workers[15], and likewise Charney seeks to avoid the unionization of his garment workers.[16] This virtually makes him the sole ruler of American Apparel, for, of course, unionization would lead to a considerable loss of Charney's independence as the company's CEO.[17] As ironic as it might seem to many consumer activists, we have to admit that the non-unionized garment workers of American Apparel are better off than the vast majority of their colleagues at other companies throughout the world. Nevertheless, this implies that Charney mustn't take advantage of his position as CEO at the expense of the employees' welfare and dignity. By and large, this has been working for almost a decade now, except for a few sexual harassment charges that four former female employees had filed against him as of 2008.[18]

Another instance where American Apparel might be susceptible to criticism from countercultural activists is the fact that Charney doesn't demonize capitalism. He does not even leave the faintest doubt about his capitalist intentions and the fact that

American Apparel is a major capitalistic enterprise.[19] Today there are some 260 company owned retail stores[20] worldwide, it is a success story that speaks for itself – a Los Angeles based garment manufacturer that became a global player without exploiting its workers. Despite the global success, American Apparel managed to maintain its underground appeal, which apparently is so important for all sorts of cultural radicals. However, it has also shown that we don't have to smash the capitalist system, simply because it is much more effective to change it from within, as I will explain in the following paragraphs.

In Nation of Rebels Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter argue that "cultural rebellion […] is not a threat to the system – it is the system"[21]. I think American Apparel being an institution in young adult urban hipster culture is a great example for proving this point. When Heath and Potter talk about the "system", they mean capitalism and consumerism respectively, both of which countercultural rebels are opposed to. They furthermore argue that cultural rebellion is nothing but another form of consumerism - "rebel consumerism"[22]. How does this make sense? First and foremost, rebels want to set themselves apart from the masses – they are on a constant quest for distinction.[23] Hence, in order to establish distinction they have to consume, one major source of distinction is fashion, and fashion is a perfect example for a consumer good.

Rebellion is consumerism, and nothing represents this more than American Apparel. Heath and Potter's assertion that "rebellion, not conformity, […] has […] been the driving force of the marketplace",[24] might seem paradoxical and ironic, especially to those who oppose consumerism. And here is the problem. How can someone effectively rebel against something he or she is an essential part of? If we follow Heath and Potter's argument, we will see how counterproductive this kind of countercultural rebellion is. Even though they generalize the term 'counterculture', their argument does not lose much of its weight, simply because any kind of countercultural rebellion they refer to at bottom works the same, whether it be environmental activism or, as in our case, consumer activism. Rebels basically deny the fact that they are simply a cog in the huge machine that is capitalism. Simply deciding that we don't want to be a small cog anymore, and thereby trying to stop the machine is certainly not going to make a huge difference. However, trying to improve the system would probably have a much bigger impact, even if it might be at the cost of remaining a cog in the machine. The latter applies to American Apparel, which is both rebellious and capitalistic. In this case, by 'rebellious' I don't mean counterproductive but innovative.

Consumer activists' profound aversion to power is probably an obstructive feature in the attempt to reform the global economy. However, we can choose to whom we give power, because we have the power of spending. And if companies like American

Apparel would gain more weight in the power relations of global economy, others would probably follow their example, simply because corporations will do whatever promises the most profit. What American Apparel has achieved in roughly ten years is much more than consumer activism has achieved in a comparable period of time with companies like Nike for instance. The example of American Apparel proves that it is a lot more effective to work with the system instead of working against the system. Nevertheless, many activists still regard culture jamming and adbusting as "the perfect tool"[25] in their fight against brands and large corporations. But these are mere symbolic acts scratching on the surface of a problem that goes much deeper. The system needs to undergo certain changes – there is no question about that – but as long as assertions like "the 'strongest' brands are generating the worst jobs"[26], as Naomi Klein puts it, prevail, not much going to happen. It might still be the exception to the rule, but American Apparel, though 'unbranded', has become quite a strong brand, yet it is certainly not generating the worst jobs.

Consumer activists have been very busy fighting the cutthroat capitalism of big corporations like Nike, which is certainly a good cause, but they should instead focus on promoting business models like the one of American Apparel. Even though it might not be exactly the ideal type of manufacturer that consumer activists want it to be, it still is as close as we can get at this time. We don't know what is going to happen after Dov Charney decides to step back from his position as the company's CEO. Some large corporation might be already lurking to buy up American Apparel, and if it should become incorporated into a corporate group, everything that it stands for right now would likely be lost. In that case, American Apparel could not single-handedly decide their strategy, instead the proprietary company would be in power of decision. We have seen examples like that before. Vans skate shoes once were the epitome of rebellion for an entire subculture, namely skateboarding, that has existed since the 1960s. Now that Vans belongs to the Nike corporation it has become nothing more than a poor copy of what it once represented. If people let that happen, we all will wind up where we started, before corporations were forced to make concessions toward consumer activism. I believe that I've shown that reform within the corporate system is possible. If done right, capitalism and consumerism don't have to be so bad.

NOTES

1. Naomi Klein. No Logo. 2nd ed. 2002. New York: Picador. 367.
2. Ibid. 327.
3. Polly Vernon, "American Apparel: Label of the Year," The Guardian (also published in The Observer). United Kingdom. November 30, 2008.
4. Josh Dean. "Dov Charney, Like It or Not," Inc. Magazine, September 2005.
5. Michael Pollan. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. 2006. New York: Penguin Books Ltd.
6. Klein. No Logo. Chapters 6-8.
7. The Economist, "American Apparel's unusual flotation is typical of Dov Charney, its founder," (United Kingdom) January 4, 2007.
8. Vernon, "American Apparel: Label of the Year".
9. Christopher Palmeri, "Living On The Edge At American Apparel," BusinessWeek, June 27, 2005.
10. Klein. No Logo. 196.
11. Palmeri, "Living On The Edge At American Apparel".
12. Vice Magazine US. Vice Online: http://www.viceland.com
13. Palmeri, "Living On The Edge At American Apparel".
14. Klein. No Logo. 434.
15. Ibid. 214-16.
16. The Economist, "American Apparel's unusual flotation is typical of Dov Charney, its founder," (United Kingdom) January 4, 2007.
17. Peter Y. Hong, "Is There Substance Behind Clothing Factory Owner's Brash Style?; American Apparel chief says he offers workers wages and dignity rarely seen in the business.; [Home Edition]," Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles, Calif.: Jan 12, 2003. pg. B.1
18. Carla Hall, "Lawsuit has fashion mogul in spotlight," Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles, CA: Jan 17, 2008. pg. B.1.
19. The Economist, "American Apparel's unusual flotation is typical of Dov Charney, its founder".
20. American Apparel Profile on www.americanapparel.net. Video accessible at: http://americanapparel.net/gallery/investors/qt.html
21. Joseph Heath and Potter, Andrew. Nation of Rebels: Why Counterculture Became Consumer Culture. 2004. New York: HarperCollins. 1.
22. Ibid. 308.
23. Ibid. 103.
24. Ibid. 99.
25. Klein. No Logo. 284.
26. Ibid. 275.

Don't Fence Me(n) In:
Four Cultural Texts Chart Expanding American Masculinities

Heather Andrews

This paper was written for Professor John Ibson's, AMST 413: The American Male in Fall 2008. After reading James Twitchell's Where Men Hide, C.J. Pascoe's Dude, You're a Fag, and watching the films Boys Will Be Men and Shelter - each of which focus on modern American men and masculinity – we were asked to define or characterize, or argue against the possibility of defining, current "conventional American masculinity" using these texts. It was understood, in this class, that masculinity is based on social and cultural expectations of how men should behave rather than any traits essential to all males. I therefore refer to masculinity as a performance or external project of gender throughout the paper. I hoped to convey what I saw in these texts as shift away from a singularly definable masculinity towards more realistically variable masculinities.

Masculinity can be thought of as the reading of a cultural script performed on a social stage and American men are acting out their masculinity on an ever-widening stage with increasing self-awareness as actors. Many men, who believe that gender roles are culturally defined rather than biologically inherent, have great potential for variation without being more or less "masculine" for their difference. On the other hand, men who still believe in essentially male characteristics are now just one type of performer of American masculinity. American men have not shed the external project of gender; masculinity remains culturally scripted and socially enacted even as it becomes hard to define.

By looking at four contemporary American texts – two works of nonfiction and two films – I will explore the broadening spectrum of gender performance that falls under the umbrella term "masculine." These texts indicate that current conventional masculinity is characterized by gender play without gender crisis, de-feminizing introspection and emotionality, and, most importantly, variation among men. The films *Boys Will Be Men* and *Shelter* as well as the nonfiction works *Where Men Hide* by James Twitchell and *Dude, You're a Fag* by C.G. Pascoe help us chart the expanding territory of masculinity in their attention to: men's relationships with nature, with

authority, with women, and with other men. These relationships demonstrate that masculinity continues to be, even in its pluralistic blooming, based on *expectations of* and *interaction with* certain individuals, social structures, and environments. More importantly, the texts also indicate that current conventional masculinity cannot be easily defined or narrowly labeled; it is a promising sign for American men – and Americans in general – that gendered variation does not constitute a gender crisis.

Men and Nature

Conventional American masculinity is enacted through a variety of relationships including ones with nature; some masculine relationships with nature seem like a remnant of a time gone by while other extremes are characterized by a total disconnect with nature. In his book, *Where Men Hide,* James Twitchell gives a sweeping interpretation of a masculine relationship with nature in his chapter on the hunt. With geographic location and age being the most obvious markers of difference, there are American men, like Twitchell, who believe that the rites of the hunt are essentially masculine. Twitchell begins by describing the hunting camp as "a lair, a den" asserting the very basic and animalistic relationship between men and nature during the hunt.[1] This rudimentary relationship is what Twitchell describes as drawing out man's human emotions when he writes that the camp is "a place for men to open up to each other."[2] The idea that men must "rough it" in order to "open up" is a very limited view of men's capacity for self expression. Typified by Teddy Roosevelt, "his rough and ready narrative that connected hunting with training for war, *rough camaraderie*, and bully-good fun,"[3] the hunter is a conflated individual whose woodsy masculinity and dominating relationship to nature does not sustain reverence among all men today. Certainly Twitchell does not appeal to all men when he writes, without qualification, that "it is on the hunt that the young man comes into his own and celebrates his manhood in the communion of his campmates."[4] This ritual was never as universal as the author believes and, now, *if* an individual's masculinity will derive meaning from a relationship with nature, the relationships are as varied as the geographic and mental terrain where they are founded.

The films *Boys Will Be Men* and *Shelter* provide a counter example to Twitchell's hunt, portraying conventionally masculine relationships with nature as restorative and respectful. In the documentary film *Boys Will Be Men*, a program for youths who have struggled with school, drugs, and the law provides individual and group counseling while teaching the young men to survive in a harsh desert environment. The boys are given daily tasks and learn to travel and camp while respecting the land.[5] The group leaders do not treat the young men like "screw ups,"

but instead trust them with great responsibilities and, in the process, the boys become more confident. This dutiful and safe relationship with nature, without the hunt or the kill, allows young men to "open up" to each other as Twitchell describes. There is still the camaraderie Twitchell refers to numerous times, but instead of using the hunt and the kill as an *excuse* to bond, the overt goal is caring, physically and emotionally, for yourself and other young men. Their masculinity is asserted by being responsible enough to take care of each other in a natural setting, not by enacting rugged individualism.

Also in contrast to Twitchell's example, the main characters in *Shelter* find physical and mental peace in their relationship with nature. Zach, Shaun, and Gabe – who are all conventionally masculine despite their variance in sexuality – bond in their love for surfing and the beach. Compared to the deer camp, which is full of challenges to and demands for proof of masculinity, the beach provides a sort of safe zone to the men in *Shelter*. Zach surfs in solitude to reflect on his family obligations and homosexuality. Zach, Shaun, and Gabe surf together at various levels of familiarity as they "open up" to one another: Zach and Gabe as best friends find common ground despite class differences; Zach and Shaun as they develop their romantic relationship; and all three as a intimate group of men who accept their variant sexualities. The relationship with nature for these men is one of enjoyment and recreation where they also nourish other types of relationships. Whether they are engaged in emotional introspection or grappling with sexual identity they are never emasculated.

Men and Authority

Following the pattern of conventional masculine relationships with nature, masculine relationships with authority are increasingly characterized by variation among men. Relationships with authority, which range from subjection *to* strict authority to *being* the authority, shift based on a man's social mobility, class, age, profession, and so on. Twitchell provides perspective on male authority in his impressionistic rendering of outdated conventional masculinity, which he links, with unrealistic certainty, to the present. Twitchell describes, with near nostalgia, the literally separate spheres of the Victorian house; he details women's spaces where they hid themselves because of expectations of modesty – a passive position – and the men's spaces to get away for business or pleasure – an active position.[6] Male domestic authority in the Victorian era was unquestionable and, according to Twitchell, present day masculinity includes a longing for that absolute authority. He discusses offices, garages, and particularly sheds as microcosms of a home that the man "really can be

[the] man of" and describes executive offices being decorated to look like home living rooms.[7] Most men are better adjusted and their masculinity less threatened by the democratization of the workplace and home than Twitchell believes. Speaking as a member of a particularly large family, which includes one and two parent households as well as professional and blue-collar households, there are no "men only" spaces to report and "No Girls Allowed" signs are posted only by the very young to protect against cooties.

While Twitchell does not sufficiently problematize the man of the house, king of the castle diatribe, he does give an appropriately amused reading of male authority in a 1950's model train ad: "If Mom and Sis are pictured, they are over in the corner, amazed that Junior can control such power. Junior is often wearing an engineer's hat. Dad is close at hand."[8] In this image the son is an authority figure in training; Dad is there to assert his own authority and keep things safe while "Mom and Sis" look on in passive admiration. Advertising has endless use for these sorts of manipulated images, but this representation of masculinity and authority in the household was an exaggeration when the ad was published and is comical today. Stay-at-home Dads and professional mothers speak to a new conventional masculinity that does not include being a gendered king of or heir to the domestic castle.

Conventional American masculinity has quite a different look when males are subject to authority rather than the executers – perceived or real – of authority. In *Boys Will Be Men* young boys' progress and confidence are at the mercy of school authority. Crisis status is given to natural developmental differences among and between boys and girls. In primary school boys are described as having too much energy and being slower in learning to read when compared to girls.[9] Male students lose confidence and motivation when they are punished for behavior that is neutral or not above average. Alternatively, and with equal detriment, school aged girls have to do very little to be treated as exceptional. The film asserts that authority figures' misuse of punishment and discipline when dealing with young boys is detrimental to their gendered development.[10] Positive, expressive masculinity can result from warranted discipline as seen in the earlier example of the outdoors group, while defensive masculinity may result when boys are punished for not *exceeding* the unrealistic expectations of those in authority. This school age dichotomy between male and female students is one determinant of masculine variation between those who are judged on individual performance and those who are judged against a pre-established bar for male students.

Detrimental relationships with authority continue during high school where, as Pascoe discusses, these relationships vary depending on race as well as sex. River

High, where Pascoe conducted her research, had an official no tolerance policy on sexual dancing. However, at the school's dance performances, "only the African American boys were singled out and given strict instructions not to touch the girls."[11] African American male students had an undesired and distinct relationship with authority and their masculine performances were accordingly different. The varieties of relationships to authority that are conventionally masculine vary within the male population and within subgroups of the male population. Conventional masculinity can assert itself with or against authority and sometimes in an admixture of different sources of authority: moral authority, artistic authority as in dancing, legal authority against discrimination, and so on.

Men and Women

Conventional American masculinity is asserted in and affected by men's relationships with women, romantic and otherwise. Both Twitchell and Pascoe oversimplify masculine relationships with women. Twitchell is certain that *all* men toy with the question, "How would life be without women?" and that they go through all sorts of trouble to "hide" themselves and find out.[12] The desirability of personal time and private space does not imply that masculine men fantasize about a literal absence of women. When my step-dad took my youngest brother on a weekend hunting and camping trip, I took the opportunity to spend some time with my mom and spied a note on the fridge from my step-dad telling her he could not wait to return home and "breathe [her] in." Twitchell misses this subtlety of masculinity which can include reveling in a relationship with a woman even while enjoying time apart. In another example, Pascoe also stops short of recognizing the complex relationships masculinity allows for. Pascoe overstates her exceptionality when she writes, "in one-on-one situations with me (and possibly with each other) they often spoke touchingly about their feelings about and insecurities with girls."[13] Pascoe is commenting on two relationships with women: young men with an adult female authority and young men with peer-aged girlfriends; her surprise is misplaced in both. Pascoe's surprise at the boys' candidness underestimates the extent to which conventional masculinity can include open emotionality. Her surprise at their "insecurities with girls" underestimates the extent to which high school boys are still formulating their masculinity rather than being self-aware executors of their heteronormative dominance over women as she frequently implies. High school boys and grown men do not shut out women as a rule as these examples imply; individual men have relationships with women – some romantic, some platonic, and some imagined – and are more or less successful in balancing these relationships and others in their

life. Current conventional masculinity does not depend on the posting of a literal or emotional "No Girls Allowed" sign but it does include personal time and privacy of emotions that men value more or less on an individual basis.

In the film *Shelter* and in *Dude, You're a Fag* masculinity is challenged based on an actual or proclaimed desire to have a sexual relationship with women. In *Shelter*, Zach is invited to visit Santa Barbara to get some "pussy" and is chided for his lack of interest. Zach is asked outright if he is "a fag" because he no longer wants to date his "hot" ex-girlfriend.[14] Pascoe records similar challenges to masculinity, "Jace told me that guys who weren't interested in girls were 'all gay guys.'"[15] In the use of "fag" and "gay" we see literal and imagined homosexuality pushed upon the male subject but the extent to witch these epithets stick varies as much as the subjects themselves. Pascoe's belief that "girlfriends both protected boys from the specter of the fag and bolstered their masculinity"[16] is true only within these limits; Zach is literally gay, but remains masculine, while boys at River High are teased for talking about girlfriends and holding hands with girlfriends. The individuals challenging masculinity in these examples are revealing more about their own insecurity than anyone else's masculinity. Conventional masculinity need only depend on getting "pussy" for those who actively believe in the "specter of the fag" and his appearance in the absence of heterosexual sex or sex talk.

Conventional masculinity has taken a significant shift away from an assertion that men's relationship with women is that they are *opposites* and that masculinity is achieved by rejecting all things feminine. This assertion is a dangerously un-meaningful one because both masculinity and femininity are performed, constructed, and constantly changing. While conventional masculinity in America today does not define itself by essentialist differences, individual men may still ascribe to this notion. Twitchell participates in gendered essentialism when he writes, "'going for a ride' is for men is what 'being in the kitchen' is for women" or that the significance behind hand tools is "that they are hard for girls to use."[17] This dichotomous view of men and women serves as a counter example to a crucial characteristic of conventional masculinity today: variation among men not just between men and women. Turn on TLC (The Learning Channel) and you will see men teaching you how to cook ("Take Home Chef"), women teaching carpentry ("Tool Belt Diva"), female tattoo artists ("LA Ink"), and male makeover recipients ("10 Years Younger"). The men on these programs are as masculine as their fellow TLC residents, the macho metal-benders on "American Chopper," who Twitchell refers to with unsurprising adoration.[18] Twitchell is demonstrative in his belief that a way of being could be essential to a man or woman; he proves that the extent to which the performer of masculinity recognizes

the construction of gender roles, the more or less free he is to redefine them.

Men and Men

Men's relationships with other men can be masculine without being anxiety-ridden or emotionally closeted. However, it is also in these relationships that these characteristics have been most stubborn. Violent or neglectful male relationships, literal and imagined homosexual relationships, intimate male friendships, and racialized male relationships help demonstrate the diversity of American men who are all equally masculine. Violent or neglectful male relationships, often between a son and father figure, inform the analysis of an unfortunate and persistent form of conventional masculinity. *Boys Will Be Men* describes this type of masculinity as a "culture of cruelty" in which it is a "guy thing" to attack weakness and condone violence.[19] Violent masculinity is acted out in socially endorsed settings like boxing, Ultimate Fighting or military service, but it also frequently reproduces itself in the home where the abused child becomes an abusive husband or father. Aggressive performances of masculinity can result from anger towards an abusive or neglectful father figure *or* in communion with father figures who demand that a male child be "tough". Twitchell, in his chapter on boxing, asserts that for a culture to survive it must "control how men experience and express hurt."[20] Twitchell is referring to military and sporting violence and, in these contexts, control is valuable. In relationships with other men, however, to *let loose* how men experience and express hurt is necessary in order to shift masculinity away from a "culture of cruelty." Males should not have to choose between stoic silence and aggression to deal with pain. In *Boys Will Be Men* young male adults are asked to write a poem about the pain of growing up; the results were creative, personal, and honest showing a potential for a transmutation of pain into productivity for the very diverse group of boys involved.

Taken together *Shelter* and *Dude, You're a Fag* demonstrate that conventional American masculinity cannot be allocated away from gay men by virtue of their sexuality any more than straight men can don masculinity by virtue of theirs. In *Shelter,* Zach is not a caricature of a homosexual man, nor is he hyper-masculine; he exhibits the variety of traits that current conventional masculinity allows for. Zach has a strong sense of family and responsibility, a positive and well-established notion of masculinity. He also has vulnerabilities like his hesitance to let Shaun look at his sketches and his difficulty in accepting a compliment when Shaun tells him he is "beautiful."[21] These characteristics do not make him less masculine, only more realistic. Conventional masculinity does not preclude having a "sensitive side" which is a dimension that can be shared by men who identify as gay and straight. *Shelter*

does not exaggerate or make a joke out of being gay *or* being masculine which allows characters to inhabit both believably.

In *Dude, You're a Fag* being a "fag" *is* the joke and it is a joke on anyone who forgets to exaggerate their masculinity, not on someone who is actually (necessarily) gay. Unlike Zach's believable character, the "fag" in Pascoe's book is a disembodied "free floating accusation"[22] or, what Pascoe calls, a "specter." At River High young men's relationships include diverting attention away from their own undeveloped masculinity by casting other boys as the exaggerated, imaginary, and laughable "fag." Pascoe describes how "Neil made fun of Craig and Brian for simply hanging out together."[23] It is due to immaturity rather than deviousness that teen age boys would try to formulate their masculinity by drawing extreme opposites in girls and girl-like "fags," but, problematically, Pascoe goes along with their extreme definitions. She represents a portion of the audience of performed masculinity that demands extreme caricatures; she assumes that the only gay boy at River High is the flamboyant Ricky and that the boys who seem straight must be straight. That gay and straight men can perform gender separate from their sexual preference is another example of the trend towards variation among conventionally masculine males, of the expanding territory of conventional American masculinity.

In addition to romantic and sexual relationships, friendships between men provide compelling evidence for the current trend of conventional masculinity towards variety and expressive emotionality. "Gay jokes" not excluded, males in *Shelter* and Pascoe's book show their affection through teasing and mocking as well as more serious conversations – sometimes in the guise of play – about girls, life, family, personal goals, and sex. Verbal communication can be cathartic, but it is non-verbal communication between male friends that reveals so much about current conventional masculinity. Pascoe writes that "boys usually touched each other in rule-bound environments (such as sports) or as a joke to imitate fags."[24] The fact that these young men *choose* to touch when given an excuse shows a desire to communicate with friends, or simply communicate friendship, through touch. Boys often rough house or play fight with their closest friends, communicating their feelings for each other very effectively. In *Shelter*, non-sexualized physical intimacy between men serves as an incredible source of comfort. Shaun hugs Zach to offer him emotional support after they talk about Zach's deceased mother and his family obligations. Gabe, even more significantly, hugs Zach as he tells him, "we're still bros," letting him know that Zach being gay will never change their intimate friendship.[25]

Pascoe's examination of African American males at River High demonstrates relationships between racialized groups of men, differences and similarities

across racial lines, and variation within racialized groups of men. Pascoe claims to understand that masculinity is "not a homogenous category"[26] but quickly abandons this notion when documenting that African American male students were more likely to call each other "white" than "fag." She twists this phenomenon to fit her theory that masculinity asserts itself by attacking weakness and/or femininity. She explains, "because African American men are so hypersexualized in the United States, white men are, by default, feminized, so *white* was a stand-in for *fag*."[27] Pascoe ignores the social and historical reasons why African American men might assert masculinity against whiteness itself not the supposedly "default" femininity of white men, while she also perpetuates the essentialist notion of African American males' hypersexuality. Pascoe writes that the African American male students she observed had other distinctive styles of performing masculinity. Pascoe documents that African American male students took careful care with their appearance, "frequently danced together in single-sex groups," and did not exhibit the fear and disgust towards Ricky that some white boys did.[28] Pascoe hears admiration for Ricky from at least one African American boy, "'He's a better dancer than all the girls! That takes talent!'"[29] Not all of the African American male students Pascoe observed shared these traits and some white male students certainly joined in on them, showing that African American male students are not more or less conventionally masculine, but simply provide more examples of inter- and extra- group variation.

Conclusions

        In examining men's interactions with individuals, social structures, and natural environments, a narrow definition of masculinity becomes increasingly unrealistic and unappealing. Because masculinity is a social construction, with no more tactile presence than Pascoe's "specter of the fag," it is the audience and performers who have the power to give it meaning. In *Shelter*, Zach is the *performer* of conventional masculinity which, for him, includes sexual and romantic intimacy with another man, open emotionality, and artistic creativity; his *audience* of friends supports him and validates his version of masculinity. Current American masculinity, as represented in Zach's character, accommodates variety, does not delegate emotionality and introspection to feminity, and does not cast gender fluidity as a masculine crisis. In *Boys Will Be Men* as well as Twitchell's and Pascoe's texts there is an air of crisis that is unnecessary.

        In examining four contemporary American cultural documents which deal heavily with men and masculinity, it became evident that the terrain of "conventional" American masculinity is variable and expanding. Current conventional masculinity

has no hard fast requirements because men do not share one personality any more than they share one body. These texts, authors, and characters reflect a shift away from a singular, hard-fast definition of masculinity and "traditional" expectations of what it means to be masculine. The texts also provide evidence that while American men perform gender in different relationships with their natural environment, built environment, and other people, they are not more or less masculine for these differences. Current conventional masculinity's primary characteristic is variability and its performers include, but are not limited to, the underachiever, the old fashioned, the crude, and the gay. This is not a state of crisis, but a state of relief.

NOTES

1. Twitchell, James B. *Where Men Hide*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 29.
2. Ibid., 35.
3. Ibid., 33.
4. Ibid., 34.
5. *Boys Will Be Men*. Dir. Tom Weidlinger. 2001. DVD. Moira Productions, 2001.
6. Twitchell, *Where Men Hide*, 69.
7. Ibid., 200, 206.
8. Ibid., 75.
9. *Boys Will Be Men*.
10. *Boys Will Be Men*.
11. Pascoe, C.J. *Dude, You're a Fag*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, 49.
12. Twitchell, *Where Men Hide*, 9.
13. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag*, 107.
14. *Shelter*. Dir. Jonah Markowitz. 2007. DVD. GP Pictures, 2008.
15. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag*, 89.
16. Ibid., 90.
17. Twitchell, *Where Men Hide*, 144, 187.
18. Ibid., 138-141.
19. *Boys Will Be Men*.
20. Twitchell, *Where Men Hide*, 43.
21. *Shelter*.
22. Ibson, John. Lecture. AMST 413: The American Male. California State University Fullerton, Fullerton, CA. 18 September 2008.
23. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag*, 62.
24. Ibid., 96.
25. *Shelter*.
26. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag*, 5.
27. Ibid., 71.
28. Ibid., 73-74.
29. Ibid., 69.

"This Campaign for Light":
The Social Photography of Jacob A. Riis

Leif E. Trondsen

> This analytical response paper was written for AMST 433, Visual Arts in Contemporary America. As stated in the syllabus, the primary goal of this course was to "analyze the visual arts and their relationship to American culture." Above all, AMST 433 examined the visual arts as "cultural documents," through which the nature of and changes in "American intellectual, political and social thought" were revealed. In short papers, students responded to a specific painting or photograph and then analyzed the cultural context in which this visual artifact was created. In the case of the "social" photographs of Jacob A. Riis, however, these "cultural documents" also affected – and not just reflected – the living conditions of the urban poor in late nineteenth-century America. Indeed, Riis's visually powerful 1890 exposé on New York City slum life ignited a virtual "fire-storm" of social reform and urban renewal for decades to come.

This analytic response paper addresses the 1890s photograph entitled "Three Children Sleeping in a Dirty Alley" by Jacob A. Riis (1849-1914).[1] In viewing this work, however, it is important to note that Riis was a "social photographer," as later described by fellow social activist and educator Lewis Hine. In his 1909 article "Social Photography: How the Camera May Help in the Social Uplift," Hine wrote,

> The artist, [Edward] Burne-Jones, once said he should never be able to paint again if he saw much of those hopeless lives that have no remedy. What a selfish,   cowardly attitude! How different is the stand taken by [Victor] Hugo, that the great social peril is darkness and ignorance. "What then," he says, "is required? Light! Light in floods!" The dictum, then, of the social worker is "Let there be light;" and in this campaign for light we have for our advance agent the light writer – the photograph.[2]

Accordingly, Riis's photographs were not intended to be viewed in the "splendid isolation" of a museum gallery – although they were works of "fine art," as

the contemporary art critic Charles Caffin would undoubtedly have agreed.[3] Rather, Riis's social photography was part of his overall project to achieve "social uplift" (i.e., socioeconomic improvement) for America's urban poor. The numbers of the latter, moreover, had recently swelled with the arrival of millions of mostly unskilled immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, many of whom flocked to the dilapidated and crowded tenements of New York City.[4]

          In order to accomplish such a lofty social goal, Hine encouraged his fellow social photographers to follow Riis's earlier example of "backing" their photos with "observations, conversations, names and addresses" so as to "authenticate" their work.[5] This Riis had meticulously done, first in the "magic lantern" slide shows that accompanied his lectures on urban poverty to middle-class audiences in the late 1880s and then in the ground breaking 1890 exposé How the Other Half Lives.[6] To fully appreciate "Three Children Sleeping in a Dirty Alley," therefore, it is advisable to view this photograph in the context of the chapters of How the Other Half Lives dealing with New York City's destitute and homeless children as well as of the entirety of Riis's later books dedicated entirely to these unfortunate urban youngsters.[7]

          Even without this literary backdrop, "Three Children Sleeping in a Dirty Alley" is a visually powerful and deeply moving photograph. In it, Riis captured the restless sleep of three homeless boys as they uncomfortably repose around a large barrel in a dirt-strewn back alley of New York City during the 1890s. The boys pitifully huddle close to one another for warm and comfort, clad only in filthy and tattered clothing. Their hands, legs, and faces are covered with the grim of one of New York City's numerous and nameless slums of the day. Even in sleep, the boys' grimacing countenances capture their pain and fear. Additionally, as no adults were included in the photo, it is evident that these boys are "on their own" in such a dangerous urban landscape. In this one image, therefore, Riis managed to capture the pathos and despair of the daily struggles of the American lower classes – especially that of poor urban "waifs." "This is how the other half lives" appears to be the overarching theme of this masterfully crafted and composed photograph.

          Clearly, then, Riis's "Three Children Sleeping in a Dirty Alley" was a "call to action" on the part of his intended middle-class audience. As such, the observant viewer cannot help but question just how "authentic" this photograph actually was. Lewis Hine had admonished his fellow social photographers not to practice "yellow-photography," which engaged in sensationalism to sway the emotions of its audience.[8] Two features of Riis's photograph, however, hint that some "bad habits" (to borrow Hine's phrase) might have crept into this work. First, the three reposing boys in this photograph appear carefully arranged, as they form an almost perfect pyramid. This

pattern for the arrangement of three-four figures in particular had been perfected during the Renaissance by the famed Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci and was widely imitated thereafter.[9] In Riis's photo, the older boy forms the pinnacle of the pyramid, while the two younger ones on either side form its base. Secondly, the expressions of the "sleeping" boys also appear somewhat staged and even contradictory. While the two boys on the right knit their brows in response to their desperate situation, the boy on the left wears an almost whimsical smile – like that of a child attempting to restrain his amusement. Therefore, some aspects of "yellow-photography" might well have influenced Riis in the staging of the subjects in this photograph, although the wretched living conditions of New York City's "Street Arabs" which he depicted were very real.[10]

The portrayal of the plight of America's urban poor by Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine in photography was part of a wider movement of social concern among American visual artists during the late 1800s and early 1900s. This new breed of artists rejected the subject matter and artistic constraints of the prevailing neoclassicism of the so-called "Gilded Age," as was celebrated at the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago.[11] For them, such Greco-Roman mythological and allegorical motifs appeared incongruous to the harsh realities of a nation in the unrelenting grip of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. Accordingly, many artists searched for new artistic techniques, styles, and especially mediums – such as the cartoons and drawings of Ashcan artists George Bellows, Stuart Davis, and John Sloan that filled the leftist monthly publication The Masses – to convey their social message.[12] For Riis, the "added realism" and "inherent attraction" of the new medium of photography proved equally efficacious and lent added urgency to his clarion call for social reform.[13]

Nor were visual artists the only ones demanding social justice for America's urban poor. During the Progressive Era (c. 1870-1920), middle-class "crusaders" attempted to remake America in their own image. These turbulent but colorful decades featured a wide variety of campaigns to reform America's urban society, from "the moral outrage of Carry Nation, smashing saloons to end the scourge of drink" to "the calm courage of Jane Addams, crossing the social boundaries of urban Chicago to improve and change the lives of her new immigrant neighbors."[14] In the political arena, Theodore Roosevelt and the newly-formed Progressive Party also campaigned tirelessly "to improve the lot" of the common man. Without considering this greater context of reform, therefore, one cannot fully appreciate the social relevance and moral fervor contained in Riis's own crusading social photography.[15]

Some modern observers may dismiss Riis's social photographs as historical

"curiosities," detailing the urban conditions of a less enlightened and (hopefully) bygone era. Nevertheless, they remain stark reminders that economic prosperity has seldom, if at all, reached the many Americans on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. Unfortunately, a "present-day" Jacob Riis could easily document similar appalling images of the urban poor within America's blighted cities, especially those of the Midwest "Rust Belt." As American "free-market" capitalism begins its "self-inflicted apocalypse" in the new millennium, the deteriorating living standards of the "other half" of American society will only accelerate.[16] That is why Riis's work continues to "haunt" us: "because so much of it remains true."[17]

NOTES

1. For the above image, see the Website of Corbis Corporation, http://pro.corbis.com/default.aspx, which contains images of stock photography and footage (accessed February 5, 2009).

2. Quoted in Patricia Hills, Modern Art in the USA: Issues and Controversies of the 20th Century (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), p. 30.

3. Ibid., p. 28. Hills quotes Charles Caffin in his 1901 work Photography as a Fine Art, where the critic stated, "There are two distinct roads in photography – the utilitarian and the aesthetic; the goal of one being a record of facts, and of the other an expression of beauty. They run parallel to each other, and many cross-paths connect them." Clearly, such "cross-over" occurs in the social photography of Jacob A. Riis, as is argued below concerning, for example, the "artistic" arrangement of the figures in and overall composition of "Three Children Sleeping in a Dirty Alley." In many ways, therefore, Riis's work served as the artistic precursor to the equally haunting Depression-era photographs of American's destitute masses by the noted FSA photographer Dorothea Lange. See Anne Whiston Spirn, Daring to Look: Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), p. 44. Ironically, one of the largest collections of Riis's photographs is available at the Jacob A. Riis Collection in the Museum of the City of New York.

4. On this "second" and largest wave of immigration to the United States, see Alan M. Kraut, The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921, Second Edition (Arlington Heights, ILL: Harland Davidson, Inc., 2001). For the socioeconomic and political struggles of the immigrant population in New York City during this time, see Rick Burns and James Sanders, New York: An Illustrated History, Expanded, with a New Epilogue on the Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), pp. 216-99.

5. Hills, Modern Art, p. 31.

6. For a summary of the life and photography of Jacob A. Riis, see the excellent introduction by photographer and critic Luc Sante in Jacob A. Riis, How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York, Introduction and Notes by Luc Sante (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), ix-xxii. For a more in-depth examination of the above, see Tom Buk-Swienty, The Other Half: The Life of Jacob Riis and the World of Immigrant America, Translated by Annette Buk-Swienty (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2008).

7. See in particular Chapters 15 ("The Problem of the Children"), 16 ("Waifs of the City's

NOTES

Slums"), and 17 ("The Street Arab") in Riis's How the Other Half Lives. This book was followed by The Children of the Poor in 1892 and Children of the Tenements in 1903.

8.Hills, Modern Art, p. 31.

9. Confer, for example, Leonardo da Vinci's painting Madonna of the Rocks (c. 1483-85), in which the Virgin, Christ Child, infant John the Baptist, and Angel Gabriel are arranged in a well-defined pyramid, thus creating "a stable composition" for the four figures. The early Italian artist Pietro della Francesca first employed this triangular composition in his 1463 painting The Resurrection. Leonardo adopted this device in his own work, often to a great extent, as in his famous fresco The Last Supper (c. 1485-98). See Ross King, ed., Art: Over 2,500 Works from Cave to Contemporary (New York: DK Publishing, 2008), pp. 112-17.

10. Such "staging" of documentary photographs had occurred as early as the Civil War. The famed photographers Alexander Gardner and his assistant Timothy O'Sullivan, for example, had repositioned rifles, equipment, and even corpses on the battlefield of Gettysburg in order to enhance the visual imagery and emotional impact of their photographs. See Robert C. Williams, The Historian's Toolbox: A Student's Guide to the Theory and Craft of History (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2003), pp. 68-71.

11. See Erika Doss, Twentieth-Century American Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 18-33 for the 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, which celebrated the artistic standards and norms of "official" art as defined by America's ruling elite.

12. See, for example, the introduction to the Michigan State University Museum art exhibit entitled "Images of American Radicalism: Cover Illustrations from The Masses 1913-1917," http://www.lib.msu.edu/coll/main/spec_col/radicalism/exhibits/masses/ (accessed March 1, 2009).

13. Hills, Modern Art, p. 31.

14. Michael McGeer, A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), xiii-xiv.

15. See H. W. Brands, The Reckless Decade: America in the 1890s (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 90-127.

16. See Michael Parenti, "Capitalism's Self-Inflicted Apocalypse," Commondreams.org, January 21, 2009, http://www.commondreams.org/view/2009/01/20-9 (accessed February 10, 2009).

17. Luc Sante from the "Introduction" to Riis, How the Other Half Lives, xiii.

"My Only Love Sprung From My Only Hate:"
Race in Romeo + Juliet and West Side Story

Bridget Kominek

This essay was written for Erica Ball's American Studies 447: Race in Popular Culture class. It is an analysis of how racial difference is portrayed in two mainstream Hollywood films: West Side Story and William Shakespeares's Romeo + Juliet. The creators of each film use their source material, Shakespeare's play Romeo and Juliet as a canvas upon which to project their own progressive ideas about race. Ultimately, neither is completely successful, yet in these attempts, viewers can learn much about attitudes about race in popular culture at two points in contemporary American history, the 1960's and the 1990's.

The wail of trumpets, the thump of a bass guitar, abstract black dashes on a field of orange, and hazy billboards shaking below the slicing blades of a helicopter signal the start of something new. In 1961, these images heralded Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise's ground-breaking and critically acclaimed West Side Story. Thirty-five years later, these images thrust viewers into the commercially successful and critically galvanizing William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet, directed by Baz Luhrmann. Both films are interpretations of the classic play Romeo and Juliet, written by William Shakespeare in the 1590's. Shakespeare's version itself is not an original work; it is modeled after a popular poem by Arthur Brooke written in 1562.[1] Brooke was also not the originator of the Romeo and Juliet story, as he based his poem on an Italian version written by Luigi da Porta, who most likely took his inspiration from a folk tale whose origins are unknown.[2]

As each permutation of the tale developed, a different aspect of the story was emphasized based on the individual author's perspective and historical context. From Brooke's earlier tale cautioning young lovers to heed their parent's advice to Shakespeare's play warning parents of over-controlling their children to later film versions that idealize young love, the Romeo and Juliet theme is a canvas on which a

variety of messages can be projected to the author's contemporary audience.

West Side Story and William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet are both self-conscious attempts to give thoroughly modern and cutting edge interpretations of the classic Romeo and Juliet theme, and because of the time periods when these films were made, the 1960's and 1990's respectively, a large portion of each film focuses on racial identity and the meaning of race relations. West Side Story is ultimately preoccupied with issues of race, reflecting the increasing racial tensions of its time. In 1961, race was a growing social concern; appropriately Robbins and Wise re-use the classic story of star-crossed lovers to create "message movie" that attempts to spread progressive ideologies of racial tolerance and non-violence. Luhrmann's interpretation, on the other hand, reflects the racial politics of the mid-1990's, when many in the dominant culture believed that America had or should have moved beyond racialized interpretations of the world. Reflecting this, Romeo + Juliet offers a post-modern, post-racial version of the story.

In retrospect, however, both versions are incomplete and inelegant at explaining race in the context of love between rivals. West Side Story's inaccurate and one-dimensional portrayal of Puerto Rican characters creates as many problems as it solves. Meanwhile, in Luhrmann's "color blind" Verona Beach, where race is neither spoken of nor acknowledged as a reality, the Capulet and Montague gangs are divided using racial signifiers and the white hero kills the Latin antagonist in a reenactment of the rumble scene in West Side Story. In the early 1960's, race could not be dealt with in the way West Side Story's creators hoped it would be: thoughtfully and progressively. In Romeo + Juliet, race cannot be ignored, despite efforts to move beyond the role of race in a movie about social problems, and a familiar race dynamic arises.

West Side Story is widely considered to be a cinematic masterpiece. It is the winner of ten Academy Awards including best supporting actor and actress (George Chakiris and Rita Moreno), best cinematography, best director, best music, and best picture.[3] Because it offered a totally new, totally modern interpretation of the timeless Romeo and Juliet theme, West Side Story was also successful with average American moviegoers. For example, in an article published in 1962 in The English Journal, high school teacher Gary J. Taylor writes, "The rapid pace of the Bernstein musical score plus the hard-hitting, tough-sounding lyrics completely won over" his high school English classes.[4] In the context of the early 1960's, the film was quite intense and very modern in its feel. The song "Gee, Officer Krupke" performed by the Jets exemplifies the tough lyrics Taylor refers to. Singing about why they are juvenile delinquents, the Jets sing, "Dear kindly Sergeant Krupke/You gotta understand/It's just our bringin' up-ke/That gets us outta hand./Our mothers all are junkies/Our fathers all are

drunks."[5] The set design of West Side Story also reflects this toughness, with much of the action taking place in dirty city streets littered with overflowing trashcans and graffiti everywhere, including the closing credits. Representations of contemporary social problems help to bring the world of Romeo and Juliet into the 1960's.

The music of West Side Story is jazzy and brash, with dissonant sounds and intense crescendos found in songs like "The Quintet," the suspenseful highlight of the film. During this song leading up to the rumble where Bernardo and Riff are killed, each character expresses his or her emotions about the upcoming night. The interweaving voices, strings, and horns combine with the red glow of the setting sun during this number to evoke intensity as characters gather in the streets and fire escapes as the film rushes toward its climax. "Tonight" along with "Maria" were also popular with young people at the time of the movie's release, with teenagers "dropping their dimes and nickels into juke boxes" to play them. [6] The setting, storyline, song lyrics, and music combine to create a film that is ultimately unrealistic. The film's bright colors and chaotic design imparts a sense of hyper-realism; the streets of the West Side are more than real, with more color, more intensity than the real world.

This created sense of hyper-reality is problematic in the context of the film's racial discourse. In "Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican Identity Discourses" Frances Negron-Muntaner explains that West Side Story was never intended to be about Puerto Rican people explicitly.[7] If the film's creators and critics agree that the film is not -- nor was it intended to be -- a representation of how life really was for Puerto Rican immigrants, then what is the message behind the movie? Songs like "America" and constant racial insults between the Sharks and the Jets make the ethnicities of both groups an issue, so while the film is not explicitly about the Puerto Rican experience, it is about race. The apparent dissonance here becomes clearer in context of a much older version of the tale: as with Brooke's 1560's morality tale, West Side Story's message is a pedagogical one, trying to teach viewers—especially young viewers who are attracted to the jazzy soundtrack and eye-popping visuals—that racism, and the violence and division it causes, is pointless. There is no significant difference between men like Tony and Bernardo, and the fact that racism destroys romantic love, the only good thing in the entire film, serves to show just how destructive it is.

This message is articulated in the song "A Boy Like That/I Have a Love," which is performed by Anita and Maria after they learn that Tony has killed Bernardo. When Anita finds Tony running from Maria's bed, she is furious that Maria still cares for Tony; for the first time in the film she expresses the racial hatred shared by the

Sharks and the Jets: "A boy like that will give you sorrow/You'll meet another boy tomorrow/One of your own kind/Stick to your own kind!" Maria chastises Anita, saying, "You should know better/You were in love—or so you say/You should know better."[8] Anita realizes that Maria is right. Her racist proclamations were the product of her grief, and they are not her true feelings; the women realize that love is bigger than race or class, and to say otherwise would be wrong. The song ends with the line, "When love comes so strong/There is no right or wrong/Your love is your life."[9]

Ultimately, these lyrics convey the message of the movie. Love is bigger than whatever separates us as human beings, and what separated humans in the 1950's and 1960's America was race, legally as well as in the minds and hearts of people. Anita's statements about staying with one's own "kind" are an extension of the ideology held by the Sharks and the Jets, the same ideology that leads the film's young men to fight over dirty streets and kill each other for a difference that amounts to nothing. The belief that the white and Puerto Rican teenagers are essentially different from each other has no basis in reality, as the division between the Sharks and the Jets is purely superficial because race, significant as it appears, is a social construct and not a meaningful way of categorizing inherent differences.

Negron-Muntaner explains the "racialization efforts" in West Side Story as a way to "signify the specificity of the Puerto Ricans;" these "efforts" include George Chakiris's brownfaced portrayal of Bernardo, the "shifting, asinine accent deployed by most Puerto Rican characters" and the choices in costume and makeup that make the Jets preternaturally blonde with orange, khaki, and yellow clothing and the Sharks dark skinned and haired with purple, blue, and red clothing.[10] These choices were not so much intended to single out the Puerto Rican characters as different; rather, they were cues intended to create space between the Sharks and the Jets. Without these signifiers, there isn't much difference between the two gangs, and during scenes like the gym mambo and the rumble, where the gangs are in close physical contact, the differences are difficult to spot.

Viewed through the lens of the pedagogical message of the film, the fact that these signifiers are necessary reveals that the film's creators believed there was no real difference between the white and Puerto Rican characters. Without the accoutrement of the makeup artist or costume designers, these men are essentially the same. The message of the film, however, is complicated by a profound lack of research or understanding about the Puerto Rican culture, so the signifiers that are used to create the artificial space between the Sharks and the Jets still portray Puerto Rican people in ways that are inaccurate and stereotypical. It is possible that the film's creators could have spent more time researching, but they did not feel accuracy was necessary to

tell their story or convey their message.[11] Perhaps they did not feel this way because a high level of inter-cultural understanding would have been difficult to attain in the context of the 1950's and 1960's. Within the confines of their time and place, the creative minds behind West Side Story made choices that were in line with their goals for the film.

Romeo + Juliet runs parallel to West Side Story as a film adaptation of the Romeo and Juliet theme that is aimed primarily at young audiences as a totally new, contemporary, and cool version of the timeless tale. As in West Side Story, the creative mind behind the film, Baz Luhrmann, makes self-conscious choices that propel his film into the forefront of ground-breaking and hyper-real contemporary film. Also like West Side Story, Romeo + Juliet reflects the racial politics of its time. However, analyzing Luhrmann's film becomes an exercise in looking for absence rather than presence. All signifiers of race and ethnicity in the film are reduced, mixed, and muddled.

In Romeo + Juliet Luhrmann creates a world that is post-modern in almost every way, except for the Elizabethan English, which only adds to the disjointed, chaotic, and very contemporary feel of the movie. The film takes place in mythic Verona Beach, which is something like Miami or Venice Beach but dirtier, brighter, and bigger. The actual filming locations for Romeo + Juliet included Veracruz and Mexico City, Mexico, but on screen Verona Beach is placeless; it never has and never will exist.[12] The adaptation of the theme to the modern day setting in Romeo + Juliet is as powerful as the successful "making new" done in West Side Story.

Sarah L. Lorenz describes some of the ways the Shakespearian prose is made accessible to audiences in the mid-1990's: "The references to the weapons, longbow, sword, etc., is cleverly accommodated by camera shots of guns with those names imprinted on them. The mad scene before the Capulet's ball with raving Mercutio suddenly makes perfect sense when you glimpse him take a hit of acid beforehand."[13] The modernization of Romeo and Juliet for young audiences in the 1990's continued outside of the film with an official website—www.romeoandjuliet.com—which still exists on the internet as if caught in a mid-1990's digital time capsule—a music video, and a special produced for MTV to time with the film's release.[14]

Although Romeo + Juliet is not a musical, it uses contemporary musical forms to engage a contemporary audience, creating the sense of newness that accompanied West Side Story thirty-five years prior. The soundtrack to Romeo + Juliet includes artists popular in the mid-1990's like Garbage, Radiohead, Everclear, and Butthole Surfers; while the teenagers in the 1960's were dropping their dimes into jukeboxes, teenagers in the 1990's were spending their free time watching MTV and their extra

money buying the movie's soundtrack at their local Tower Records. In both cases, the musical and stylistic choices of Luhrmann and Robbins and Wise appealed directly to young people because they feel so very new and fresh.

In the context of their times, both films are attempting to breathe new life into an old story. But what stands behind the surface? If West Side Story's message is anti-racist and anti-segregationist, what is the message behind Luhrmann's interpretation of the Romeo and Juliet story? In Romeo + Juliet race is not mentioned. This can be partially attributed to the fact that the script is based on Shakespeare's own words, and Elizabethan England was a relatively homogenous population. Still, issues of race did come up in other Shakespearian drama like The Merchant of Venice and Othello, so the source of the play cannot be the only reason why race is not a factor in the film.

The lack of any reference to race is notable because Luhrmann made such a concerted effort to modernize the tale. Luhrmann includes modern dress, music, sets, and popular culture references like the choir boys who sing Prince's "When Doves Cry" during Romeo and Juliet's wedding scene but left out any direct mention of race. Either the absence of race in the story was a conscious choice, perhaps as a way to move beyond the West Side Story motif, or it was the product of subconscious forces. In either case, the implication is that race doesn't matter anymore, a belief that reflects larger racial politics and ideologies of the mid-1990's. After all, Bill Clinton was America's "first black president," and the need for affirmative action was being questioned during prosperous economic times. Just as in West Side Story, Romeo + Juliet's view of race is firmly rooted in the larger cultural context; Luhrmann is also similarly unsuccessful in articulating a realistic view of race within that context.

Casting is one area where reace comes into play in Romeo + Juliet. Mercutio, Romeo's best friend, is played by Harold Perrineau, an African-American actor. Juliet Capulet is played by Claire Danes, a white actress, her parents are also played by white actors. Her cousins, however – most notably Tybalt, who is played by John Leguizamo – are identified visually with stereotypical Latin signifiers: dark hair and skin, bolero-style clothing, and extensive Virgin of Guadalupe tattoos, and jewelry. Courtney Lehmann connects the "bizarre ethnic mix" of the Montagues and Capulets to the post-modern nature of the film, saying that the "south-of-the-border-cum-spaghetti-western Capulets are characterized by an excess of ethnicity" while the Montagues are pale, red-headed and blonde, wearing Hawaiian shirts and cargo shorts.[15]

For Lehmann, this contrast shows a loss of personal style typical of the post-modern world, which may be true, but this analysis only reveals part of what the casting and costumes are doing.[16] These differences break up the two feuding families

along racial lines, even though the film is—intentionally or not—trying to downplay the importance of race. While there are exceptions within each group, (like beautiful, pale Juliet who is reminiscent of the glowing white Maria when she arrives at the ball dressed as an angel), Luhrmann divides the Montagues and Capulets up along essentially ethnic lines. The division is as strong as the split between the Sharks and the Jets, but no one seems to notice it or mention it in the film. This sublimation of race reflects the contemporary culture in the mid-1990's: race is still a dividing line between groups, but it is not acknowledged as such. Whether the silence on race is a product of political correctness, a true move forward, or denial—or some mix of all three—this film replays the familiar racial drama of West Side Story minus the overt acknowledgment that is given when the Jets sing, "Every Puerto Rican's a lousy chicken" in the "Jet Song."[17]

At the end of the film when Romeo hunts down Tybalt to kill him in revenge for Mercutio's murder, Romeo + Juliet is replaying the central action of West Side Story: Tony, the white hero, killing Bernardo, the Hispanic antagonist. The same racial dynamic exists, but the film's analogy to Anita, Juliet's nurse, offers only weak, class-based reasons why Juliet should marry Paris instead of an impassioned plea like Anita's call to "stick to your own kind." Race is there, below the surface of the narrative. Perhaps it is a reflection of how far race relations have progressed that no one in the film acknowledges it, but it is also possible that this post-racial discourse is a new way to not see or acknowledge people of color.

Despite critical ambivalence, audiences' reactions to Romeo + Juliet were generally positive, with the film becoming a "surprise success" making $11.6 million it's opening weekend.[18] Steve Perani, the creative director behind the film's trailers and commercials, describes the film as "subversive," saying its "passionate message about nonviolence" is aimed at young people who can relate to "car culture and gun culture and fashion and music."[19] The success of both of these films at targeting a young audience and offering a contemporary take on the Romeo and Juliet theme is indisputable. In addition, both films are in some senses subversive, and clearly both are intended to be. However, in the area of understanding race and ethnicity and articulating a clear point, both miss the mark. Instead, they are cultural documents that reflect ideological and political limits of their time. In the 1950's and 1960's, race was an important social issue, a serious concern for most Americans. Thus, West Side Story deals with race as a central source of conflict. In the mid-1990's, many believed society was beyond race, that race didn't matter much anymore. As a result, Romeo + Juliet takes place in a post-racial world; however, Verona Beach is a place "neither past nor future." [20] Sadly, its ideal of post-racialism is also non-existent. Race bubbles up

between the lines, creativity meets with social and historical reality, and the familiar dance begins again.

NOTES

1. Epstein, Norrie. The Friendly Shakespeare: A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of the Bard. New York: Penguin, 1993, p. 323.
2. Ibid., p. 323.
3. "West Side Story." Imdb.com. 2004. Internet Movie Database. < http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0055614/>.
4. Taylor, Gary J. "Romeo and Juliet and West Side Story: An Experimental Unit." The English Journal 51.7, Oct. 1962, p. 484.
5. West Side Story. Dir. Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins. Perf. Natalie Wood, Richrd Beymer, Russ Tamblyn, Rita Moreno, and George Chakiris. Metro Goldwyn Meyer, 1961.
6. Taylor, "Romeo and Juliet," p. 484.
7. Negron-Muntaner, Francis. "Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican Identity Discourses." Social Texts 18.2, Summer 2000, p. 84.
8. West Side Story.
9. Ibid.
10. Negron-Muntaner, "Feeling Pretty," p. 91.
11. Ibid., p. 84.

12. "Romeo + Juliet." Imdb.com. 1999. Internet Movie Database < http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117509/>.
13. Lorenz, Sarah L. "Romeo and Juliet: The Movie." The English Journal 87.3, Mar. 1998, p. 50.
14. Lehmann, Courtney. "Strictly Shakespeare? Dead Letters, Ghostly Fathers, and the Cultural Pathology of Authorship in Baz Luhrmann's William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet." Shakespeare Quarterly 52.2, 2001, p. 189.
15. Ibid., p. 193.
16. Ibid., p. 193.
17. West Side Story.
18. Weinraub, Bernard. "Audiences In Love With the Doomed Lovers." New York Times 5 November 1996, online ed.<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9805E0DE1238F936A35752C1A960958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=print>.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.

The Politics of Whiteness Studies:
A Historiography of the Field

John DeCarlo

This paper was written for Dr. Erica Ball's 502 Seminar titled, Theoretical Approaches to Racial Formation in the United States during the spring of 2009. The goal of the paper is tri-fold. First and foremost, this paper was a general attempt to come to terms with the burgeoning field of whiteness studies. Secondly, it addresses the recent explosion of whiteness in academia by exposing the reader to the various ways scholars across the spectrum have utilized whiteness as a theoretical tool to analyze racial formation in the United States. Lastly, this paper highlights some of the strengths and weaknesses of the recent proliferation of whiteness studies throughout academia in the hopes of offering suggestions for the future direction of the field.

"Whiteness Studies is not a celebration of values that are said to be white but rather an examination of how whites obtained the dominant position they now hold in American society."[1] This statement appeared in the winter 2003 issue of The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education and reveals the fundamental political motive underlying the burgeoning field of Whiteness Studies. The rapid proliferation of the genre that appears to have come out of nowhere is quite astonishing: in a recent keyword search on my university's online catalog, twenty-three books contained the word whiteness in the title and nearly three quarters of them were published after the turn of the twenty-first century. In 2002, historian Peter Kolchin observed that, "American historians from sociology to law and cultural studies are writing books with titles such as The White Scourge, How the Irish Became White, Making Whiteness, The Possessive Investment in Whiteness, and Critical White Studies."[2] Suddenly Whiteness Studies is everywhere. Although the term "Whiteness Studies" might suggest works that celebrate white history or represent a backlash against multiculturalism and "political correctness," virtually all Whiteness Studies authors seek to confront white privilege: they perceive a close link between their scholarship and creating a more humane social order.[3]

The overt political motive that underlies the field of Whiteness Studies can be identified through each author's personal biographical testimony on the social problem of racism. This can be typically located in the preface or introduction of the work. Whiteness giants such as David Roediger, Noel Ignatiev, Matthew Jacobson, and Richard Dyer began their work with personal accounts of racism. In a now seminal book on whiteness titled, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the American Working Class, David Roediger demonstrated the political impulse of the field by linking his childhood experience with racism in an all-white working class town in St. Louis to major themes in the book:

> Until very recently, I would have skipped all this autobiographical material, sure that my ideas on race and the white working class grew out of conscious reflection based on historical research. But much of that reflection led back to what my early years might have taught me…they could have given me the central themes of this book.[4]

Thus, for Roediger and many other scholars on Whiteness, their personal experiences with racism are significant factors fueling the political agenda behind Whiteness Studies.

In the midst of the Whiteness explosion in academia within the last two decades, few scholars have attempted to address the ramifications of the overtly political intent that underlies the field. In its broadest strokes, this essay is an attempt to highlight some of the significant consequences that resulted from the politics of Whiteness Studies. The essay is divided into three main sections. The first is concerned with the development of Whiteness scholarship over time and highlights four distinct prescriptive methods adopted by scholars to confront white privilege. The second section deals with the wide-ranging literature on whiteness. Moreover, I assess the various strengths and weaknesses of the recent proliferation of Whiteness Studies. A third section focuses on three different criticisms leveled against the field by the academic community, which highlight key gaps in Whiteness scholarship. The last section will critique two existing solutions Whiteness scholars advocate to dismantle racism as well as provide suggestions for the future direction of the field. As a whole, this essay attempts to address the significant ramifications of the politics of Whiteness Studies.

The Prescriptive Approaches: Studying Whiteness and Understanding White Privilege

All Whiteness Studies are prescriptive. That is, all Whiteness scholarship is aimed to confront white privilege in different ways. Because Whiteness work is so heavily prescriptive, Kolchin argued that, "Important clues to the Whiteness Studies authors understanding of whiteness emerge from what they suggest should be done about it."[5] In this respect, I suggest that important clues to the understanding of white privilege can emerge from a discussion of the different methods Whiteness scholars have adopted to confront it. Since I cannot address every single angle scholars have taken to study whiteness in a paper of this length, I discuss three distinct prescriptive approaches in Whiteness scholarship. In particular, I analyze the approaches of David Roediger, George Lipsitz, and Sharon Sullivan. Although they are all prescriptive in nature, a discussion of each work will highlight the different ways scholars have attempted to confront white privilege. This will not only add to our understanding of the politics of Whiteness Studies but also reveal significant details of the nature of white privilege

Identified by Mark McGuinness as one of the earliest works on whiteness, David Roediger's The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the American Working Class interrogated the role white racial identity played in the process of European immigration and assimilation at the turn of twentieth century. Roediger's approach in The Wages of Whiteness was an extension of W.E.B Du Bois' idea of the psychological and physical "wage" white racial identity offered to working class laborers. Writing on the African American role in the political, economic, and social Reconstruction of the South following Emancipation Du Bois noted:

> While the white group of laborers received a low wage, they were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them.[6]

While Du Bois originated the idea of the "wages of whiteness," Roediger applied the "particular public and psychological wages whiteness offered" to a

desperate rural and often preindustrial Irish population who found themselves living alongside African Americans in the teeming slums of American cities during the 1830s.[7]

Roediger's use of the wages of whiteness to understand European immigration and assimilation of the Irish is one specific approach that focuses on the historical construction of white racial identity and how diverse groups in the United States came to identify and be identified by others, as white---and what this has meant for the social order.[8] However, not all Whiteness scholarship focuses on the process of European immigration to confront white privilege.[9] One work that departs from Roediger was published in 1998 under the title, The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics. In The Possessive Investment in Whiteness, Lipsitz sought to confront white privilege by identifying how a possessive investment in whiteness has accounted for economic gain. According to Lipsitz:

> Advantages that have come to individuals through profits made from housing secured in discriminatory markets, through the unequal educational opportunities, through insider networks that channel employment opportunities to the relatives and friends of whose have profited most from present and past racial discrimination, and especially through intergenerational transfers of inherited wealth that pass on the spoils of discrimination to succeeding generations.[10]

This type of analysis implies a literal interpretation of the term, possessive investment. That is, whiteness has a distinct cash value. One specific example of the possessive investment in whiteness Lipsitz points out is the racially coded legislation of the New Deal Era. Aimed at protecting the social welfare of all Americans, the passage of the Wagner Act and Social Security Act effectively excluded farm workers and domestics from coverage. As Lipsitz observed, the disproportionate number of the minorities that were employed in those two sectors of the work force failed to receive the protection and benefits routinely afforded to whites that were employed in other sectors.[11] On this note, New Deal legislation was coded with the possessive investment in whiteness: it primarily excluded a disproportionate number of minorities that held agricultural and domestic jobs in the American economy and privileged sectors of the workforce occupied by a disproportionate number of the white population.

In *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*, Sharon Sullivan broke from Lipsitz's approach of studying whiteness and offered a unique

methodology centered on conceptualizing white privilege as habit. For Sullivan and other Whiteness scholars, the advantages of understanding white privilege as habit are at least fivefold:

> First, thinking of white privilege as habit avoids mind body dualisms and explains the operations of racism as simultaneously bodily and mental… second, habit construes ontology as historical, allotting as appropriate weight to race and white privilege without making them static, acontextual necessities…Third, white privilege as habit helps demonstrate how white domination is located, so to speak, in both the individual person and the world in which he or she lives…Fourth, understanding racial privilege as habit explains how oppressive structures such as white domination take root in people's selves…Finally, the concept of habit is useful because it helps explain how white privilege functions as if invisible[12]

Considering Sullivan's justification for her approach of conceptualizing white privilege as habit in conjunction with those previously discussed, one should have a good understanding of the variety of methodologies Whiteness scholars adopt in order to confront white privilege. As stated earlier, I suggest that by studying whiteness with a variety of different approaches each author contributes significant insight into the understanding of white privilege itself.

Based on their approaches, one can easily glean the following characteristics of white privilege. First and foremost, white privilege rests on whiteness; a socially-constructed category that changes over time. This is best illustrated by The Wages of Whiteness, which highlighted how Irish immigrants were not identified as white in early twentieth century America.[13] Instead, the Irish worker had to undergo a transformation to become a white worker. This was a double sided affair: "On the one hand, Irish immigrants won acceptance as whites among the larger population" by identifying their struggle against African Americans. "On the other hand, the Irish themselves came to insist on their own whiteness and on white supremacy."[14] In this regard, although the Irish are considered "white" by present day standards, Roediger illustrated how this transformation was historically contingent by revealing the dynamic nature of white racial identity over time.

A second characteristic of Whiteness scholarship is the invisibility of white privilege in the modern day. This is demonstrated by Revealing Whiteness, which was primarily concerned with "how white privilege operates as unseen, invisible, and even seemingly non-existent."[15] During the Jim Crow era, Sullivan noted, "White

domination tended to be fairly easily visible to all. Lynchings were well-attended social affairs for white people, who openly celebrated the vicious hangings of black people with picnics and photographs to proudly send friends and family."[16] Yet, after the Civil Rights movement the move from de jure to de facto racism meant not the end of white domination, "but a significant shift in its predominant mode of operation."[17] Once it was no longer socially acceptable to openly proclaim racist beliefs, white supremacy transformed into white privilege. Thus, it is no coincidence that in the de facto era of racism, white privilege goes to great lengths not to be heard.[18]

White privilege is, in a sense, invisible. In The Possessive Investment in Whiteness, one could argue that a main concern of Lipsitz was to make the invisible visible. That is, to illustrate how white privilege is maintained through political, individual, and social investment in whiteness over time. The racially coded legislation of the Wagner Act and Social Security Act during the New Deal of the 1930s and 1940s is one of the many examples Lipsitz offered in his effort to tear off the mask concealing white privilege in the twenty first century.

The Explosion of Whiteness: Strengths and Weaknesses

The proliferation of Whiteness Studies across the academic spectrum in the last two decades has generated interesting ramifications for the field as a whole. It is the interest of this section to provide an overview of the explosion of Whiteness Studies and examine both the strengths and weaknesses of the wide-ranging literature on whiteness. In this respect, I examine a number of popular works that span from the fields of education to cultural studies, from philosophy to law. Because the works on whiteness are extensive this is not an easy task. Therefore, I cannot address all the strengths and weaknesses of the literature here. My goal is to highlight some of the key contributions and pitfalls of Whiteness scholarship by focusing on a handful of the works from a variety of different disciplines.

Legal scholars are publishing some of the most recent studies on whiteness. In a 1995 issue of the University of Pennsylvania Law Review, Martha Mahoney explored the links between white privilege and racial segregation. In her article titled, "Racial Segregation, Whiteness, and Transformation," Mahoney illustrated the interactive relationship between racial segregation and the reproduction of whiteness and white dominance. In particular, Mahoney suggested that the racial segregation policies of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s fostered suburban/urban development in which "good" neighborhoods were defined as white and whiteness was defined as, "good, stable, employed, and employable."[19]

The exploration of the racialization of space directly resulted from Whiteness

Studies' political agenda. Yet, legal scholars are not the only discipline to interrogate whiteness and space. Geography is another field that has investigated the process through which territory becomes coded as white. In a 2003 publication of the Annals of American Geographers, Steven Hoelscher focused on how the culture of Jim Crow relied on white cultural memory as a defining element upon the destabilization of the power and authority that accompanied Reconstruction.[20] For Hoelscher, the Natchez Pilgrimage (a tourist attraction that consisted of a colorful pageant in which several hundred costumed residents presented the regional culture of the Old South by visiting the homes of wealthy planters) stands out as the ultimate performance of whiteness that preserved the race, class, and gender hierarchies of the Old South through cultural memory.[21] Thus, the Natchez Pilgrimage illuminates the dialectic relationship where ideas of whiteness and blackness are simultaneously being created through space. The memory display of the Pilgrimage, Hoelscher noted, "Provided a means of preserving the city's racial and class structure."[22] As a result, this process not only created ideas of race and space in the past but it simultaneously informs our ideas of race and space in the present. (For example: what race do you think of after hearing the word urban?)

The concern over space and the performance of whiteness does not end here. The field of Anthropology has also shed light on how space can be coded through language. In "Language, Race, and Public Space," Linguistic Anthropologist Jane Hill attempted to illustrate how the marginality of different minority groups is achieved by their lack of standard-white-linguistic orderliness. However, this article highlights a potential weakness in the expansion of the field. In the two works mentioned above, white public space is conceptualized as physical, geographic locations. In contrast, Hill's argument afforded a different interpretation of space. Using an Anthropological study from 1994, Hill defined white public space as, "A morally significant set of contexts that are the most important sites of the practicing of racial hegemony, in which whites are invisibly normal, and in which racialized populations are visibly marginal and the objects of monitoring ranging from individual judgment to Official English legislation."[23] Here, the problem presents itself. While some scholars utilize the literal definition of space, others employ a more theoretical understanding of the term. The immediate result is confusion. After reading, one is left wondering, what space are they talking about?

A fourth discipline that has, in the proverbial sense, jumped aboard the whiteness train is Education. In "Emptying the Content of Whiteness: Toward an Understanding of the Relationship Between Whiteness and Pedagogy," Nelson Rodriguez called for creation of 'pedagogies of whiteness' as a counter hegemonic

act predicated on the need for the reconfiguration of whiteness "in antiracist, anithomophobic, and antisexist ways."[24] While Rodriguez's vision of a new version of whiteness will be addressed later, his words reveal a greater issue at hand. Based on an understanding that all Whiteness Studies are prescriptive, the proliferation of the field has caused a debate over the most effective way to confront white privilege. In Rodriguez's case, prescriptive policy goals occupy a central position in many disciplines outside the field of history.[25] This divide is more pronounced after a comparison between Whiteness Studies that develop within the field of history and those in surrounding disciplines.

        One of the most recent whiteness publications appeared in 2007 under the title, The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in the New South. Authored by Shelley Sallee, this work offered a fresh revisionist narrative of child labor reform policy by illustrating how reform giants such as Florence Kelley and Jane Addams used white supremacy as a unifying discourse to improve child labor conditions in the South following Reconstruction. "In the face of apparent disparities between southern whites and a rapidly modernizing North," Sallee noted, "reformers promoted white supremacy as a basis for bringing the New South in line with minimal national standards of child welfare."[26] Under this light, Addams and Kelley appear as unlikely practitioners of Jim Crow segregation and the politics of white supremacy. Although Sallee's work was prescriptive in the sense that she offered unique insight to how race infiltrates into reform policies, ultimately, her descriptive analysis is reflective of the route historians have chosen to travel in order to confront white privilege.

        A second piece of Whiteness scholarship that is reflective of the descriptive approach appeared in 1998 under the title, Whiteness of A Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race. A work of Matthew Jacobson, Whiteness of A Different Color centered on the backdrop of the heavy influx of European immigration during the 1840s to reveal the history of political whiteness and "the fluidity of certain groups' racial identities."[27] With the reigning naturalization law allowing "free white persons" to migrate from Europe in the late eighteenth century, Jacobson affirmed how the perceived threat of European immigration to the polity in the mid nineteenth century, "was increasingly cast in terms of racial difference and assimilability."[28] Thus, the racially-coded language of the Johnson Reed Act of 1924 meant that whiteness was among the most important possessions one could lay claim to. "It was their whiteness," Jacobson asserted, that quite literally "opened the Golden Door" for European immigrants.[29]

        Both Jacobson and Sallee established the utility of the descriptive analysis in order to confront white privilege. Sallee demonstrated how whiteness influenced

child labor reform discourse while Jacobson probed the elasticity of white racial identity and how it can be altered and molded over time. This is one route scholars can travel. However, other scholars have pointed out that descriptive analysis often fails to provide any solutions toward the elimination of white privilege. Thus, scholars primarily located outside the discipline of history have attempted to produce more prescriptive-based solutions to confront white privilege.

In The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race, Political Scientist Bruce Baum traced the complex and intertwined political histories of the Caucasian people and the "Caucasian Race" from Antiquity to the present. Although his analysis was provocative, our main interest lies with his conclusion titled, "Deconstructing 'Caucasia,' Dismantling Racism."[30] In contrast to Whiteness Studies that appear from the field of history, Baum offered suggestions and solutions to dismantle racism:

> Anti-racism or racial justice requires that people who have benefited from being racialized as white avow their whiteness even as they seek to put an end to it. One way for white people to do this is to support affirmative action and other policies to overcome racialized injustice as part of a larger politics that aims to affirm fully the dignity of all human beings.[31]

This section has attempted to address some of the strengths and weaknesses that the explosion of Whiteness Studies has caused. A particular strength lies in its ability to help explain the dialectic relationship between race and space. Hoelscher's piece explicitly demonstrated how racial segregation in the past informs our racial constructions of the present by examining the Natchez Pilgrimage tourist attraction, which still exists today. One weakness of the literature lies in the lack of consensus on the definition of terms. While Hoelscher used a literal interpretation of space others, like Hill, did not. Does space literally mean space, or is it a metaphor? Can it be both? The last consequence I addressed was the emerging descriptive and prescriptive debate in Whiteness literature. That is, while all Whiteness Studies are prescriptive in nature, there continues to be disagreement over whether one should provide actual solutions to eliminate white privilege or just to merely identify it.

The Tidal Wave of Criticism

Conservative Commentator David Horowitz noted, "Black Studies celebrate blackness, Chicano Studies celebrates Chicanos, Women's Studies celebrates women, and white studies attacks white people as evil."[32] Although Horowitz oversimplified the vast and wide-ranging literature on whiteness his words are reflective of the tidal

wave of criticism that has been leveled against the field. Columnist Samuel Francis made another overtly negative response to whiteness studies. He wrote, "The people who peddle in whiteness studies make no pretense about their real purpose: to change how whites think about race so as to make whites feel guilt about who they are and what they and their ancestors have achieved, and thereby to destroy whites' capacity to resist being shoved aside by nonwhites."[33]

Although this type of criticism leveled against Whiteness Studies is interesting, it will not be further entertained in this section as it fails to provide significant critical analysis of the field. Instead, this section is devoted toward identifying some of the key criticisms of Whiteness scholarship from within the academic community.[34] Specifically, I will address four different criticisms. First, the lack of gender analysis in Whiteness scholarship occupies a major void in the field. Second, in assigning whiteness such an all-encompassing power, Whiteness Studies seem to ignore other forms of oppression, exploitation, and inequality. Third, Whiteness Studies suffers from a white-black racial binary that excludes minority groups from the historical narrative. The fourth criticism of Whiteness scholarship is the obvious and sometimes unspoken assumption that the racism they describe is uniquely American and that it can be understood in isolation without considering any transnational implications.

Even though more historical scholarship is slowly beginning to analyze the role of women at various moments in American history, Whiteness Studies suffers from a serious void of gender analysis. Throughout my entire research process, I came across only three books that interrogated the intersection between whiteness and gender. In White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in The United States, Louise Michele Newman explored the impact of feminism on a particular form of evolutionary racism. Beginning with the underlying premise that feminists shared racist assumptions common throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Newman argued that the first wave of feminism "developed as a racialized theory of gender oppression."[35] In Gender and Jim Crow: Women and The Politics of White Supremacy, 1896-1920, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore asserted the historical role women played in the making of segregation and whiteness in the South.[36] In White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness (one of the earliest works on the intersection of whiteness and gender), Sociologist Ruth Frankenburg noted the invisible and "normal" presence of whiteness by conducting interviews with white women in California. After conducting interviews with white women that identified not so much as white but "normal," Frankenburg called whiteness "an unmarked marker of other's differences."[37]

Even though all three works make significant contributions to the field that

I can only touch on, the majority of Whiteness scholarship has failed to investigate the intersection of gender and whiteness. However, this is only one of the many criticisms of the field. We can use Newman's White Women's Rights as an example of a second criticism. That is, that some Whiteness Studies authors have the tendency to over-generalize the impact of whiteness and thereby remove the subject from their historical context."[38] This appears to hold merit for Newman who by over-extending the sensible assertion that white feminists shared the racial prejudices of their time, glosses over the nuanced political, cultural, and economic factors influencing feminist thought.[39]

One of the most pronounced criticisms of Whiteness scholarship is its inability to move beyond the black-white racial binary of American race relations. Indeed, very few works have investigated how other minorities fit within the historical narrative. They are, in a sense, invisible. Noel Ignatiev's How the Irish Became White operates as a prime example of the black white binary. Only two groups merit attention: Irish immigrants and African Americans. Although the goal of the book was to explain how one specific immigrant group became "white," it would be a more accurate historical account if other groups were included and could also create a more nuanced narrative of the historical complexity behind the process of racialization. It is not as though Irish immigrants and African Americans were the only two social groups present in urban American cities. One is left asking, what happened to the other European immigrant groups that were there?

A piece of Whiteness scholarship that departs from the black-white binary is Matthew Jacobson's Whiteness of A Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race. Broadening his view by examining how others perceived European immigrants across a long time span (1790-1965), Jacobson was able to explore the intertwined relationship between race, ethnicity, and nationality.[40] With a three stage chronological periodization of racial categorization, Jacobson revealed the highly elastic and extraordinary malleability of American racial construction. This is arguably one of the greatest contributions Jacobson made to the field of Whiteness Studies.

In an article titled "What Group? Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of 'Color-Blindness" Sociologist Amanda E. Lewis noted that, "Studies of whiteness must not be conducted in a vacuum."[41] This quote is reflective of the fourth criticism, which suggests that Whiteness Studies should practice a more transnational approach. That is, Whiteness Studies must not be conducted in isolation without considerations abroad. The United States is not the only place where white racism exists. Perhaps grounding the American Whiteness Studies within an international context could help illuminate both the similarities and anomalies of how race is made in America. The

origins of this criticism in 2002 appear to be the result of a current trend in historical scholarship (and particularly the discipline of American Studies) that is commonly referred to as the transnational turn.[42] At this current historical moment, no scholar has written on whiteness with a transnational lens.

A Future For Whiteness

So where should Whiteness Studies go from here? While incorporating the criticisms provided above would do well to further our understanding of the historical construction of whiteness and what it has meant for the social order in both America and abroad, I maintain that Whiteness Studies should adopt a more comprehensive approach toward breaking down racial identification rather than working toward an abolition of whiteness; or as many Whiteness authors suggest, substituting a new "positive" whiteness in place of the old racist version. Let me prove my case.

First, Roediger and Ignatiev are the frontrunners of Whiteness authors that maintained the abolition of whiteness is the solution to the social problems of the present day. As the coeditor of the journal Race Traitor, Ignatiev proclaimed that, "The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race."[43] The problem with this approach is that there is a lack of consensus on what "abolishing whiteness" means. In part, this is the result of contested meanings of "whiteness." Thus, based on the myriad meanings of "whiteness" one could suggest that there also exist a plethora of meanings for "abolishing whiteness." Is it rejecting white privilege? Is it rejecting white racial identity? Is it seeing whiteness as evil? Is it rejecting racism? The list could go on. On the practical level there needs to be a clearer understanding of exactly what one is supposed to reject.

The abolitionist claim fails to be adopted by the majority of Whiteness scholars because such an argument spurs the resurgence and investment in the reaffirmation of white identity. This is clearly demonstrated by the earlier responses of Francis and Horowitz. However, other Whiteness scholars such as Ruth Frankenburg suggested that whites need some form of ethnic identification. "If whiteness is emptied of any content other than which is associated with racism and capitalism," Frankenburg warned, "this leaves progressive whites without a genealogy."[44] In contrast to the abolition of whiteness, scholars have suggested the replacement of the old racist version of whiteness with a new "positive" one. In particular, Rodriguez's comment within the field of education for the reconfiguration of whiteness "in antiracist, anithomophobic, and antisexist ways" is reflective of this effort.[45] But this approach is also problematic for one primary reason: positing the goal of creating a new and better whiteness implicitly accepts the legitimacy of the racial identification while

simultaneously suggesting that there is something "good" about being white and something less good about being non-white. So which approach is better?

British sociologist Paul Gilroy noted that, "It is time to abolish race, not just whiteness."[46] These words illustrate the need for Whiteness scholars to adopt a new approach that seeks to eliminate whiteness through a more comprehensive assault on racial identification in general: white, black, yellow, etc. The attempts of Whiteness scholars to abolish or substitute a "good" version of whiteness in place of the old have fallen short. A new approach to whiteness must work as part of a broader attack on the process of racial identification. The ability of Whiteness scholars to address this criticism and create new approaches that attack racial classification will determine the future success of the field.

NOTES

1. The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, "The Emergence of Whiteness Studies on America's College Campuses," Journal of Blacks in Higher Education 42, Winter (2003): 60, http://jstor.org.

2. Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness: The New History of Race in America," The Journal of American History 89, no. 1 (2002): 150, http://jstor.org.

3. Ibid.

4. David Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the American Working Class, (New York: Verso, 1991), 5.

5. Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies," 167.

6. W.E.B Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 (New York: Meridian, 1935), 700-701.

7. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, 134.

8. Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies," 151.

9. For more works that do follow this approach please consult Noel Ignatiev's How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995), Thomas Guglielmo, White on Arrival:Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago,1890-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), and Karen Sacks How the Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America (New Brunswick, 1998).

10. George Lipsitz, The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), xvii.

11. Ibid., 5.

12. Sharon Sullivan, Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habit of Racial Privilege, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 3-5.

13. For a more in depth analysis on the topic of whiteness and Irish immigration please consult Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995).

14. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness, 137.

15. Sullivan, Revealing Whiteness, 1.

16. Ibid., 5.

17. Ibid.

18. Patricia Williams, Seeing a Color-Blind Future: The Paradox of Race (New York: Farrar, Stratus, and Gireau 1997), 61.

19. Martha Mahoney, "Racial Segregation, Whiteness, and Transformation," University of Pennsylvania Law Review 143, no. 5 (1995): 1659, http://jstor.org.

20. Steven Hoelscher, "Making Race, Making Place: Performances of Whiteness in Jim Crow South," Annals of American Geographers 93, no.3 (2003): 657-685, http://jstor.org.

21. For a definition of the Natchez Pilgrimage please consult previous citation, pp.658-660.

22. Ibid., 678.

23. Jane Hill, "Language, Race, and Public Space," American Anthropologist 100, no. 3 (1998): 682, http://jstor.org.

24. Nelson M. Rodriguez, "Emptying the Content of Whiteness: Toward an Understanding of the Relation Between Whiteness and Pedagogy" in Joe L. Kincheloe, et al, White Reign: Deploying Whiteness in America (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 33.

25. Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies," 154.

26. Shelley Sallee, The Whiteness of Child Labor Reform in South (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 2.

NOTES

27. Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies," 156.
28. Matthew Frye Jacobson, Whiteness of A Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 8.
29. Ibid.
30. Bruce Baum, The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race: A Political History of Racial Identity (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 20.
31. Ibid., 252.
32. The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education Foundation, "The Emergence of Whiteness Studies on America's College Campuses," 60.
33. Ibid.
34. For a list of the primary criticisms of whiteness studies please consult Steve Garner Whiteness: An Introduction (New York: Routledge, 2007), 8-12.
35. Louise Michela Newman, White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 8.
36. Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies," 164.
37. Ruth Frankenburg, White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness, (Minneapolis: Routledge, 1993), 198.
38. Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies," 164.
39. Although Newman does provide an excellent case for racism as the root of feminist thought, I would argue that it is only one of many ideologies that influenced early feminism.
40. In a different article, David Roediger emphasized the need to move beyond the black-white binary of The Wages of Whiteness. Please consult David Roediger, "The Pursuit of Whiteness: Property, Terror, and Expansion 1790-1860," Journal of the Early Republic, (1999): 592-600.
41. Amanda E. Lewis, "What Group? Studying Whites and Whiteness in the Era of "Color-Blindness," Sociological Theory 22, no. 4 (Dec., 2004): 623, http://jstor.org.
42. Mae Ngai, "Transnationalism and the Transformation of the "Other": Response to the Presidential Address" American Quarterly 57, no. 1 (Mar., 2005): 59, http://jstor.org.
43. Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey, eds. Race Traitor (New York: 1996) 2, quoted in Kolchin, "Whiteness," 167.
44. Frankenburg, White Women, Race Matters, 232.
45. Nelson M. Rodriguez, "Emptying the Content of Whiteness: Toward an Understanding of the Relation Between Whiteness and Pedagogy," 33.
46. Paul Gilroy, Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line (Cambridge: Belknap, 2000), 3.

The Mythopoetic Men's Movement on Television: A Gathering Place for the 90s Male

Jennifer Moore

This essay was written for History 572, taught by Dr. Benjamin Cawthra. The assignment was to conduct original research on any topic in American history. Two of my primary research interests are gender and television, so I took advantage of the opportunity to look at television programming that influenced and reflected ideas of American manhood, limiting my investigation to programs from the 1990s. In my initial exploration, I found that the sitcom Home Improvement was one of the most widely referenced programs of the period and was mentioned frequently by men when referring to their ability to identify with characters on television. I decided to look into why and how this came to be, and what about the show particularly attracted these men and the general viewing public. The end result is an analysis of how cultural anxieties are presented in television and how, in turn, television helps shape our cultural discourse.

We are living at an important and fruitful moment now, for it is clear to men that the images of adult manhood given by the popular culture have worn out: a man can no longer depend on them. By the time a man is thirty-five he knows that the images of the right man, the tough man, the true man which he received in high school do not work in life. Such a man is open to new visions of what a man is or could be.

--Robert Bly, Iron John: A Book About Men

In the pilot episode of the television sitcom, Home Improvement, which aired on ABC on September 17, 1991, lead character Tim Taylor, played by stand-up comedian Tim Allen, turns to his neighbor for advice after he has a fight with his wife. The neighbor, Wilson (Earl Hindman), peers over their common backyard fence and declares that Tim's trouble is that he does not know who is is "as a man." He goes on to explain, "a lot of men feel lost, confused. You see, Tim, the Industrial Revolution took the adult male out of the home. Boys were left without an adult male to teach them how to be men." In order to fix this, he says, "We need to go back to something more primitive – atavistic. Men need to spend more time around the campfire with their elders, like in ancient days, seeking wisdom, telling stories, sharing…it's time for men to reclaim the male spirit."[1] While Tim's response to this is to grunt comically in agreement (after

all, this is a sitcom), Wilson is expressing a prevalent theme in American culture of the early 1990s, a theme that was most directly characteristic of something called the mythopoetic men's movement.

In part because of shows like Home Improvement, television played a central role in constructing and promoting the ideas of the mythopoetic men's movement, infusing them into mainstream American culture. In addition, television became a sort of "gathering place" for modern men around which they could observe new versions of manhood and masculinity that broke with the traditional models of their fathers' generation.

Crisis Mode

In the 1980s there emerged what many referred to as a "Crisis of Masculinity" in the United States. By 1990, the crisis had come to a head, and American men were seeking new answers to the question "what is a man?" This query, in various forms, reverberated throughout the news media, inspired the creation of men's studies curriculum in colleges and universities along with books on manhood and masculinity, and even prompted the creation of several journals on "men's issues." An early public voice on this topic was that of Asa Baber, who launched his "Men" column in Playboy in 1982. Baber proclaimed that "men have the right to be proud they are men," implying that modern males might have been feeling a sense of insecurity or even shame about their manhood.[2]

This "crisis" affected white, middle-aged baby boomers most strongly. Edward Gambill, author of Uneasy Males: The American Men's Movement 1970-2000, explains: "Having achieved the outward symbols of the American Dream, they [men] still exhibited symptoms of anxiety and despondency." Gambill claims these men were "lonely and confused…burnt out and unfulfilled," having "few if any, close male friends and were often estranged from their children, their wives and their parents."[3] Michael Kimmel described this phenomenon as "a deep current of malaise among American men." His contention was that, "the fears of feminization - that we have lost our ability to claim our manhood in a world without fathers, without frontiers, without manly creative work – have haunted men for a century."[4]

Since the Industrial Revolution the concept of American manhood had boiled down to that of a "breadwinner." Men got married and had children. Not to do so was to run the risk of being identified as homosexual, or even psychologically ill (usually considered the same thing). Men worked – women stayed home and raised children. As Barbara Ehrenreich points out in her 1983 study of American manhood, "By the 1950s and '60s psychiatry had developed a massive weight of theory establishing

that marriage – and within that, the breadwinner role – was the only normal state for the adult male."[5] This simplified definition of manhood provided an easy answer to the question, "What is a man?" Manhood was manifested in the societal role as breadwinner for a nuclear family.

By 1990, the rules had changed, due in part to the modern women's movement. Men could no longer identify themselves by that which women were not. Since the 1970s, women had entered the workforce in record numbers, which meant that men were not only competing with women for jobs - some men even found themselves with female bosses. In addition, divorce rates were skyrocketing, doubling in just one decade.[6] Since being single was no longer suspect, men and women were able to focus on their careers or themselves, without the pressure to be married they had previously faced.

However, the women's movement and the civil rights movement were not the sole motive forces that changed - or challenged - middle-class white men's roles in society. There were several other contributing factors leading to the dissolution of the dominant ideology of American manhood. The economic changes occurring in the eighties made the one-income household almost a thing of the past, a luxury few could afford.[7] Ehrenreich pointed out that by the mid-eighties, "the average male wage is now less than that required to support a family," so even most married women had no choice but to work.[8] Other broad cultural shifts took place through the second half of the twentieth century that weakened the stereotype of the breadwinner role, including the Beat movement's outright rejection of marriage and traditional limits on sexuality, the emergence of the unmarried and unapologetic "playboy," men's growing concern over their health problems as a result of the stress placed on them as a breadwinner, and the counterculture, "hippie" movement that allowed men to embrace androgyny with long hair, flowing blouses and jewelry.[9]

The events at this time were similar to the "crisis" men faced at the turn of the twentieth century, when they reacted to the first women's movement with insecurity about their own standing in American society, and turned to outward displays of physical prowess, celebrating hyper-masculinity as the ideal and creating homosocial groups designed to reaffirm and strengthen masculinity in young men, such as the Boy Scouts and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).[10] Throughout modern history, as Michael Kimmel points out, "crises" of masculnity occur when "larger structural changes…[lead] women to redefine their own roles," which in turn cause men to need "new versions of masculinity."[11]

In response to this modern crisis, there arose several types of loosely organized groupings of men - or "men's movements," as they came to be called in

the popular media – whose members were trying to define what it meant to be a man in modern America. One of these was the pro-feminist/anti-sexist movement, which was the label given to the men who supported the goals of the women's movement and worked as allies with feminist and gay rights activists. There was also the right-leaning men's rights/father's rights movement, in which men argued that feminism led to discrimination against men in the home and the workplace, especially in issues of divorce and child custody. The addiction/recovery movement was comprised of men who participated in therapy groups that had become increasingly popular in the 1980s. Later in the decade, other men's movements took center stage. The Million Man March in 1995 was an attempt to unite and empower African-American men and the Promise Keepers emerged as a huge movement in which hundreds of thousands of evangelical Christian men affirmed their commitment to be good fathers, husbands and heads of households, similar to the ''muscular Christianity" movement of the nineteenth century. [12]

How the Men's Movement Got on TV

In the early 1990s, the most visible of all these attempts to explore and redefine men's place in society was the mythopoetic men's movement, whose "curious activities and colorful, outspoken leader…drew heavy media attention and…became popularly known as the men's movement."[13] The de facto leader was acclaimed poet Robert Bly, who had been running mythopoetic men's groups for years when his work was launched into the public eye with his television special "A Gathering of Men," hosted by respected journalist Bill Moyers in January 1990 on PBS. Newsweek's June 1991 cover story, "Drums, Sweat and Tears" originated with the PBS special, prompting the magazine to label the men's movement "the first postmodern movement" because it "stems from a deep national malaise that hardly anyone knew existed until they saw it on a PBS special."[14] The show inspired a great deal of media coverage in the national and regional press and nearly 50,000 copies on VHS cassette (at $39.95 each) were sold by the end of the year.[15] The same year, Bly's book, Iron John: A Book About Men became an instant bestseller and the "bible" of the movement.

The term "mythopoetic" was first applied by movement leader Shepard Bliss, using a literary term referring to the use of newly created mythology, as in Bly's adaptation of the Grimm Bothers' fairy tale Iron Hans into a modern tale of reclaimed masculinity. Firmly rooted in Jungian psychology (which he began to explore after marrying a Jungian psychoanalyst), Bly believed that myth and allegory were the most effective instruments through which to explore new ideas about masculinity

and access men's more spiritual, emotional side. As Demaris S. Wehr explains in Jung and Feminism, "From within the Jungian framework, dreams, fairy tales, myths, and other forms of folklore contain wisdom and direction for our lives."[16] The term mythopoetic quickly became commonly used to describe the entire movement, which centered around men gathering in groups or wilderness retreats and participating in ritual drumming, music, and dancing, along with psychological and spiritual "men's work."[17]

In "Gathering" and Iron John, Bly explained that the Industrial Revolution had produced "soft" men due to overexposure to women in the home and lack of a father figure, given that fathers had been driven out into the workplace and were largely emotionally unavailable when they did return home. Therefore, men had lost an important connection which they needed in order to make the transition from boys to men. Bly asserted that "when we stand physically close to our father…something moves over that can't be described in physical terms."[18] According to the mythopoetic tenets, only men can teach boys to be men, and since most men in the late twentieth century grew up without a father either physically or emotionally present, men suffer from "father wounds," which prevent them from feeling they have achieved manhood.[19]

In order to correct this, Bly argued, men needed the support of other men. Men's gatherings provided a place where men could recreate a sort of initiation into manhood that they did not experience as boys. Gatherings also provided mentors in the form of peers, group leaders, and older men. Older men were commonly brought out and honored at these gatherings, where young men were told to look toward them for guidance and mentorship, and especially to help initiate men into manhood. Bly explained that "older male initiators" are necessary, because there is tension between the boy and his father, so boys need to learn from their fathers how to be men, but must be initiated into manhood by "father's friends…uncles or grandfathers."[20]

The mythopoetic movement was concerned with capitalist expectations that placed men in positions of wage earners and "success objects" in American society. These men felt they had been let down by the expectations of American manhood, and their disappointment was especially prevalent in regards to their fathers. Most men participating in mythopoetic activities expressed the feeling that their fathers fit the cultural ideal of traditional masculinity, which was to spend most of their time and energy on work and attempting to prove they were "rational, tough, indomitable, ambitious, competitive, in control, able to get the job done and ardently heterosexual."[21] These traits were thought to have caused their fathers to be largely physically and emotionally unavailable, and often even abusive.

In her 1999 study on American masculinity in the second half of the twentieth century, Susan Faludi observes, "What emerged in the testimonies of men was a deep confusion at having to live up to conventional expectations of masculinity…fearless, invulnerable, all-knowing. Their fathers and their culture had taught them this was the way to act manly."[22] In her discussions with men across America, Faludi found a core issue of modern men upon which the mythopoetic men's movement had hit: "`My father never taught me how to be a man' was the single line I heard over and over again. Having a father was supposed to mean having an older man show you how the world worked and how to find your place in it."[23] Men in the 1980s and 1990s were living in a world that was vastly different from the one their fathers knew, and thus the model of manhood they saw in their father could not be translated to their own lives without massive dissonance. To make matters worse (as far as Bly and others in the men's movement were concerned) in rejecting their father's example, many of these men had turned to their mothers for primary role models, leading them to rely on "feminine ways of feeling" and thus become "soft."

Bly relied on ideas of gender essentialism and Jungian psychological archetypes, in which men and women have inherent psychological and emotional differences. In (much simplified) Jungian terms, women have an inner "masculine" and men have an inner "feminine," and people must nurture both their masculine and feminine selves in order to be in balance. For Bly, there was "something wonderful about…men welcoming their own 'feminine' consciousness."[24] Yet, while rejecting the traditional version of masculinity that did not acknowledge the "feminine" in men, Bly emphasized that modern men must reclaim the "wildman" in their psyches to balance the softness and sensitivity that has developed. A 1990 New York Times article reported "[Bly] noted that almost every pre-industrial culture, from ancient Greece to the Middle Ages, projected in its myths and poetry an image of an ideal man as a forceful, spontaneous, primal being."[25] Men participating in mythopoetic activity were seeking another way to be men – one in which they would achieve an "assertive manhood free from emotional repression." Bly taught these men to use Jungian psychology to "redefine their feminine traits, especially their emotionality, as aspects of 'deep masculine.'"[26]

The mythopoetic tenets were troubling to some, especially feminist scholars, who believed that the idea that men should retreat away from women in order to reassert their masculinity was a backlash against feminism and the advancement of women in society. However, the men asserted they simply wanted the opportunity to express their emotions without risking ridicule or rejection, without being labeled a wimp or a sissy, and felt safe doing so only in the company of other like-minded men.

The men drawn to this movement were trying to find a balance between traditional models of masculinity (many referred to iconic film star John Wayne as the epitome of this role) and the more socially conscious, sensitive model that had recently emerged in society (represented by the actor Alan Alda, who is repeatedly referred to as a "wimp" by men's movement participants). The confusion of modern men seemed to stem from the tension between the expectations of a father who could only teach traditional masculinity (if he had the time, energy, or will after work to teach anything at all) and a society grappling with the new expectations of men in the wake of the women's movement, the civil rights movement, free love and Vietnam.

In an October 2008 email exchange I had with Thomas R. Smith, a former mythopoetic men's movement participant, poet, and friend of Robert Bly, he explained why he was drawn to Bly and the movement:

> I suppose that like most thirty-something young men at the time who were sympathetic to feminism, I had neglected to attend to my masculinity. Which is to say, I didn't think much about it. Robert, through his work on the fairy tale "Iron John," helped my generation of young men think about this matter and set us on the path to trying to define what would constitute a positive masculinity in our lives and in our time…I was finally able to understand my struggles with my father and his generation and define myself as a man in terms that made sense to me with my generational experience.[27]

Smith's words echo those of many men's movement participants quoted in interviews conducted in the 1990s. The movement is widely reported to have reached a peak of actively involved men at 100,000 participants. However, as sociologist Michael Schwalbe argues, "The importance of the Mythopoetic movement is not a matter of its size alone," rather, "the ideas…have diffused through the culture…and have gained currency with many more people – women and men – than have heard of Robert Bly or attended a men's gathering." [28] This absorption into the popular culture occurred largely because of television's fascination with the movement.

After the Gathering

After "Gathering," the movement gained tremendous visibility. Several mainstream news magazines, such as Time and Newsweek, ran cover stories on the movement, and newspapers all over the country sent reporters to retreats, interviewed members of local men's clubs or movement leaders, or published opinion pieces from well known men's issues writers, such as Jackson Katz.

On television news, the movement was portrayed in tones from respectful to ridiculous. Hugh Downs reported on a men's retreat in an episode of 20/20 entitled "What is a man?" (aired May 17, 1991). In what is described as an "extraordinary voyage," Downs visited the "wild man" weekend near Austin, Texas, where he interviewed participants and the retreat leaders, "men searching for the soul of modern man, discovering themselves for the first time." Downs was largely in favor of the movement - closing his report with an endorsement, "I was glad to see what they were doing and I think it's on the up-and- up." However, some reports were not as understanding of what the men's movement was up to. In a segment titled, "The Opposite Sex; The New Men's Movement" (aired January 1, 1992), 48 Hours reported primarily on the run of sitcom episodes targeting the men's movement as the butt of their jokes. Reporter Bryan Goldberg openly wondered at the significance of the movement even while speaking of its pervasiveness on the airwaves, saying "The movement, in truth, really isn't much of a movement. There aren't a lot of men in it. And those who are hardly represent a cross-section of American men. They're mostly white, mostly well-educated, mostly professional, and some say, mostly full of baloney." CBS's Bill Geist was openly critical of the movement in his report on Sunday Morning (aired September 1, 1991), determining that "much of the men's movement seems to be just putting a new label on more sitting in a circle with your shoes off and complaining" and that "it's often just group analysis, replete with the old psychobabble."

Regardless of the tenor of the reports, the media coverage contributed to sales of mythopoetic movement books and tapes, and increased attendance at retreats. As a scathingly critical 1992 American Spectator article ironically pointed out, "All publicity is good publicity. Every Jay Leno wisecrack and smartass piece in Esquire reinforces the notion that the men's movement actually exists. And the notion, however implausible, is an undoubted moneymaker. Men's movement leaders can get annoyed if they want, but they're getting annoyed all the way to the bank."[29]

Hollywood Responds to the Men's Movement

Hollywood was enamored of the ideas in the mythopoetic movement early on. Bly himself referenced John Wayne and Alan Alda as failed examples of masculinity that shaped the way men define themselves. He speaks often of the importance of positive male images and role models, thus it makes sense that this highly image-driven movement would appeal to television producers and audiences. Just as the unmarried working woman depicted on the Mary Tyler Moore Show had been a touchstone for the women's movement, "a pop culture phenomenon used by

audiences and social commentators to make sense of and negotiate the powerful social change movement then referred to as "Women's Lib,"" now, more than ever, men were looking to the popular media for roles models and for cues on who to be and how to be.[30] In 1990, Daniel Golman, the New York Times science reporter declared, "John Wayne is dead, and we haven't found a replacement for him yet."[31] "If I had a son," lamented one men's movement participant, "where could I point him - radio, TV - that he could go to find out why it's good to be a man?"[32]

In Manhood in America, Michael Kimmel discussed several films that have incorporated themes and messages from the mythopoetic men's movement. He identified the Star Wars trilogy (films released in 1977, 1980, and 1983), ET: The Extra Terrestrial (1982) and Field of Dreams (1989) as tales of mythic quests to "heal the father wound." Dances with Wolves (1990) and City Slickers (1991) can be interpreted as modern man's effort to overcome the softening effects of civilization by returning to the "quintessential mythic site for demonstrating manhood:" the American frontier (even if, in City Slickers, it is not the actual frontier, but a modern simulation).[33] Kimmel also argued that the resurgence of the monster in films such as Interview with a Vampire (1994), Wolf (1994), and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992) signifies "a masculinist descent to the primitive."[34] Other films of the period can clearly be identified as "mythopoetic," such as The Fisher King (1991), which one movement participant told me was "the closest we have to a "mythopoetic" men's movie, with its references to the wounded king of the Grail myths."[35] In the 1990s, actors like Kevin Costner (who starred in such mythopoetic films as Field of Dreams, Dances with Wolves, A Perfect World and The War) and Robin Williams (in The Fisher King, Jack, Father's Day, and Good Will Hunting) provided models of "new masculinity" by playing roles in which they were rugged and manly, but also openly sensitive, introspective, and able to express deep emotion (in the case of Robin Williams, often alternating between the man-child and the mentor roles).

Television's response to the mythopoetic men's movement was more direct. In the immediate aftermath of "Gathering," several shows aired episodes in which they openly tackled the subject of the mythopoetic men's movement, but they usually cast it as foolish or ridiculous. Murphy Brown, Coach, and Anything but Love all produced episodes in 1990-91 that used men's retreats or men's groups as plotlines. These portrayals were largely negative and used the men's movement ideas as the butt of jokes, also conflating the mythopoetic men's movement with versions of more traditional fraternal organizations, such as the Elks or the Moose.

Bringing Bly Home

Images of Men in Popular Sitcoms, Tim is still "wielding power" in the home as a breadwinner, but his relationship with his wife exemplifies the "tremendous social power" women have gained. "Jill makes him aware of and sensitive to the results of his masculine ideas and behaviors when they affect her in ways that she finds wrong and unfair," the researchers concluded, "Tim consequently seeks advice that can help him understand his own fears and confusions and can also help him to have a better relationship with his wife."[41]

To deal with Tim's struggles as a man finding his new role in an increasingly changing world, the creators also turned to another popular author of the era, Deborah Tannen, whose study of essential differences in male and female communication styles, You Just Don't Understand, was the inspiration for Tim and Jill's relationship.[42] Not surprisingly, Tannen and Bly were fans of each other's work and even conducted a seminar together in a "standing room only" event in New York City in 1991.[43]

In the pilot episode, Tim "fixes" the family's dishwasher by adding an additional power source, with comically disastrous results. He implements this "home improvement" against his wife's wishes, while she is at a job interview. Tim's attitude is, "this is my house, that's my dishwasher, and I'll fix it if I want to." Tim and Jill argue over Tim's desire to "upgrade" the dishwasher, over the fact that he forgot that she had a job interview, and over his insensitive handling of her disappointment in not getting the job.

Williams claims the premise behind Tim and Jill's relationship was, "men and women should never live together, but they do. How do they make it work?"[44] Tim was unashamedly the "man of the house," making decisions without thinking of how it might affect his wife. This generally leads to the central conflict of the plot, an argument between Tim and Jill. In the end, Tim learns a lesson about how to be more considerate of his wife and Jill often apologizes to Tim for not respecting that he acted with the best intentions, however misguided. It was always clear that Tim and Jill loved each other. Their arguments and her frustration simply boiled down to Tannen's contention that men and women were fundamentally different, thus communicated differently, and we must accept that if we are to live together.

In keeping with Bly's philosophy, the pilot episode and the entire series of Home Improvement emphasize Taylor's role as a father as well. We see him teaching his sons how to fix and make things, giving them advice, rough-housing with them, and generally being a hands-on dad. "We wanted to deal with little men as well as grown-up men," said Williams. "One of the ongoing conflicts is Jill says, 'I'm raising three future husbands here.' And Tim's argument is 'Yeah, but I also want

Though initially used as the butt of jokes by television sitcoms, it is there that the mythopoetic men's movement ultimately found a home and where its ideas became a significant influence on popular culture. Once TV got on board, Bly's "wild man" was no longer reserved for those who could afford to pay $250 for a weekend retreat; it was available to the masses.

Home Improvement came at a time when American men were looking for an alternative to the two primary media images of "the traditional man (gray-flannel-suited or blue-collar macho) and the feminist-inspired sensitive man."[36] Tim Taylor was a new image of a "90's male," one that many men could relate to. "He's lived through two decades of feminism and knows he ought to be vulnerable and sensitive. But at the same time he's tired of apologizing for his instinct to be aggressive, analytical or to go ga-ga over the contents of a hardware store," explained one of the series creators, Matt Williams, in a 1991 interview with the New York Times.[37]

The creators of the show were three white, middle-aged, middle-class men who fit exactly the demographic of those participating in the Mythopoetic men's movement. Along with Williams, Carmen Finestra and David McFadzean openly admit that they wanted to use the show to express the teachings of the movement's "guru," Robert Bly and his best-selling guide to "re-claiming the masculine."[38] Though they had conceived of the show prior to ever hearing of Bly or the movement, McFadzean spoke in a 1991 interview about the impact "A Gathering of Men" had on him and his colleagues. "We actually passed the tape around first of Robert Bly with Bill Moyers," he recalled, "Then all three of us bought `Iron John' and told Tim to read it."[39]

Williams, who was 40 when Home Improvement premiered, explained the lead character as an embodiment of his own conflicting feelings:

> He's a man who says, 'I'm a little confused; I don't know where the lines are anymore,' You go, 'I don't know what I'm supposed to be anymore. I'm trying, damn it, I'm trying to be a good husband, a good father, but I keep screwing up.' I feel that. Tim feels that. A lot of guys in their 30's and 40's feel that right now. And that's what we're trying to capture with the show.[40]

In the half-hour sitcom, Tim Taylor is a middle-aged family man and host of a popular cable TV home repair show, "Tool Time." His wife, Jill (Patricia Richardson), is a no-nonsense, outspoken, stay-at-home mom who wants to get back out into the workforce. As Amy Klumas and Thomas Marchant point out in their study,

them to grow up to be men.' Her job -- and this is right from Bly -- is to civilize them. And his is to make sure they grow hair and howl at the moon."[45] Though Tim preaches masculinism, he also teaches his sons that its okay for men to hug and show affection.[46]

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, television seemed to be dominated by sitcoms which could be divided into four types. There were feminist inspired programs in which men were secondary characters, such as Roseanne, Murphy Brown, Golden Girls and Designing Women; those that sought to re-claim the macho male, like Cheers and Coach; family sitcoms, like The Cosby Show, Full House, Empty Nest, Family Ties, Who's the Boss?, and Growing Pains, in which the fathers were exactly the sort of "soft" men Bly was urging men to reject; and those that turned the sitcom format on its head by portraying the worst of dysfunctional families and characters no one would want to model themselves after: The Simpsons and Married With Children. In the family sitcoms, the category into which Home Improvement fits, fathers were regularly portrayed taking on traditionally female tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, and tending to the everyday needs of the children. Most of these programs featured men learning about women by raising daughters; father-daughter relationships were more prevalent than father-son in television sitcoms of the time.

Home Improvement was intentionally different. In an interview I conducted with Williams in November, 2008, he explained that he and his colleagues set out to create a show that would provide a positive role model for men raising sons. "The concept we were wrestling with was 'father as hero.'" Williams told me, "Men were not involved in the raising and nurturing of their children, especially their boys."[47] Home Improvement was in part a way to counter that perceived trend in society. Reflecting Bly's argument, Williams declared, "Single mothers are heroic, but it takes a man to raise a boy."[48]

The pilot introduces another element of the series that is most directly reflects Bly's teachings. Whenever Tim and Jill argue, or he just gets confused or frustrated, he retreats to his backyard to consult with his neighbor, Wilson. Wilson is an older, retired man, who seemingly spends all of his time in his back yard and offers words of wisdom that never fail to help Tim solve his problems. As the mentor, Wilson is arguably the most important and memorable figure in the show. Wilson is always peering over the shared backyard fence or creatively using another object to obscure most of his face. The lack of concrete identity allows him to be the figure of every man's mentor. He is the universal guru of the mythopoetic men's movement – he could be, and seems to be, Robert Bly himself.

The show was incredibly popular. From the beginning, it finished in the top

15 shows on television, prompting ABC to sign an "unprecedented 3-year renewal."[49] It won the 1992 People's Choice Award for Favorite New TV Comedy Series and garnered an Emmy nomination that year for Outstanding Comedy Series (Murphy Brown won). The program would go on to air for eight seasons, spanning virtually the entire decade. Interestingly, its biggest fans were women. In 1993 Time magazine reported that it "typically ranks higher than even Roseanne among women ages 18 to 49."[50] Williams corroborates this statistic, saying, "women were the primary viewers because they got to see how men think. We imagined women sitting at home elbowing their husband or boyfriend in the side saying, 'that is you.'"[51]

Williams believes that women, as well as men, were looking for a new kind of man. He recalls conversations with female writers on Home Improvement: "We had a lot of great women writers who said, 'I want a sensitive man,' but if you pressed them on who they thought was attractive, they said Dolph Lundgren."[52] When I asked Williams what he thought about representations of men on television at the time Home Improvement came out, his response was blunt and indicative of the gender essentialism of Bly: "the men on TV were divided into two types, tough guy or super sensitive – basically a female who happened to have testicles."[53] One goal of the show, to "create a man's man who could still be sensitive," was partly a response to what Williams perceived women wanted.[54] In other words, this new man was one who could be sensitive and caring, who could accept criticism and apologize for his mistakes, but still "performed" according to traditional codes of masculine behavior, and thus validated his masculinity and represented less of an overt challenge to gender norms.[55]

One of the more interesting and less acknowledged elements of Home Improvement was the way it played on the theme of "A Gathering of Men." It illustrated the importance of what had become a place men could bask in the presence and wisdom of other, often older, men: the do-it-yourself show. These shows, like the well-known PBS series This Old House, provided a way for men to tune in to a TV "gathering place" where they can watch men who are experts and mentors in their fields. In addition to home improvement oriented shows, shows that focus on "manly" activities, such as hunting and fishing, can provide a kind of mini "wild man" experience of which Bly might approve. Usually small budget and low-production value, these shows rely on hosts with expertise speaking directly into the camera, teaching and explaining their actions to the viewer. Often the hosts of these shows impart their own snippets of life experiences unrelated to their designated activities. The intimate format allows the viewer to connect with the host on a more personal level, as they would with a mentor. As Matt Williams pointed out to me, both

the television and the garage (where men can practice their skills on cars and various projects) are "cheap" gathering places for men.

On his show "Tool Time," Tim often related to his viewers the advice he received that week from Wilson. In a kind of version of the children's game "telephone," Tim got it just a little off every time, but still managed to offer enough wisdom to function as a mentor to the men in the audience. The fact that this element was included in the show-within-a-show parody "Tool Time" is testimony to its common use in shows of that type. Viewers of Home Improvement could both appreciate and laugh at Tim's bits of advice.

Canadian Import: The Red Green Show

Like Home Improvement, Canada's CBC Television show The Red Green Show premiered in 1991, and uses the idea that the do-it-yourself and hunting/fishing TV shows targeting men are the modern man's affordable "clubhouses" or gathering places. The series was on the air an incredible 15 years, from 1991 to 2006, and still airs in re-runs all over the U.S., Canada and Australia.[56]

Though a Canadian production, the show became popular in the U.S. when it was threatened with cancellation early on and the producer and star Steve Smith got the idea to market it to PBS stations. In a 2006 interview with Wisconsin Public Television, Smith explains how American fans saved his show:

> I was watching Monday Night Football, I started to think that in those stadiums filled with 70,000 people, 'I bet there's a couple of Red Green fans in there -- the type of guys who figure they can fix a microwave by themselves to save a couple bucks.' I contacted some public television stations and we started small with five or six. But now, the show is on nearly 100 stations in the U.S.[57]

This show was brought to my attention by Thomas Smith, who claims it is a very apt parody of men's movement activities, saying, "I have a feeling that the creators of that show have a little personal experience of the Bly-style gatherings, though I can't prove it!" He finds the show "hilarious" and claims "it couldn't have been done without the 1990's men's movement." A cross of sitcom and sketch comedy show, this series featured Smith as Red Green, president of the "Possum Lodge," a men-only club where Green and his middle-aged friends and fellow club members (along with his 20-something nephew) gather and film what one reviewer called "a fishing show, a fix-it show, and a men's advice program all rolled into about ¾."[58]

In the show-within-a-show, Red works on handyman projects with any materials he can scrape together, using duct tape as his primary "tool." Much like Tim Taylor, Red Green's projects are not the most successful, which is the cause of humor in both programs. Like the creators of Home Improvement, however, Smith says he was not trying to mock men with his bumbling antics, but rather, the material for the show comes out of "personal experiences" of "want[ing] to figure out how to put things together in my own way."[59] The haphazardness of the men's handyman techniques stem more from their desire to be impulsive and creative, to listen to their instincts, the way Bly would encourage them to, than from incompetence. Williams implies that the idea one must conform to rules is "wimpy," saying, "We were poking fun at the sensitive man in Al, who lived with his mom and was the patient, methodical one, while Tim was the impulsive, impatient one who never read directions."[60]

The Red Green Show also features all the ingredients of a mythopoetic retreat. Red sings campfire songs, recites poetry in a segment entitled "The Winter of our Discount Tent," and provides mentoring as the men assemble in a panel of "experts" (much like a group of elders) to answer viewer mail. In addition, Red's friend Bill Smith (Rick Green) provides the "wild man" portion of the show, with regular segments in which he ventures into the great outdoors and tests his skill at various "manly" activities, such as fishing.

Conclusion

The men's movement started out as a way for a select few educated, middle-class white men to get in touch with their emotions and learn to be "New Men" by spending the time and money to go on retreats, buy books and tapes, or meet regularly in local men's groups. Television brought the movement into the homes and minds of average, working-class American families. Shows like The Red Green Show and Home Improvement made the ideas of Bly and his fellow mythopoetic movement leaders accessible (meaning both available and easily understood) to the wider public.

The use of the sitcom format to explore the ideas of the mythopoetic men's movement is not insignificant nor is it accidental. Sitcoms serve the purpose of addressing social issues in a seemingly innocuous format - adhering to the old adage, "a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down." As Klumas and Marchant argue, sitcoms can "help people deal with confusion, injustice, social change, and personal uncertainties (a) from a distance and (b) with a certain lightheartedness that makes facing the issues easier."[61] They also serve to "expose the illogic of taken-for-granted social order and role expectations."[62] Home Improvement and The Red Green Show

successfully entertained their audiences, but also succeeded in introducing concepts of manhood and a particular ideology of masculinity without being didactic.

In "A Gathering of Men" Bly asserted that, "men do not learn except in ritual space." While that contention is debatable, it is certainly true that television viewing is a ritual of the modern age, and as geographer Paul C. Adams suggests, television "serves various social and symbolic functions previously served by places" including "sensory communion" and "social congregation." [63] The shows discussed here provided a gathering place where men, and women, could absorb the lessons of the mythopoetic movement and perhaps commune with new types of men and mentors, serving to ease the loss and confusion men felt in the most recent American "crisis" of manhood.

Both of the programs discussed here were a clear indication that the mythopoetic movement had reached television and was a prominent theme in American popular culture. As such, it was reflecting and shaping our dominant ideology in the 1990s and may have even changed the way men are depicted on television. In a 1996 interview in the New York Times, Bly commented on the changes in society brought about in part by the men's movement, "The biggest influence we've had is in younger men who are determined to be better fathers than their own fathers were."[64] Williams echoes Bly's sentiments, and is proud of his accomplishment with Home Improvement, explaining to me, "We succeeded in creating an example of a dad involved in his boys' lives, a father on TV that people could look up to."[65]

Leonard Steinhorn, author of The Greater Generation: In Defense of the Baby Boom Legacy, agrees that, among all aspects of American masculinity, the role of father has undergone the most dramatic shift in the last fifty years. Writing in 2006, he credits the advances in self awareness among baby boomer men, saying,

> Todays fathers are simply not the silent, psychologically distant dads of the Fifties, the ones whose emotional absence casued lifelong sadness to their sons and daughters. The 'new man' image may be a cliché ripe for parody, but when asked by pollsters is they prefer to be viewed as "sensitive and caring" or "rugged and masculine" only 15 percent of American men choose the Malborough man norm, and nearly three-fourths opt for sensitive and caring.[66]

In 2005, author Paul Zakrzewski reflected on how the movement has all but disappeared from the public eye, but concluded its effects can still be seen in the way men come together socially. "Even if we're not likely to see maverick poets and

Jungian therapists on television specials and magazine covers again any time soon, one thing is clear," he concludes, "The Bly-style men's movement highlighted a powerful urge for men to commune with each other that persists today, even among those who wouldn't be caught dead within miles of a drumming circle."[67]

At least in part because of the ideas generated by the mythopoetic men's movement, images of American masculinity - both the traditional model and the new "sensitive male" that had emerged in the 1970s and 1980s - were able to be examined and critiqued in the 1990s. Men also seemed to benefit from the movement's emphasis on men learning to express their feelings openly, and bonding with other men over shared experiences and emotion, rather than privileging stoicism, toughness, and competitiveness as ultimate markers of masculinity. In addition, fathers today are more involved with their children, and able to express a more traditionally "feminine" nurturing side. On the whole, the mythopoetic movement and its infusion into popular and thus mainstream American culture has, in a sort of Jungian fashion, helped men to become more balanced, and thus, more fully human.

NOTES

1. Home Improvement: Pilot, DVD, directed by John Pasquin (1991; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2004.)

2. Asa Baber quoted in Edward Lee Gambill, Uneasy Males: The American Men's Movement 1970-2000 (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 165.

3. Ibid, 166.

4. Michael Kimmel, Manhood in America: A Cultural History (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 321.

5. Barbara Ehrenreich, The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight From Commitment (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 15.

6. Ibid, 120.

7. Ibid, 172-3. For a response to Ehrenreich and more on how the economic changes forced men out of the breadwinner role, see "The Contemporary Man" by Joseph H. Pleck in Men's Lives, edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Michael Messner (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company), 1989. See also Stephanie Coontz, The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap, New York: Basic Books, 2000.

8. Ibid, 173.

9. These cultural events are discussed in depth in Ehrenreich, The Hearts of Men.

10. For more discussion of this, see Kimmel, Manhood in America.

11. Michael Kimmel, "The Contemporary 'Crisis' of Masculinity in Historical Perspective," in The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies, ed. Harry Brod (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 124.

12. This breakdown of contemporary "men's movements" is adapted from Jack Thomas "The New Man; Finding Another Way to be Male," Boston Globe, August 21, 1991.

13. Michael Schwalbe, Unlocking the Iron Cage: The Men's Movement, Gender Politics, and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

14. J. Adler and K. Springen, "Drums, Sweat and Tears," Newsweek, June 24, 1991.

15. Jack Thomas, "The New Man; Finding Another Way to be Male," Boston Globe, August 21, 1991.

16. Demaris S. Wehr, Jung and Feminism: Liberating Archetypes (London: Routledge, 1988), 6.

17. For more on the development of the movement and use of the term "mythopoetic,"

NOTES

see Schwalbe, Unlocking the Iron Cage and Christopher Harding, Wingspan: Inside the Men's Movement, New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

18. PBS, "A Gathering of Men With Bill Moyers and Robert Bly," Google website, Windows Media Player video file, 90min, http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3145952730483171546, Original air date January 8, 1990 (accessed September 7, 2008).

19. Schwalbe, Unlocking the Iron Cage, 19.

20. PBS, A Gathering of Men.

21. Schwalbe, Unlocking the Iron Cage, 18.

22. Trip Gabriel, "Call of the Wildmen," New York Times, October 14, 1990.

23. Susan Faludi, Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man, (New York: W. Morrow and Co., 1999).

24. Robert Bly, Iron John (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1990), 2.

25. Gabriel, "Call of the Wildmen."

26. Schwalbe, Unlocking the Iron Cage, 25.

27. Thomas Smith, email message to author, October 22, 2008.

28. Schwalbe, Unlocking the Iron Cage, 4-5.

29. A. Ferguson, "America's New Man," American Spectator, January, 1992.

30. Aniko Bodroghkozy, "Where Have You Gone Mary Richards? Feminism's Rise and Fall in Primetime Television," Iris 49 (Fall 2004): 12.

31. Ariane Barth, "After John Wayne, the New Man Seeks Another Role Model," Houston Post, May 29, 1990.

32. Catherine Foster, "Men's Rights; A Modest Movement is Gaining Momentum," The Christian Science Monitor, December 2, 1982.

33. Kimmel, Manhood in America, 323.

34. Kimmel, Manhood in America, 325.

35. Smith, email message to author.

36. Dan Cryer, "Novelist Tracks Male Role Models," Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel, Nov 18, 1990.

37. Trip Gabriel, "In Touch With the Tool-Belt Chromosome," New York Times, Sep 22, 1991.

38. Ibid.

39. Deborah Starr Seibel, "Being Real Men Is Nuts 'N' Bolts On `Home' Front," Chicago Tribune, Nov 24, 1991.

40. Ibid.

41. Amy L. Klumas and Thomas Marchant, "Images of Men in Popular Sitcoms," Journal of Men's Studies, Vol. 2, Iss. 3 (Feb 28, 1994), 269.

42. Matt Williams, interview by author, November 8, 2008.

43. Esther B. Fein, "Battle of the Sexes Gets All Fuzzy as New Age Authors Meet," New York Times, November 3, 1991.

44. Williams, interview.

45. Gabriel, "Tool-Belt Chromosome."

46. Richard Zoglin, "Prime-time Power Trip," Time, May 3, 1993.

47. Williams, interview.

48. Williams, interview.

49. Zoglin, "Prime-time Power Trip."

50. Bill Anderson, "TV's Latest Hit is a `Gruntcom'; Home Improvement Taps Into the Men's Movement,"
The Gazette, Montreal, Que., Oct 17, 1991.

51. Williams, interview.

52. Williams, interview.

53. Williams, interview.

54. Williams, interview.

55. For an excellent discussion of this concept of performative masculinity on television, see Joanna L Di Mattia's examination of the sitcom Seinfeld in "The Show About Something: Anxious Manhood and the Homosocial Order on Seinfeld" Michigan Feminist Studies 14 (1999/2000).

56. Wisconsin Public Television, "A Red Green Send Off," posted June 15, 2006,http://www.wpt.org/blog/2006/06/red-green-send-off.html (accessed November 1, 2008).

57. Ibid.

58. Ralph Lucas, "Steve Smith," Northern Stars, http://www.northernstars.ca/actorsstu/smith_stevebio.html (accessed November 1, 2008).

59. WPT, "A Red Green Send Off."

60. Williams interview.

61. Klumas and Marchant, "Men in Popular Sitcoms," 273.

62. Ibid.

63. Paul C. Adams, "Television as a Gathering Place," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. 82, No. 1 (Mar., 1992), 130.

64. Trip Gabriel, "At Home-Away-From-Home With: Robert Bly; Now Banging the Drum Slowly," New York Times, May 16, 1996.

65. Williams, interview.

66. Leonard Steinhorn, The Greater Generation: In Defense of the Baby Boom Legacy (New York: St Martin's Press, 2006), 91.

67. Paul Zakrzewski, "Daddy, What Did You Do In The Men's Movement?," Boston Globe, June 19, 2005.