The Boothe Prize Essays 2006

School of Humanities and Sciences

Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Introduction to the Humanities Program

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Table of Contents

Boothe Prize Nominees 2005-2006

Foreword by John Bravman vii

Essays from the Program in Writing and Rhetoric 1

Introduction by Andrea A. Lunsford and Marvin Diogenes 3

Spring 2005

Kimber Lockhart, Winner
Instructor’s foreword by Claire Bowen 4
“Reading Between the Lines: The Rhetoric of Literacy” 5

Nick Parker, Honorable Mention
Instructor’s foreword by David Colón 14
“The Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell: Mistakes Worth Fixing” 15

Autumn 2005

Jennifer Chin, Winner
Instructor’s foreword by Mark Feldman 28
“Reaffirming, Not Redefining: A Look at Rem Koolhaas’ New Seattle Central Library” 29

Matthew Gribble, Honorable Mention
Instructor’s foreword by Scott Herndon 42
“Gender, Art, and the Nursing Shortage: The Effect of Gendered Visual Rhetoric on the American Healthcare System” 43

Winter 2006

Cecilia Yang, Winner
Instructor’s foreword by Scott Herndon 56
“The Memorial Hall for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre: Rhetoric in the Face of Tragedy” 57

Aaron Quiggle, Honorable Mention
Instructor’s foreword by Scott Herndon 90
“In Search of an Anorexic Rhetoric: A Theory of Language, Meaning, Society, and Mental Illness” 91
Essays from the Introduction to the Humanities Program 105

Introduction by Susan Stephens and Ellen Woods 107

Spring 2005

Jessica Lee, Winner
Instructor’s foreword by Kirsti Copeland 108
“Death of the Faces of God” 109

Julie Byren, Honorable Mention
Instructor’s foreword by Alice Staveley 116
“If You’re Lost Enough to Find Yourself: Unveiling Nature’s Secrets in Robert Frost’s ‘October’ and ‘Directive’” 117

Autumn 2005

Patrick Leahy, Winner
Instructor’s foreword by Alison Lovell 122
“The Three Furies of Dublin” 123

Nathan Pflueger, Honorable Mention
Instructor’s foreword by Joel Slotkin 126
“Hamlet’s Imagined Filial Love” 127

Winter 2006

Sarah Johnson, Winner
Instructor’s foreword by Keila Diehl 132
“Breaking the Watch Along With the Wedding Glass: Conceptions of Time in the Transition from Biblical to Rabbinic Judaism” 133

Jason Dunford, Honorable Mention
Instructor’s foreword by Kathryn Mathers 138
“Empowering the Oppressed: The Role of Language in the Struggle Against Apartheid in South Africa” 139
NOMINEES & FINALISTS 2005-06

**PWR Nominees**

*Spring 2005*
- Justine Lai
- Charlie Davis
- Nisa Ari
- Karan Bhople
- Michael Munson
- Nick Schlag
- Francois Jean-Baptiste
- Laurel S. Gabler
- Michael Lin
- Sahaja Acharya
- Daniel Sean Bradley
- Lasse Jarner Thorenfeldt
- Scott Sayare
- Daniel Jacob Babinski
- Nidhi Bhat

*Autumn 2005*
- Emily Cramer
- Laura Femino
- Michael Lin
- Anya Bershad
- Lillian Tsay
- Andrew Ehrich
- Meryl Holt
- David Hutchison
- Alex Gaidarski
- Elizabeth Kersten
- Bernard Funk
- Shahrzad Zarafshar
- Monica Miklas
- Bernie Rihn
- Rohan Tandon
- Monica Bowe

*Winter 2006*
- Juliet Fraser
- Linda Green
- Valerie Bellande
- Michelle Park
- Katie Pickrell
- John DiCola
- Michael Yong
- Grace Hunter
- Becca Stanger
- Winston Lofton
- Christina Espinosa
- Klara Klein
- Robin Zhou

**IHUM Nominees & Finalists**

*Finalists*
- Amanda Hua
- Dawn McDonald
- Maggie Oran
- Graham Carroll
- Nathan Pflueger
- Shane Moriah
- Mollie Traver
- Andrea Ayala
- Brenden Lake
- Maja Bozovic
- Jack Browning
- Natalie Tabb
- Justine Lai
- Emily Dalton
- Ian Wong

*Nominees*
- Lindsay Reinsmith
- William East
- Caroline Smartt
- David Borowitz
- Emily Campbell
- Victoria Degtyareva
- Nila Bala
- Hin Leung
- Lauren O’Neal
- James Anthony
- Christopher Lin
- Sergey Levine
- Therin Jones
- Ono Nseyo
- Stephanie Cao
- Lisa Kerner
- Ben Eppler
- Carlos Fonseca

*Tiffany Hicks*
- Stephanie Alessi
- Nora Martin
- Megan Suzanne Maass
- William Lewis
- Jennifer Founds
- Corey Hiti
- Stephanie Cao
- Cory Combs
- Megan Doheny
- Matthew Sun
- Kathleen Wang
- Sylvia Tomiyama
- Andrea Fuller
- John duPont
- Amanda Garvin
- Glenn Hickman
- Grace Hunter
- Leia Lorica
FOREWORD

Thanks to the generosity of the late D. Power Boothe Jr., his wife Catie, and their son Barry, the Boothe Prizes recognize and reward outstanding expository, argumentative, and research-based writing of first-year students in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric and the Introduction to the Humanities Program. Each quarter superior student work from courses in both programs is nominated and submitted to Boothe Prize committee judges. Winning papers are then collected for publication, and Boothe Prizes awarded at a celebratory ceremony each spring in honor of these talented student writers and their instructors.

As this collection of essays from spring and autumn 2005 and winter 2006 indicates, the selection process is no easy task at any of the judging stages. The essays represent the broad range and reach of many of Stanford’s first-year writers; they often are remarkable in their analytic power and sophisticated rhetorical skills, as well as their personal engagement with a topic or text. Their papers additionally reveal the varying kinds of research opportunities available to Stanford’s first-year students, and the quality of work students are able to do in a short period of time, usually on fairly unfamiliar material, all the while managing the difficult work of their other courses. We take particular pleasure, then, in honoring these superior young scholars.

Our special thanks go to the Boothe family for their support and encouragement of Stanford’s first-year PWR and IHUM students in offering the Boothe Prizes and making possible the publication of these essays. We also thank the Boothe Prize Selection Committees for PWR and IHUM and the Project Committee, a collaborative venture among faculty and staff from both PWR and IHUM who planned, edited, and produced The Boothe Prize Essays 2006.

Most of all, our thanks to the many talented first-year writers whose essays were nominated for the Boothe Prize and, especially, to the students and instructors whose exemplary work now takes its place in the intellectual life of Stanford’s first-year programs.

John Bravman
Freeman-Thornton Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Essays from the
Program in
Writing and Rhetoric

Stanford University

Boothe Prize Winners
& Honorable Mentions
INTRODUCTION

First-year writing, one of Stanford’s oldest traditions, has been taught since the founding of the University. Current courses in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) provide a setting for students new to the university to focus their intellectual energies on the art and craft of writing. PWR’s small, seminar/workshop-style classes offer students the opportunity to develop their writing abilities in academic analysis and argument with the careful and consistent guidance of an experienced writing instructor.

We have now fully implemented the second-level PWR 2 course, with added emphasis on oral and multimedia rhetoric. PWR 1, the first-year course from which Boothe Prize nominations are drawn, continues to emphasize various forms of analysis and substantial research-based projects. The essays selected as the Winners and Honorable Mentions for the Boothe Prize represent the best of students’ work in these areas, and it is our pleasure to share them with the larger Stanford community.

Throughout the curriculum, PWR is committed to leading students toward strong performance in all elements of writing, including understanding a writer’s stance, developing a supportable argumentative thesis, deploying cogent proofs, and writing for a range of audiences. Each of these essays demonstrates the way in which PWR courses guide Stanford’s first-year students in presenting their ideas with the intellectual rigor and stylistic force expected of university students.

As Directors of the Program, we have had the privilege of reading all the essays nominated for the Boothe Prize, and we have been impressed over and over again by how well these beginning University students have met the challenges of first-year writing. We value the intellectual curiosity, freshness of thought and expression, and engagement with the ideas of others represented in the essays published here, and we offer our heartiest congratulations to these writers as well as to their instructors.

Andrea A. Lunsford, Director, PWR
Marvin Diogenes, Associate Director, PWR
Spring 2005 Winner

Kimber Lockhart

Instructor’s Foreword

“Reading Between the Lines: The Rhetoric of Literacy” participated in the Community Writing Project. In working toward her Research Based Argument, Kimber Lockhart fused the “think globally, write locally” energy of that program with the research and analysis that culminate in PWR 1. Her writing process began with a topic that mattered to her: the causes for and consequences of the under-representation of women in computer science. As she began her research, she recognized that her experience at Stanford accounted in large part for her interest in this broad issue and that it could (and should) inform her research and writing.

As she recounts in her essay, Kimber conducted extensive primary and secondary research and collated anecdotal and statistical data to ground her assertion of Stanford’s obligation and opportunity to involve more women undergraduates in its Computer Science program. The result—“Women in Computer Science: A Skill Specific Analysis”—frames the particular case of Stanford’s Computer Science major within broader trends in the culture of computing, and frames it to great effect: in a concluding section emboldened by the global breadth and local depth of her research, Kimber makes innovative and practical recommendations as to how the Stanford Computer Science department can welcome more female students. Members of the Computer Science faculty have applauded her work and the department has begun implementing some of her recruitment and curricular suggestions.

Kimber demonstrates exceptional bravery in this essay, for she not only takes theory and puts it into practice in a department of which she is a young member, but she does so in a department in which male students so notoriously outnumber female students that last year’s unofficial Computer Science t-shirt made a joke of it. Kimber begins there. By the end of her essay she has, without bitterness, rewritten the punch line.

Claire Bowen
Women in Computer Science: A Skill-Specific Analysis
Kimber Lockhart

The unofficial t-shirt of Stanford University’s Computer Science department features seven simplistic white figures on a plain black background with the words “Stanford Computer Science 2004-05” printed below. For such a simple design, the shirt has created a lot of controversy. Why? Six of the figures are male and one is female.

Soon after the t-shirts made their debut, articles began appearing in The Stanford Daily. Entitled “Computer Science T-shirts are Offensive,” Betty Zhao’s May 2 letter to the editor questions the propriety of making gender and enrollment the comic focus of a departmental t-shirt. She asks, “If you were a female student in Computer Science, wouldn’t it be troubling to see your minority status being displayed on the chests of your primarily male classmates for the purpose of humor?” Shortly thereafter, Stanford Computer Science course advisor Mike Brzozowski wrote to emphasize that the shirts were not officially affiliated with the department, which is sensitive to the needs of all students. Despite these arguments, the seven person logo graces the chests of many Stanford students, Computer Science majors and non-majors, men and women alike.

Figure 1. 2005 Unofficial Stanford Computer Science Department T-Shirt (Author Photo).

While the shirt obviously pokes fun at the nearly six to one ratio of men to women in Stanford’s Computer Science department, it also points out a rather disturbing trend in computer science around the world. The prevalence of these t-shirts on Stanford’s campus is indicative of how the under-representation of women has become an accepted part of the culture of computer science. After all, this culture is built upon the stereotype of a Computer Science major as one-dimensional, antisocial and “geeky.” Computer Science departments are making efforts to challenge this culture and bring more women into computing majors. These efforts, however, have met little success. It is easy to blame this phenomenon on a lack of computer science ability or experience in women. I have found, however, that each gender generally possesses distinct skills important to success.
in computer science. We need to adopt skill-specific strategies to attract more talented women to computer science.

In contrast to many other engineering disciplines, women were well-represented in the early days of computer science. Women made up thirty-seven percent of computer science undergraduates during the technology boom of the mid-1980’s (National Center for Education Statistics). Since then, the percentage of women undergraduates has been declining. Even the internet boom of the late 1990’s, during which technology majors were extremely popular and profitable, the percentage of women majoring in computer science remained stagnant. By 2003 that percentage had fallen below eighteen, and the trend is showing no signs of reversing (Vegso).

In “Is Diversity in Computing a Moral Matter?” Johnson and Miller assess the claim that women are underrepresented in computer science because they choose not to go into the field (9). It follows from this claim that we should not waste energy and resources trying to encourage women’s participation. This is not a convincing argument. While it may be true that there is little overt discrimination against women, there are other ways to make women feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in computer science. Not only is the practice unethical, it is disadvantageous to the discipline to miss out on the potential contribution of women (Johnson and Miller 10).

This contribution is vital to the integration of computing into society. Although “recreational and educational software programs reflect the gender biases and stereotypes of their [mostly male] designers” and much of the software today reflects a subtle bias towards men, women make up a large proportion of software users (Pearl et al. 136). They surf the internet in equal proportion to men and form the majority of internet consumers (Margolis and Fisher 2). For women to feel more comfortable using computers, the gender bias in software towards men must be neutralized. To make this happen, we must address the shortage of women computer scientists.
In addition, the United States faces an impending overall shortage of computer science professionals. Demographic trends suggest a significant decrease in the number of white men entering college during the next decade (Pearl et al. 135). Because white men make up the majority of computing majors, the number of computing majors and qualified computing professionals will also decrease (see figure 3). Coupled with increased demands for technology professionals in the near future, this may result in a critical labor shortage, especially if more women do not enter the field. It is worth our time and resources to encourage women in computer science.

![Figure 3. Newly Declared Computing Undergraduate Majors in the United States (Computing Research Association).](image)

To successfully recruit women into computer science, we must first determine what turns them away from the discipline. One theory holds that men are simply better at computer science than women. Perhaps something innate about men or the way men are raised and socialized makes them a better fit for computer science. The evidence, however, suggests that this is not the case. Overall measured intelligence of both genders is the same (Lippa 25). More importantly, men and women achieve nearly identical grades in undergraduate computer science courses (Margolis and Fisher 2). If men were somehow naturally better at computer science they should, on average, perform better than women. Overall, men do not appear to have an advantage over women in the discipline.

Perhaps then, the culture surrounding computing appeals more to men than to women. A stereotypical computer science student loves computers and coding more than anything. He might spend long hours late at night in a dark, antisocial computer lab, with little to show for it except some cryptic code and a “monitor tan.” Many women, especially in adolescence, simply do not want to be associated with this image. Although this cultural element is important to address, it cannot be the focus of efforts to increase women’s participation in computer science. Attempts to artificially force a friendlier culture on computing have not proven successful. Understanding and tackling the factors that led to the establishment of this culture is the only path to lasting change.

I theorize that the factors creating the gender gap in computer science enrollment are largely based on discrepancies between the genders in specific skills required for success in computer science. Though men and women are equally suited to succeed in the discipline, each group may tend to excel in distinct aspects of computer science. I surveyed Stanford Computer Science professors and examined modern computer science
education literature to determine which skills contribute to success in computer science, primarily at the undergraduate level. I chose to focus on undergraduate education because recruitment strategies must be implemented as early as possible in order to produce a larger number of qualified graduates. Ideally, some changes would take place in junior high and high school. Since many high schools do not have quality computer science programs, and it is very difficult to get pertinent information to teachers in the programs that do exist, high school is not a realistic catalyst for change. In addition, most students choose the field they will study during their first two years as an undergraduate, making undergraduate recruitment the ideal focus for this study.

To compile a computer science skill set, I consulted four professors and five print sources. From these, I identified twenty-nine important traits, with citations ranging in frequency from one to five. I then compiled a list of the top ten traits for success in Computer Science. Table 1 lists each trait along with the number of sources that cited the trait as necessary for success in computer science.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Number of Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Written and Verbal Communication</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love for Problem Solving</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Decompose Large Problems (Attention to Detail)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Thinking/Analytical Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to Work as a Team</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort With Abstract Concepts and Symbol Processing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical Skills</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confidence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Top Ten Essential Traits for Success in Computer Science

Next, I consulted scholarly literature in modern psychology to determine if researchers had determined a generalized gender difference in each trait, either innate or ingrained from human socialization patterns. For the purposes of my work, the origin of a trait difference is largely inconsequential – what is important is that the difference exists and could play a role in the different responses of men and women to the modern conception of computer science. Not surprisingly, several traits on the list reveal a gender bias, some towards men and some towards women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men's Bias</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Women's Bias</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Abstract concepts and symbolism</td>
<td>• Strategic thinking and analytical skills</td>
<td>• Written and verbal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
<td>• Logical reasoning</td>
<td>• Ability to work as a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mathematical ability</td>
<td>• Mathematical ability</td>
<td>• Organizational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Problem solving ability</td>
<td>• Problem solving ability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Results of gender difference analysis.

1 See Appendix 2 for sources included in survey.

2 The ability to decompose large problems was not included due to insufficient sex difference data.
On average, men perform better than women on many kinds of visual-spatial tests, particularly on tests of mental rotation. In these tests, participants are asked to “mentally turn around a sketched three-dimensional object to see if it is the same as an object presented in a different orientation” (Lippa 25). This type of thinking closely resembles the thinking necessary for processing abstract concepts and symbolism. Because of this relationship, men may have a slight advantage over women in this skill area.

On the other hand, “Gender differences in spatial ability occur in fairly specific skills . . . [they] do not occur on spatial tasks that rely heavily on analytic combination of complex information” (Linn and Petersen 87). In other words, men and women have equal potential in their analytic ability. No difference in strategic thinking and analytical skills exists between the genders. Similarly, studies of deductive logical reasoning find “no or very few differences . . . between the sexes” (Brandon).

Communication skills and ability to work as a team, however, are slightly greater in women than in men. Women consistently score higher than men in measures of verbal ability, especially in verbal fluency, the process of quickly generating words that possess a certain meaning or feature (Lippa 24). This skill is closely related to overall verbal communication ability. Women possess a slight advantage in other modes of communication as well. While men tend to use a more direct, assertive approach to communication, women are better at reading nonverbal cues and carefully choosing the words and tone most appropriate to the situation (LaFrance and Harris 137). Because of their high ability in interpersonal communication and an “interconnected view of the world” (Lippa 28) women tend to be skilled team players as well.

Though not as well documented, some evidence suggests women may have better organizational skills then men. A study of undergraduate students at a metropolitan university revealed that women rank their own organizational skills 13% higher than men rank their skills (Belcheir). This indicates a possible skill difference and a clear organizational confidence difference between women and men.

Perhaps the most notable skill difference between men and women was in measures of self-esteem. While men’s and women’s self-confidence levels tend to be equal through much of the human life span, a discrepancy develops in late adolescence (Lippa 29). Women tend to experience a “much greater lack of self-esteem during their college years than do men” (Pearl et al. 137).

Sex differences in problem solving and mathematical ability are slightly more controversial. While there is no evidence that men enjoy problem solving any more than women, men tend to score better on tests of mathematical problem solving (Kimura 68). Some studies point to a decrease in this gender gap over the last decade, suggesting that the apparent difference in problem solving ability reflects inadequate measures of these skills. In Human Sex Differences, G. Mitchell asserts “Boys are not better at analyzing and selecting elements needed for a solution of a problem” (175). Similarly, men have a slight advantage in overall mathematical ability; “67% of men perform better than the average woman does on math tests” (Lippa 24). Again, this may be inaccurate as “gender differences in math achievement have disappeared in most countries” (Klawe 17) and “girls, if anything, get better marks in math courses than boys do” (Kimura 67). Moreover, mathematical ability is one of the less frequently cited skills for excellence in computer science. Sophisticated mathematical understanding is certainly necessary for some areas of
computer science, but not relevant for other areas, and has a surprisingly low correlation with overall success in computer science (Klawe 17).

Clearly then, neither gender has a distinct advantage in skills important for computer science success. Men tend to excel at some aspects of computer science; women excel at others. The problem keeping women out of computer science is not a lack of ability, but rather different abilities. Effective strategies to draw more women into the discipline should focus on increasing the emphasis on women-dominated aspects of computer science. This does not, however, imply a decrease in emphasis on male-dominated skills. Rather, because “the model of a successful CS student is viewed through a male prism,” we need to shift that prism and strike a balance between the sexes to make computer science a friendly field in which all achieve (Marolis and Fisher 75).

Based on the results of my study, I suggest five changes to undergraduate curriculum.

1. Equal emphasis on men’s and women’s abilities in departmental and disciplinary promotional materials and workshops.
2. Admission policies and course requirements that emphasize underlying traits rather than programming experience.
3. Increased focus on communication skills at all levels of the curriculum.
4. Simulations of real-world teamwork – especially in introductory classes.
5. Advanced course offerings in computer science communication and team development strategies.

Many women initially encounter computer science through flyers, workshops, and other outreach material supplied by university computer science departments. Therefore, it is critical for these materials to emphasize the entire range of skills necessary for computer science achievement. I suggest developing a flyer that features the function of women-dominated traits in computer science. This flyer would target stereotypes of computer science as antisocial and reassure potential students that a great amount of programming experience is not a prerequisite for success in the field. Departmental recruiting workshops should also make use of the entire computer science skill set and teach students about topics in computer science they may look forward to in the future. This way, we would have a chance to dispel myths about computer science before the admission process even begins.

Admission policy reform is an important method of recruiting more women to computer science, especially in universities with departmentally-based admission procedures. It is critical, however, that these reforms do not just ease the admission standards for women. This will result in women (and men) questioning whether they deserve to even be in the department. Instead, we need a more holistic approach. Because “prior experience [does] not predict eventual success,” admissions decisions should consider traits and skills important for success in computer science rather than an applicant’s programming experience (Margolis and Fisher 130). Officials at Carnegie Mellon University have adopted this policy over the last decade. These changes in admissions policies look promising, but could be further improved by compiling a more extensive list of necessary traits and skills.

For universities without departmental admissions, introductory classes can implement the same strategies. Assignments and exercises could be developed that emphasize the skill set behind computer science success rather than actual coding. While these assignments
should be supplementary to programming practice, they would give all experience levels an equal chance to excel in computer science from the beginning.

As part of these supplemental exercises, communication skills – especially verbal – should be implemented into the computer science curriculum. I suggest required dialogue and presentations in small, non-threatening situations. Every student should be expected to participate. Informal essays or exercises in commenting pre-written programming code would help develop written communication skills. An increased emphasis on communication in the computer science curriculum would not only attract more women to the discipline, but also challenge the stereotype that computer science majors are antisocial, and improve communication skills for all students, a necessary factor for success in many fields.

Teamwork is another real-world skill underemphasized in introductory computer science classes. While independent programming experience is a necessary part of any undergraduate curriculum, there are many more opportunities for collaboration. These cooperative projects, however, will do little good unless they are structured similarly to collaboration in academia and industry. I suggest projects in groups of five or six where each member takes on a different role in completing the project. For example, one member could write the client code while others write necessary classes and/or libraries to complete the project. This type of assignment would allow for social interaction and team building, skills that generally attract women, and teach computer science students how computer development functions outside of academia.

This emphasis on communication and teamwork could be developed into an upper-level series for computer science majors. Courses could examine the role communication and teamwork play in computer science while building student’s skills in these areas. To offer this option would remind women that the aspects of computer science in which they tend to excel are important and valuable for success in the discipline.

While both men and women are equally suited for success in computer science, each group brings a slightly different skill set to the discipline. Computer science needs the diverse perspectives of both groups. We can achieve a more balanced gender ratio by employing strategies suggested by the different skill sets. The increased participation of women would relax the unfavorable culture that currently surrounds computing and ease the stereotypes of what it is to be a computer scientist. A population of computer scientists that accurately reflects the user demographic will allow for better software development and integration, helping to bridge the gap between technology and everyday society. Perhaps one day women will be so prevalent in computer science, the novel joke told by the 2005-2006 Stanford Computer Science t-shirt will no longer be funny.

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3 Commenting code refers to placing comments, or notes to human programmers, between lines of computer language code. Comments are critical to good programming style because they allow other programmers to determine, at a glance, what the code does.

4 Modern computer programs make use of libraries and classes to simplify the programming process. Libraries and classes are essentially collections of frequently used code encapsulated for simplicity and easy access.
Appendix 1

I emailed ten Stanford Computer Science faculty with the following request:

The first step in my research process is to compile a list of specific skills required for success in computer science. I want to try to break down the list into two (overlapping) lists – one for success at the undergraduate level (i.e. in a computer science education program) and the other for success after school.

In order to compile these lists, I need your help. Would you please create a list of 5-15 specific traits (interests and/or experience could be included as well) that you consider essential to computer science at each level? I will then compile the lists to create specific skill sets and begin the next phase of my research.

Four professors returned usable responses. Though the response rate was below 50%, the professors that responded were lecturers who routinely interact with undergraduates and are interested in Computer Science education. The professors who did not respond were generally researchers in the Computer Science department.

Appendix 2

Sources consulted to build essential computer science skill set. See Works Cited for complete citations.

Email to Author:
Johnson
Roberts
Sahami
Weiderhold

Print Sources

Klawe
Lee, Trauth, and Farwell
Prey and Treu
Taylor and Mounfield
United States Bureau of Labor Statistics


Johnson, Margaret. Email to Author. 14 May 2005.


Roberts, Eric. Email to Author. 16 May 2005.

Sahami, Mehran. Email to Author. 16 May 2005.


Weiderhold, Gio. Email to Author. 15 May 2005.

Spring 2005 Honorable Mention

Nick Parker

Instructor’s Foreword

On its surface, “The Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell: Mistakes Worth Fixing” is an essay that advocates the draining of Utah’s Lake Powell for the sake of preserving nature. But beneath the surface, in its crust, the argument is an appeal to ethical concerns: What kind of world will our children live in? If the right thing to do and the practical thing to do are one and the same, how can we not act? Can a gesture of penance atone for our sins (in this case, against our planet)? And yet deeper still, at the core, the essay touches the kind of personal strain that a respected professor once described to me, a strain that separates the great books from the rest. The train of thought that culminated in this essay was practically years old; it all began with Nick reading Wallace Stegner’s “Wilderness Letter” for an American literature course back in high school, before Nick ever knew he would come to Stanford, much less be enrolled in my PWR 1 section on manifestos. Stegner’s letter vocalized a stance that Nick sympathized with, that made eloquent the naturalist’s lobby, and in doing so both validated and motivated Nick’s interest in environmental issues. The reflections of Nick’s argument have a history: his interest in nature conservation coupled with a more abstract concern with posterity, the latter of which I still wonder about often. Though it is likely that the published words of an author will survive him, they stand a better chance if dense with conviction.

David Colón
The Rocky Mountain region of the western United States is, essentially, a giant desert. There is no shortage of breathtaking natural beauty, but it is virtually bereft of the resources necessary for human life. And yet, despite the rugged nature of the country, the American West was the fastest growing part of the nation in the mid-twentieth century. During that time, one of the greatest concerns for the West was the scarcity of – and desperate need for – water, a problem that was predicted by naturalist and explorer John Wesley Powell one hundred years beforehand. To cope with the astronomical growth of the western United States and its cities’ need for water, the utilitarian federal government agreed to build numerous hydroelectric dams throughout the West which, they hoped, would not only provide power, but would also store precious water in enormous reservoirs. Unfortunately, these dams also scarred and destroyed the surrounding environment. One of these monstrous dams was in southern Utah, at Glen Canyon. In damming the Colorado River, the federal government committed a shortsighted mistake that has had serious long-term consequences. Now that the dam’s hydroelectric power is obsolete and the area is being used only as a recreational resource, there is a desperate need for a thorough reevaluation of the area and its importance to all Americans. Continuing to let the waters of Lake Powell smother the beautiful features of long-lost Glen Canyon is a stain on our collective public conscience. As such, we need to drain Lake Powell and let the restorative properties of nature take care of the area. The full draining of the lake – which would be economically profitable as well as spiritually refreshing – is the only adequate option available to us.
The Complicated History Behind the Dam

In the early-mid 1950’s, the federal government considered various proposals to dam the Grand Canyon. Responding to and feeding off of the American public’s familiarity with and love for the threatened national landmark, many environmental groups, headed by the up-and-coming Sierra Club, led the fight to table these proposals and eliminate any potential for a dam in Grand Canyon. In order to gain public support for keeping the Canyon devoid of concrete, conservationists demonized the proposals’ proponents, while at the same time championing their own cause. As Byron Pearson wrote, “Grand Canyon belonged to everyone, preservationists argued, and it was those who sought to deface it with dams who were selfish, not the people trying to save it” (141). While environmentalists were successful in preventing the construction of a dam in Grand Canyon, that fight blinded them from other, equally pressing issues. In the late 1950’s, the Sierra Club led the charge to stop dams proposed for the Grand Canyon, but it did not object to a dam in little-known Glen Canyon (Price F1). The Sierra Club’s protection of Grand Canyon was of great importance to the American public, whose objection to the proposals contributed significantly to the concentrated efforts of environmental groups to prevent a dam in the area. Unfortunately, this victory came at a high price.

After the idea of a dam in Grand Canyon failed, the federal government told the American public that if there was to be no dam in Grand Canyon, there had to be one somewhere else nearby. Many Americans knew very little about that area of the country aside from the wonders of Grand Canyon; consequently, they cared less about dams in other places, and environmentalists were faced with a choice: either approve a dam on the Green River in Northern Utah that would flood much of Dinosaur National Monument or a dam on the Colorado River at Glen Canyon, located just 15 miles upstream of the border of Grand Canyon National Park. The uniqueness, relative popularity, and accessibility of Dinosaur National Monument in combination with the obscurity and isolation of Glen Canyon prompted the Sierra Club, which had, by 1956, become the face of American environmentalism, to oppose the dam on the Green River and approve the proposed dam at Glen Canyon. As David Brower, the executive director of the Sierra Club at the time, wrote, “In 1956 the Club directors instructed me . . . to end the club’s opposition to the construction of the dam at Glen Canyon if the two dams proposed upstream in Dinosaur were dropped” (181). The Sierra Club accepted and even approved of the compromise, and its leaders willingly sacrificed one of nature’s jewels for another. Brower revealed that he “even urged the construction of a higher Glen Canyon dam as a way to save Dinosaur” in the first few months of the fight over Dinosaur National Monument (181). In explicitly placing a higher value on Dinosaur National Monument than Glen Canyon, the Sierra Club doomed a unique, beautiful area of the West simply because its secret beauty was less familiar than that of another place.

After the Glen Canyon Dam was completed in 1963 and the Colorado’s waters began to back up behind it to form Lake Powell, Brower visited the area for the first time. Immediately, he regretted his decision to sacrifice Glen Canyon and blamed himself for ignoring the protests of its supporters – including Wallace Stegner’s warning that, “Dinosaur doesn’t hold a candle to Glen” – who had unsuccessfully tried to convince him to protect the area from damming (Brower 182). Brower’s prioritization of Dinosaur National Monument over Glen Canyon was the product of a simple lack of knowledge, and upon visiting the area, the Sierra Club’s executive director realized that his “problem [was] not having seen Glen before offering to give it away” (Brower 182). Brower’s decision
to sacrifice Glen Canyon in favor of Dinosaur National Monument was based more on familiarity with Dinosaur and unfamiliarity with Glen than it was on the true comparative value of the two wilderness sanctuaries. To his credit, Brower did not let his uninformed decision define his life. As Tom Price, a reporter for *The New York Times*, explained, Brower “Lament[ed] the lost canyons and grottos as ‘the place no one knew,’ [and] spent the rest of his life attempting to undo his mistake” (F2). In his writings, Brower described spectacular stone temples and delicate marble canyons that were quickly disappearing under the waters of the lake, and he spent much of the rest of his life mourning these losses and trying unsuccessfully to persuade Congress to drain the lake and once again reveal the canyon’s lost treasures.

An Interminable Fight: Water in the American West

The addictive manifest destiny ideology that permeated American culture in the nineteenth century stimulated a massive East-West movement that began in the mid-1800’s period of gold rushes and intense immigration, before ending with the closing of the frontier in the mid-twentieth century. Throughout that time, and continuing to the present day, the most precious and controversial commodity in the West has remained constant: water. The history of the fight over water is a long and complicated one that has existed ever since people began to populate the arid western half of this country. In turn, the relationship between water and the American West represents the usually harmful relationship between humans and nature. As Kevin Wehr writes, “The history of water and the American West, vast as it is, shows the continuities and changes over time of the relationship of humans to their environment. Through the settlement of the western frontier, the American state addressed concerns about scarcity by building an infrastructure on the landscape” (57). As the population of the West expanded and the Western states required more water, our relationship to the land became more tenuous. And, as Wehr explains, the “infrastructure” that we impose on nature has consequences not only on the environment, but also on man himself. “The establishment of large-scale water systems had profound effects upon the environment and society of the region” (42). The construction of massive dams and irrigation systems in the American West has had serious
repercussions, as humans have become dependent on artificial water systems that, despite their builders’ desperate hopes, are not permanent.

This dependent relationship often manifests itself in the actions of the federal government, which has had a tendency to intervene on the water problem in the West. Beginning during the Great Depression of the 1930’s and continuing through the Cold War era of the 1960’s, hundreds of enormous dams were constructed in the Western half of the country. According to Wehr, “The construction of massive dams and irrigation projects is the most material outcome of an era of progressive government” (41). In constructing these dams and imposing damaging large-scale water systems on the fragile ecosystem of Western deserts, the federal government revealed its shortsighted, utilitarian side. Instead of considering the long-term consequences of its actions, the government ignored environmental concerns in an attempt to get a quick fix, a temporary solution to the rapidly growing water problem in the burgeoning American West. “The progressive manifestation of the utilitarian ideology of ‘the greatest good for the greatest number,’ . . . represents an acceleration of bureaucratic rationalization and human control of nature” (Wehr 41-42). In acquiescing to the demands of the ever-increasing population in Western cities by building dams without considering their repercussions, the federal government exposed its pragmatic ideology. In this way, the “bureaucratic rationalization and human control of nature” that Wehr discusses represents one half of the complicated debate over water.

Fundamentally, the fight over water in the West pits environmentalists against people who believe that nature exists simply for our benefit. These two sides – both of which appreciate the environment – are split into two opposing factions over the issue of water. At the heart of this schism is the question: What is more important, preservation or conservation? As Wehr writes, “There developed a split among those who believed in a need for the conservation of resources. On one side were the majority of government administrators, who held that resources must be used wisely in order to conserve them for the future. On the other side were those who believed in the preservation of wilderness based on aesthetic and spiritual values that, they argued, superceded all other human uses” (49). Though both sides agree that the environment is important and deserves our attention, they are also diametrically opposed in the sense that they value nature for different reasons. While some people believe that the wilderness is worth protecting and conserving because of its tangible, material benefits, others counter that nature is most beneficial in an abstract, spiritual sense. These opposing viewpoints reveal the broad scope of environmentalism and its proponents, ranging from utilitarian conservationists to purist preservationists, and the debate between the two sides is a fitting introduction to the controversy surrounding the Glen Canyon Dam.

The Spiritual Glory of Pre-Dam Glen Canyon

In order to fully understand the debate over the Glen Canyon Dam, it is necessary to appreciate what was lost under the waters of Lake Powell. The area’s pre-dam wonders are available to us only through visitors’ descriptions of the area, but these descriptions are enough to convey the tremendous beauty Glen Canyon must have harbored. Julius Stone, who was “The first – and for a long time the only – man to float through [Glen] Canyon not in pursuit of science or notoriety, of pelts or illusive pieces of gold, but solely for the pleasure of doing so” (Martin 158) described his 1909 trip with superlatives and with a great admiration for nature. He described Glen Canyon as a place, “where
the world is shut out, [and] the spirit of
the wilderness still abides and welcomes
one into the full freedom and magic of
the night and morning; uplifting and
swaying the beholder with a sense of
being that is delightful past compare”
(qtd. in Martin 159). Stone’s description
of the area is one that reflects the
attitude of the purist preservationists,
who advocate that the wilderness is
more valuable as an abstract resource
than a concrete one. In addition, Stone,
who was an Ohio industrialist, reveals
that the beauty of the area was just as
convincing to average Americans as it
was to staunch environmentalists. Price
was equally enamored with the area
during his visit to the Cathedral in the
Desert – which is considered by many to be the jewel of Glen Canyon. He described
the Cathedral as a magical place where, “Orange-hued sandstone streaked with seeping
water closed in from three sides, the rock soaring nearly 200 feet overhead. The walls
above seemed to touch, parting just enough for a shaft of late afternoon light to warm
the sepulchral chamber in a soft glow” (F2). Price’s romantic description of Glen Canyon
echoes Stone’s, and is emblematic of the purists’ opinion that the area was most valuable
aesthetically and spiritually, not for its potential as a reservoir.

Not everyone, however, saw pre-dam Glen Canyon in the same light, and the
area had two very different meanings for two very different kinds of people. Utilitarian
conservationists regarded Glen Canyon as wasted space, and they were unable to appreciate
the area’s natural beauty. A 1924 report on Glen Canyon’s potential as a dam site captures
the pragmatic ideology of the federal government, stating that, “The uninhabited canyon
was of no particular value so far as is known” (qtd. in Martin 27). This disregard for
natural beauty and the benefits that such a place can have on society is indicative of
the government’s policy of sacrificing the environment in favor of myopic, utilitarian
projects. Even former President Theodore Roosevelt – whose environmental legacy is
strong – wanted the Colorado’s “waters that now run to waste . . . saved and used for
irrigation” (qtd. in Martin 30). In this way, the government saw Glen Canyon not as a
naturally beautiful place, but rather as an area full of potential for material use.

On the other hand, preservationists saw Glen Canyon as a Mecca for beauty and
salvation, where the diversity of nature was in full bloom. Visitors to the area often
described their experiences in Glen Canyon as mystical and otherworldly, using language
often reserved for religious epiphanies. Eliot Porter, a lawyer in Santa Fe, New Mexico,
was so overwhelmed by the area that his expressive language demonstrates the inability
to do the area justice through words. He wrote that “the monumental structure of the
towering walls in variety and color defied comprehension” and that the impression
was so powerful that he “didn’t know where to look, what to focus on;” he believed he
“was witnessing a dynamic remolding of the earth itself” (qtd. in Martin 177). Porter’s
emotional description reflects the awe-inspiring qualities of Glen Canyon and accurately
represents the preservationists’ opinion that, “the Colorado’s canyons might be most valuable in terms of what they offered in the way of wonder” (Martin 159). Though they recognize the value of the wilderness as a material and recreational resource, purists believe that nature is most precious as a source of spiritual refreshment that cannot be quantified and should not be compromised in the name of “progress.”

**Lake Powell: A “Bizarre and Somehow Exciting” Place**

There are many people, however, who believe that it is our right – and even our responsibility – to tailor the environment to suit our needs. As such, proponents of Glen Canyon Dam argue that Lake Powell is a gem, a recreational paradise in the otherwise inhospitable deserts of southern Utah. In some ways, they are right. Lake Powell provides recreational opportunities for the three million tourists it attracts each year, and these visitors bring in half a billion dollars annually to the area (United States 15). In addition, the dam and the five marinas that serve the lake provide jobs for the poor, uneducated Navajo Indians in the surrounding communities where unemployment levels can exceed fifty percent. Above all else, however, the dam’s advocates focus on the recreational opportunities that Lake Powell – which, according to its website is, “America’s Favorite Houseboating Destination” (The New Lake Powell 1) – provides. “Lake Powell holds working water – water for many purposes. And one of those purposes is to provide the people of this country with the finest scenic and recreational area in the Nation,” wrote former commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Floyd Dominy, the man who pushed for the construction of Glen Canyon Dam (126). Lake Powell, Dominy would argue, is a recreational playground for all ages that offers its visitors a chance to explore a beautiful part of the country.

This exploration, Dominy and other supporters of Glen Canyon Dam claim, would not be possible without the dam, because Lake Powell’s existence has made the area more accessible to the general public. Dominy encourages tourists, “to visit Lake Powell and especially to see that natural marvel Rainbow Bridge. Before Lake Powell, Rainbow Bridge National Monument could be visited only by the rugged few who ‘packed’ in. Now all of you can see it – easily” (127). Dominy argues that in the pre-dam era, the only people who were able to experience the beauty of Glen Canyon were “the rugged few” who were willing to go to great lengths to get there, but the construction of the dam and the subsequent creation of Lake Powell made the area more welcoming to the average American. The argument that Lake Powell is a popular recreational paradise that has made the area more accessible to visitors than it was before the dam is one that many conservationists and happy tourists use to rationalize and justify the creation of both Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell.
Some proponents, however, also offer a more controversial defense of the dam, one that supports their position on a theological basis. The unconventional belief that Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell exist in harmony with God, while not widely held, is evident in the writing of the dam’s fiercest sponsors such as Dominy, whose descriptions of the area are colorful and infused with religious symbolism. “The bright blue sky deepens slowly to a velvet purple and the stars are brilliant – glittering in the vast immensity above. Orange sandstone cliffs fade to dusky red – then to blackest black. The fire burns low – reflected in the placid lake. There is peace. And a oneness with the world and God” (128). Dominy sees a sacred spirituality in the waters of Lake Powell, and he applies these theological overtones to the environment as a whole, boldly using them to justify the dam. “There is a natural order to the universe. God created both man and nature. And man serves God. But nature serves man, and man has flung down a giant barrier in the path of the turbulent Colorado in Arizona. It has tamed the wild river – made it a servant to man’s will” (qtd. in Martin 244-245). The proposition that nature is subservient to man – that “nature serves man” – and that there is a “natural order to the universe” is impossible to prove and is far more opinionated than other defenses of the dam, but it nonetheless surely resonates within a certain segment of the population.

As viable and convincing as the defenses of Glen Canyon Dam may be – and while the area is still a beautiful place to visit – what was lost under the waters of Lake Powell was more spectacular than what remains today. To that end, some preservationists, such as Wallace Stegner, both acknowledge the sanctity of Lake Powell, while at the same time provide a reaffirmation of the drowned beauty of Glen Canyon. As Stegner explains, “Lake Powell is beautiful. It isn’t Glen Canyon, but it is something in itself. The contact of deep blue water and uncompromising stone is bizarre and somehow exciting . . . And yet, vast and beautiful as it is, open now to anyone with a boat or the money to rent one . . . it strikes me, even in my exhilaration, with the consciousness of loss. In gaining the lovely and usable, we have given up the incomparable” (qtd. in Farmer 171). Stegner’s recognition of the “bizarre and somehow exciting” beauty of Lake Powell reveals the nature of the controversy surrounding the dam. While he appreciates the increased accessibility of the area, Stegner also describes the “consciousness of loss” stimulated by the dam and laments that in making the Glen Canyon region more accessible to the general public we have lost the “incomparable” beauty of the original area. In doing so, Stegner begins to hint at the problems posed by Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell.
Program in Writing and Rhetoric

Questioning the Value of the Dam and the Uses of the Lake

The debate over Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell rages on today, as conservationists and preservationists compare and contrast the merits of the dam and the lake versus the merits of pre-dam Glen Canyon. The fundamental question at the center of the debate is, as Farmer writes, “Was it worth losing some of the beauty of this country when many more people can enjoy the great beauty that remains?” (129). Preservationists would argue that sacrificing an aesthetic resource as valuable and rare as Glen Canyon is not worth it, regardless of how positive the “benefits” are. As such, dam haters answer no and “argue for Glen Canyon’s superior beauty and the superior quality of its recreation” (Farmer 129). Meanwhile, conservationists and hedonists use a “quantity over quality” argument that stresses the recreational benefits of the lake. As Farmer writes, “The apologists, meanwhile, tend to emphasize recreational quantity – can millions of happy boaters be wrong?” (129). The two sides will likely continue this debate for many years to come and will never agree on the answer to Farmer’s question. However, if we care at all about the fate of future generations, we have a responsibility to thoroughly reevaluate the condition of Glen Canyon Dam and Lake Powell in light of problems with the area that have just recently been exposed.

Lake Powell is now nothing but an oversized bathtub, a recreational playground in the middle of the desert, and over the years it has collected huge quantities of litter thrown over the sides of boats and washed away from beaches. This appalling fact, that people are using the lake as a receptacle for their garbage, is partially a result of the kinds of tourists that visit Lake Powell, many of whom would have never considered backpacking in pre-dam Glen Canyon. According to a University of Utah student who visited the lake in the early 1990’s, “The most common motifs were ‘naked people,’ ‘boat wrecks,’ ‘dangerous feats,’ and ‘drinking too much.’ The party crowd often displays a disturbing lack of knowledge of – not to mention respect for – the local environment” (Farmer 172). This blatant disrespect for nature displayed by many of Lake Powell’s visitors is characteristic of the fun-loving crowd that the area attracts, but very uncharacteristic of the purists who visited Glen Canyon before it was dammed. As Farmer writes, “[The newcomers] come to Powell to show off their expensive toys and to get a tan to show off when they return home. It is no longer a place to get away” (173). Tragically, by making the area more accessible we have exposed a pristine place to the negative, consuming nature of our materialistic society.

The waste problems and careless, littering tourists that plague Lake Powell have been around since people first began using the lake as a vacation destination. The descriptions of the garbage that mars the lake and its shoreline are troubling, and they go a long way to debunk Floyd Dominy’s claim that nature exists solely to serve man. “Lake Powell has a history of waste problems. . . . Toilet paper, pop cans and rifle shells often dot the campsites and side canyons” (Farmer 175-176). In destroying the landscape by covering it with our garbage, we are leaving an ugly, indelible stain on the environment. While the Anasazi Indians, the first inhabitants of the area, decorated the canyon walls with beautiful pictographs – almost all of which are now underwater – we have chosen to spruce up the landscape with toilet paper and soda cans. Not all of the garbage is visible, however, and we must also be concerned about the debris below the surface of the lake. As Farmer warns, “Out of sight doesn’t mean out of existence: the bottom of Lake Powell is collecting trash” (176). As evidence, one of the lake’s concessionaires “had used the reservoir as ‘an underwater landfill.’ More than a hundred truckloads of trash and a
thousand batteries had been dumped near Lake Powell’s five marinas between 1981 and 1990” (Farmer 177). Eventually, this lack of respect for the sanctity of nature will catch up with us. If we turn a blind eye and continue to allow the lake’s concessionaires to dump old boat batteries in the bottom of the lake, the acidity of the water will undoubtedly rise to levels that make water sports and swimming dangerous activities.

Not only has Lake Powell degenerated into a landfill for reckless, shortsighted tourists, but Glen Canyon Dam is now useless as a source of hydroelectric power. “The power plant at Glen Canyon Dam currently generates . . . enough power for about three percent of the supply in the six states served by the facility. At the present time, there is a surplus of power on the Colorado Plateau, and more power plants going online within the western region, thus Glen Canyon’s power is not needed” (Living Rivers 2). Hydroelectricity went out of fashion years ago, and the dam no longer produces significant power for Western cities. The project’s supporters envisioned an energy-producing machine that would power cities such as Phoenix, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas, and in its first few years in operation, the dam was valuable as a hydroelectric resource. However, technological advancements in the latter half of the twentieth century have made hydroelectric dams virtually obsolete. “Hydropower dams were the darling of developers in this century’s middle decade. They are now essentially irrelevant, but dam lovers don’t know it yet” (Brower 181). In the mid-twentieth century, especially between 1930-1970, utilitarian conservationists believed that hydropower dams served two purposes: they provided a valuable source of power and created large storage reservoirs in the arid American West. Now that hydroelectric power is “essentially irrelevant,” Glen Canyon Dam no longer fulfills one of its original goals.

Not only does the dam no longer produce hydroelectricity, but it is also collecting vast amounts of silt at its base and storing large amounts of garbage (much of it manmade) in the lake held behind it. As Lake Powell collects more of this silt and as tourists continue to irresponsibly dump their trash in the water, the reservoir will gradually become shallower, and “The economic character of the dam will shift away from producing hydroelectric power and waste storage. The only obvious use for large bodies of shallow water would seem to be recreation” (Wehr 56). Now that Glen Canyon Dam is not a useful source of power, its main purpose is to keep in place the waters of Lake Powell. As the lake becomes shallower, the entire area will serve no other purpose but recreation. Permanently scarring a place as beautiful and rare as Glen Canyon simply to create an enormous playground in the middle of the desert is the prospect that faces us if we continue to ignore the problems associated with the dam and the lake. This idea, that Glen Canyon Dam no longer serves any practical purpose, raises the question of whether or not building the dam was worth the consequences it has had, and pinning down the true value of nature is necessary to determine the answer.
The Wilderness Idea: An Invaluable Resource

Nature is most valuable not as a utilitarian or recreational resource, but as an abstract idea, a spiritual philosophy. As such, nature’s importance is fundamentally intangible. Wallace Stegner eloquently explained the value of this intangibility in his passionate 1960 Wilderness Letter, in which he explains that he wants to speak not for “the wilderness uses, valuable as those are, but the wilderness idea, which is a resource in itself. Being an intangible and spiritual resource, it will seem mystical to the practical minded – but then anything that cannot be moved by a bulldozer is likely to seem mystical to them” (Stegner 1). While he recognizes the value of the various utilitarian wilderness uses to the “practical minded,” Stegner advocates for his unique conception of “the wilderness idea, which is a resource in itself.” In a 1965 letter to David Brower, Thomas Dustin echoed Stegner’s sentiment, writing, “The most sublime truth is that one need not actually see it physically, or hear it or touch it or grasp it to know its fundamental value” (qtd. in Pearson 85). This idea – that the elusive qualities of nature are paramount is the crux of the purists’ argument for the preservation of natural beauty. As Wehr writes, “The discourse [of the preservationists] is thus focused on nature as an aesthetic and spiritual resource that can benefit humans in important ways outside of economics” (188). In an attempt to counter the utilitarian conservationists’ argument that nature can and should be harnessed to provide humans with material benefits that will improve society as a whole, the purists argue that nature’s spiritual powers are equally advantageous, but in less obvious ways.

Nature, preservationists claim, has healing powers that have the potential to positively affect every member of society. In our urbanized world, the soothing effects of nature provide a welcome break from the frenetic hustle-bustle of city life. “The reminder and the reassurance that it is still there is good for our spiritual health even if we never once in ten years set foot in it. It is good for us when we are young, because of the incomparable sanity it can bring briefly, as vacation and rest, into our insane lives. It is important to us when we are old simply because it is there – important, that is, simply as an idea” (Stegner 2). Nature’s peace and “the incomparable sanity it can bring” afford a different perspective on “our insane lives” and the chaos of modern society. Not surprisingly, these spiritual benefits of the environment were present in the dialogue of the fight over Glen Canyon. As Wehr explains, “The environmental discourse at Glen Canyon was focused on nature as having other forms of value . . . such as the supposed ability of nature to provide respite from urban landscapes and its restorative powers for dehumanized workers and other city-dwellers” (188). Purists argue that it is nature’s remarkable ability to temporarily blind us from the problems of society that makes the wilderness worth protecting. In addition, preservationists stress that our actions and decisions with regard to the environment tend to have far-reaching consequences that will affect not just us, but also future generations.

The destruction of the wilderness in the name of utility is a slippery slope and one that, in the long run, benefits no one. Nature cannot protect itself from man’s obsessive desire for control, and the damage we inflict on the environment is as psychologically devastating to those who value its preservation, as it is physically injurious to nature herself. “As the wilderness areas are progressively exploited or ‘improved,’ as the jeeps and bulldozers of uranium prospectors scar up the deserts and the roads are cut into the alpine timberlands, and as the remnants of the unspoiled and natural world are progressively eroded, every such loss is a little death in me. In us” (Stegner 4). The environment is a necessary resource that desperately needs our help in order to survive into the future. We should heed this requirement so generations to come can benefit from nature’s sacred
healing powers in the same way that we have. As Stegner recommends, “We need to put into effect, for [the wilderness’s] preservation, some other principle that the principles of exploitation or ‘usefulness’ or even recreation. We simply need that wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope” (6). If we continue to allow the careless exploitation of nature, future generations will have to clean up our mess and deal with the repercussions of our shortsighted decisions. In addition, they will involuntarily lead lives devoid of the valuable spiritual healing powers that nature possesses.

**Drain the Lake, but Leave the Dam Standing**

With these thoughts of the future in mind, we must remember that Glen Canyon is not gone; it is merely hidden beneath the waters of Lake Powell. As such, we can restore much of the hidden beauty of Glen Canyon simply by draining the lake. Brower, who finally convinced the Sierra Club to back his proposal to drain Lake Powell in 1995, writes that he “turned from regret to restoration” because, “The fact is . . . Glen Canyon is still there” (182). The optimism of Brower – Glen Canyon’s staunchest and most vocal defender – represents the indomitable nature of preservationists who are determined in their cause to drain the lake. “As surely as we made a mistake years ago, we can reverse it now. We can drain Lake Powell and let the Colorado River run through the dam that created it, bringing Glen Canyon and the wonder of its side canyons back to life” (Brower 180).

Though our experiment with Glen Canyon Dam failed, we can fix our mistake. Draining Lake Powell would be a long and complicated process, but it would also be extremely rewarding and fulfilling upon completion, the purists argue. While Lake Powell’s waters should be allowed to run their natural course through Glen Canyon, the dam itself is a different story.

While we have an obligation to drain Lake Powell, Glen Canyon Dam should not be destroyed; instead, it should remain as a landmark. As Brower explains, “We don’t need to tear the dam down, however much some people would like to see it go. . . . The dam itself would be left as a tourist attraction, like the Pyramids, with passers-by wondering how humanity ever built it, and why” (180). Instead of completely removing Glen Canyon Dam from our memory, we should leave it in its place both as a reminder of our shortsighted mistakes and to provide future generations with an example of exactly what not to do to the environment. While many people argue that the difficulty posed by draining Lake Powell would outweigh the benefits of re-exposing Glen Canyon, there would be other, more tangible advantages linked to opening up the dam’s release tunnels.

Draining Lake Powell would not only be beneficial to the environment, but it would also be both practical and economically smart. Lake Powell now serves no purpose other
than as an oversized bathtub, and as such, draining the lake makes sense on many levels.

As Brower proposes, “Lake Mead’s Hoover Dam can control the Colorado River without Lake Powell and can produce more power if Powell’s water is stored behind it – saving massive amounts of money, water, and wild habitat. Economics and ecology are ready to team up on this one” (181). Draining Lake Powell, purists argue, would be economically profitable because it would allow one dam (Hoover) to serve the purpose of two (Farmer 182). In addition, if the waters of the Colorado were allowed to pass freely through Glen Canyon Dam, western states would see their water resources increase. As Brower explains, “Draining Lake Powell means more water for the Colorado River states and Mexico, especially Colorado and Utah” (183). Draining Lake Powell has both tangible and intangible benefits, and the proposition should appeal to both utilitarian conservationists and purist preservationists. The economic and practical benefits of draining the lake appeal to the conservationists, while the reemergence of the wonders of Glen Canyon would appease the preservationists.

The End of Lake Powell: A Lofty – But Not Unattainable – Goal

Today, the plan to drain Lake Powell is a hot-button issue in the American West, particularly in states immediately affected by the area, such as Utah, Colorado, and Arizona. Of course, the fight still pits the same two opposing sides against each other: the utilitarian conservationists versus the purist preservationists. The practical minded argue that the proposition to drain Lake Powell would involve legal disputes that might never be settled. As Farmer writes, “Glen Canyon Dam may be necessary on paper only, but that paper is a set of treaties, laws, and legal precedents governing the use of the Colorado River, the most intensively litigated river in the world” (183). The legal issues surrounding Glen Canyon Dam are complicated and wide-ranging. As such, disparate groups of people from varying backgrounds would have to work with each other in order to eliminate the barriers preventing the draining the lake. As Farmer states, “It would require the combined initiative of citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats, and some heroic cooperation over water rights, historically one of the most contentious issues in the American West. At the same time, it would probably require a reform of the way westerners use water – limiting growth and getting by on less” (183). While this cooperation would be hard to achieve, it is an admirable goal that we must strive for if we hope to one-day drain Lake Powell. Opponents of draining the lake point to both the intense litigation linked to the dam and the recreational benefits of Lake Powell.

Defenders of the lake argue that not only does the area provide unparalleled recreational opportunities that should not be eliminated, but also that preservationists do not appreciate Lake Powell’s upside. As Farmer writes, “Anti-dam activists generally fail to appreciate the importance of Lake Powell to others. . . . They do not respect the recreation that goes on there” (187). In addition, Farmer recognizes the same “bizarre and somehow exciting” beauty of Lake Powell that Stegner appreciated during his visit to the area, explaining that, “No one would mistake it for a wilderness experience, or even a nature experience, but houseboating with family can have its own deep meaning” (187). While jet skiing or waterskiing on Lake Powell does not produce the same spiritual refreshment as an escape to the remote, untouched wilderness, it nonetheless is important to a large section of the population.

On the other side, preservationists argue that Lake Powell is a waste of water and that draining it would be economically profitable. In an attempt to broaden their appeal,
purists appealed to the utilitarian side of environmentalists, citing the extraordinary waste of water and significant profit loss that occurs as a result of the dam. Farmer explains that, “Eight percent of the Colorado River disappear[s] at Lake Powell through evaporation or percolation. Considering the going (and projected) price of water in the metropolitan West, this missing water represents millions, even billions of dollars” (183). Preservationists argue that draining the lake would eliminate the undesirable waste of water and economic loss. According to Brower, “The highest economic use of the river would be to let it run free in Glen Canyon” (Farmer 183). In addition to economic reasons, purists defend draining the lake on moral grounds.

Just as supporters of the lake argue that dam-haters do not appreciate the value of Lake Powell’s recreational opportunities, preservationists claim that lake-lovers do not understand the divine properties of nature. “Most members of the pro-lake camp don’t appreciate – perhaps can’t fathom – the depth of this ‘spiritual’ feeling” (Farmer 187). Purists also argue that not only would the draining of Lake Powell be economically profitable, but it would also be spiritually lucrative. “Whatever the final details of Lake Powell’s water losses turn out to be, the draining of the lake simply has to happen. The river and the regions dependent on it . . . can no longer afford the unconscionable loss of water. We need to get rid immediately of the illusion that the only way to protect water rights is by wasting water in Lake Powell” (Brower 183). This idea – that we have a moral obligation to drain Lake Powell – demonstrates the fierce determination of the preservationists, who will stop at nothing to achieve their goals. As Brower urges, “The sooner we begin, the sooner lost paradises will recover – Cathedral in the Desert, Music Temple, Hidden Passage, Dove Canyon, Little Arch, Dungeon, and a hundred others” (qtd. in Farmer 183). In using unwavering language indicative of their stance on the issue, purists act as if the question is not if Lake Powell will be drained, but when, and it is this attitude that gives the preservationists such a powerful voice.

Lake Powell has its benefits: it is beautiful in its own right, it is one of the greatest water playgrounds in the world, it has made a breathtaking part of the country more accessible to visitors, and it brings in five hundred million dollars per year in tourism revenue. What lies beneath the lake’s placid waters, however, is a combination of natural and spiritual beauty that cannot be found anywhere else on earth. In the pre-dam days, Glen Canyon offered its visitors salvation and an awe-inspiring escape from the ordinary. In order to restore the incomparable beauty that Glen Canyon offers its visitors, we need to drain Lake Powell. When we do so, as Brower writes, “The candle conservationists lit to remember the things lost in Glen Canyon can be put back on the shelf, and, let us pledge, be left there. In time, Glen Canyon will reassert itself, through the action of wind and water. . . . Once again, for all our time, the river can run through it” (183).
Autumn 2005 Winner

Jennifer Chin

Instructor’s Foreword

Jennifer Chin’s essay on the new Seattle Public Library (2004) designed by Rem Koolhaas and his Office for Metropolitan Architecture emerged out of my course, “Speaking with Things: The Rhetoric of Display.” In this class we sought to understand how objects on display, and the environments that contain them, “speak” to us; how they make arguments, and incite desire.

At first, Jennifer was struck by how this new library, in her hometown, was futuristic and radical in its form: shaped like a stack of falling books and clad in glass and steel, it smacks of the new, of a postmodern disregard for the past. But as Jennifer struggled to understand this building, and the library as an institution, she came to realize that it was, in fact, a very traditional library, in its function and aspirations.

I think we can see in this a double moral. First, Jennifer’s astute perspective on the Seattle library offers an excellent example of how not to be beguiled by new forms into thinking that everything has changed. Second, Jennifer’s uncertainty and genuine curiosity about her topic – so successful in propelling her through her research, writing, and multiple revisions – testify to the importance of finding a topic that you are interested in and uncertain of.

Mark Feldman
Reaffirming, Not Redefining: A Look at Rem Koolhaas’ New Seattle Central Library

Jennifer Chin

A snippet of honeycomb, a work of Picasso, a Lego creation, an enormous pile of rock candy and a stack of falling books. These are all descriptions architectural critics have bestowed upon the new glass and steel building situated at the very heart of Seattle’s downtown, safely nestled between Fourth & Fifth Avenues and Spring & Madison Streets (see figure 1) (Gilmore, Goldberger, Lacayo, Muschamp). Of these, perhaps the last description of a stack of falling books is most fitting – not necessarily because it best expresses the structure of the building, but because the building itself functions as a haven for books, both fallen and upright: it is a library. More specifically, it is the newest Seattle Central Library, renovated at the turn of the century to its current post-modern design and unveiled to the general public in May 2004 (“A Brief History”).

Even though the new Seattle Central Library stands at the very same site as its predecessors, including the first central library building raised 98 years earlier, most comparisons stop there, at least on a physical level. While an elegant Beaux-Arts style creation and later a classic “international” style building greeted former patrons (“History of the Central Library”), current visitors find themselves welcomed by an enormous yet irregularly shaped building that seems to defy architectural convention as well as common sense. The central structural components are stacked, shifted on top of each other to create a zigzag effect; seemingly random angles of steel lattice and glass jut out from the main form to pierce Seattle’s more traditional downtown skyline. If patrons can break long enough from their admiration of the outside form, equally stunning features await them inside, starting with the reception area dubbed the “Living Room” that reaches fifty-foot heights and allows views into the meeting floors and reference areas above (see figure 2). Brightly colored chartreuse escalators lined with installations of talking modern art take patrons up to those very meeting and reference areas, where rows of new computers sit ready for use and librarians wait to answer questions of any sort.
Additional escalators and elevators chug quietly upwards to the gently sloping floors that contain the 1.45 million nonfiction volumes found in the “Book Spiral” and, eventually, towards the Reading Room that spans the entire top floor and channels every single ray of Seattle sunshine that streams in through the glass walls and ceiling (“Floor by Floor Highlights”).

By all standards, the Seattle Central Library is not a normal library, or even a normal building. Given credit for this architectural marvel is the famed Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas and his Rotterdam-based Office for Metropolitan Architecture, abbreviated “OMA.” Koolhaas and his firm were selected from a smattering of architectural firms in 1999 for the library redesign, and worked side by side with the Seattle Public Library for five years to create the finished product (Goldberger). Many critics believe that Koolhaas’ avant-garde monster of a library was successful in part because it was built in Seattle, the city that gave the world Amazon.com, the Internet’s leading book and media retailer, and whose residents check out more books per capita than any other American city (Ouchi). But even if this library reconfirms Seattle’s love for and dedication to books, there is still the issue of its radical form and appearance.

Caught up in all the glass, steel and exotic chartreuse, many residents and spectators believe that the new building introduces vast amounts of contemporary aesthetics and innovation and consequently hail the Seattle Central Library as a complete redefinition of what a library is. Though this is a popular conception, it is ultimately a misreading of the building. Aesthetics and innovation were not the focus of Koolhaas’ original plan for the library, and while they remain salient aspects of the building, they are not the focus of the finished product either. As with previous libraries, the focus of the Seattle Central Library – its heart, one might say – remains its patrons, its employees, its resources and, most importantly, its books and information. The plethora of knowledge contained within the library’s walls may no longer be the aspect that strikes visitors first, but it still exists in full force, through more books to peruse, more accessible librarians to consult, and now, more computers and digital information of which to take advantage. In this way, and in many others, the Seattle Central Library is still deeply traditional and does not redefine the library as an institution. Instead, Koolhaas and the new library have simply reaffirmed the basic values of a traditional public library, updated them to meet a twenty-first century standard, and cemented the place of the library as an institution in a changing modern era.

To fully understand the implications of these assertions, a certain amount of background knowledge is required. First, it is necessary to examine the library as an institution, particularly the established functions and values that have driven library progress and expansion through the years. With this knowledge, it is then possible to understand how these principles have shaped the specific history of the Seattle Public Library and how the renovation of the library system’s main branch was a logical next step in the city’s attempt to constantly improve the library experience. Finally, one will see that Rem Koolhaas, despite being a relative outsider to the Seattle library scene, was a fitting choice for the new building’s main architect due to his previous library design theories. In combination, this wealth of background information ultimately places the new Seattle Central Library in the appropriate contexts so that the library’s final form, purpose and function can be accurately evaluated, analyzed, and contemplated.

A logical place to commence would be the beginning: the roots of the library as an establishment and as an institution. With a long history dating back to at least the third
century BC under Ptolemy II of Egypt (Brundige), libraries as institutions are defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “place[s] set apart to contain books for reading, study, or reference.” This definition was especially true of the first libraries, which began as mere rooms to house literature, usually in private homes. However, libraries soon grew to fill entire buildings and serve communities rather than individuals. In fact, the scope of libraries has expanded so much in the present day that a classification of library types based on function is now possible. Libraries generally fall into four categories: the national library, the public library, the academic library, and the specialist library – the last of which refers to libraries that are topical in nature, such as poetry libraries and law libraries (Edwards 111). While all are generally dedicated to books and literacy, these four types of libraries serve four very different purposes; for instance, a national library, where copies of every published piece of work are deposited, is primarily concerned with creating a comprehensive collection for historical reference. On the other hand, academic and specialized libraries – although also concerned with reference – are geared more towards research and educational support. This often includes having extensive electronic and technological resources in addition to printed materials (Edwards 20).

And perhaps of the most importance, or at least of the most relevance to the Seattle Central Library, is the function of the public library. Unlike other libraries, the public library can pride itself on being free and open to all (Edwards 132). This is in part because public libraries strive to lure people inside to become “permanent readers and learners” (Burke 283). The readers described here are not necessarily readers of academic material; public libraries also contain pleasure reading sections and have specific areas catered to certain demographic groups: children, the elderly, English language learners. Because of this general campaign for an appreciation of reading and learning, public libraries are usually much more dedicated to the printed book than academic and specialist libraries (Edwards 20). The Social Science Research Council, in a study for the book *The Public Library in the United States*, finds that, on the whole, public libraries have three main objectives: (1) to assemble and organize books and other materials to promote knowledge and citizenship; (2) to provide general information for the community; and (3) to “provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men and women to educate themselves constantly” (Burke 282). In simple terms, these three objectives represent the values to which modern public libraries should hold themselves: a dedication to patrons, to communities, to books, to education and ultimately, to knowledge. These are the values that, through further investigation, the new Seattle Central Library actually upholds.

In fact, these values have played a vital role throughout the history of the Seattle Public Library and, more specifically, the evolution of its central library branch over the years. A city with a long tradition of fascination with books, Seattle has housed a public library of some sort for approximately 140 years of its 155 years of existence. A group of fifty residents gathered in the summer of 1868 to create the city’s first library association and in 1890, the city of Seattle officially formed the Seattle Public Library (“Brief History”). The fact that the beginning of the Seattle library system lay in residents’ own desire for books – and not just for books, but for more of them – is symbolic of the path the Seattle libraries would take. Books and patrons’ needs have driven every step. For example, Seattle’s very first library was just a floor of an office building in the historic Pioneer Square district, but it was quickly deemed unacceptable for its lack of adequate shelving and seating space. With an eventual expansion to an Andrew Carnegie-funded beaux-arts style library in 1906 (see figure 3), the Seattle Public Library was able to finally offer
patrons a larger collection and a sitting area from which to enjoy that collection. This building was, in fact, the first to be handed the honor of being titled the Seattle Central Library and the first building to sit on the downtown city block where a version of the central library still stands today (“History of the Central Library”).

Eventually, however, the library’s collection again grew too big for the Carnegie building’s shelves and patrons outnumbered the amount of seating available. Seattle Public Library responded by unveiling a brand new building with four times as much square-footage in 1960. This new building took dedication to books and patrons to a new level; for example, it featured the first escalator in an American public library to make the process of finding books on multiple levels easier. Beyond that, the new library also featured a drive-through service window through which users could pick up books they had requested from librarians in advance (“Brief History”). The drive-through window served two purposes: it demonstrated the Seattle Public Library’s commitment to making patron’s lives as convenient as possible – the downtown location lacked parking and thus it was a hassle for residents to simply pick up the books they wanted – and consequently, the lengths the library was willing to go to encourage and promote a love of books, literacy and knowledge.

But like its predecessors, the 1960 Central Library would not last. As the turn of the millennium approached, it became evident that a new central library building would be necessary to accommodate a still-growing collection of books, materials and library users. Realizing the need for a library update, Seattle Library officials took it one step further: they proposed to revamp the entire city’s library system. The “Libraries for All” bond measure – the largest American library campaign to date, according to its website – designated $194.6 million in city funding to remodel existing branches, build new branches and completely redo the Central Library. In 1998, an unprecedented 69% of Seattle voters gave their support to the measure (Dietrich), showing the public’s dedication to improving their library buildings and, by default, their library collections and library experiences. The question for the Seattle Public Library, then, was whom they would trust with the enormous task of redesigning their main symbol, the Central Library, and continuing the tradition of patron service and knowledge dispersal.

Seattle librarians found an unlikely answer in Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, founder of the Office for Metropolitan Architecture. At the time, Koolhaas was known more for his design theories than his completed buildings. Educated for four years at the prestigious Architectural Association School in London, Koolhaas first found success with his writing. His most famous works include *Delirious New York*, a “retroactive manifesto” of Manhattan’s architecture and urbanism, and *S, M, L, XL*, a collection of essays, diaries and meditations on architectural theory. To this day, Koolhaas still considers himself “as much writer as architect” (Lubow). But even now that many of his designs have found their way from paper to steel, glass and concrete, Koolhaas is still known for the scope and heft of his ideas. Even renowned architect Frank Gehry, of Guggenheim Museum Bilbao fame, once praised Koolhaas in a meeting by claiming, “Koolhaas is something.
His ideas. He’s beyond what I’m doing” (Buchanan). On another occasion, Gehry even hailed Koolhaas as “one of the great thinkers of our time” (Lubow).

It was Koolhaas’ great thoughts that clinched the Seattle Central Library job. Although OMA was not on Seattle’s initial list of architecture firms considered for the building redesign, the company eventually surged past the other contenders under the skillful guidance of Koolhaas and his Seattle-based lead project partner Joshua Ramus. The board officially picked OMA as the chief architects of the library project in 1999, citing Koolhaas’ “intellectual approach to the library of the future” as the main factor (Buchanan). Despite their initial confidence in choosing Koolhaas, the Seattle Public Library faltered when he submitted his first design concept. They were stunned by Koolhaas’ plan to build an eleven-story monster of a building that did not seem to adhere to the laws of either structure or gravity, and frankly, more closely resembled a stack of falling books than an urban public library. The idea, they feared, was simply too radical. But after an oft-mentioned tense moment at a preliminary planning meeting, when board members shooed Koolhaas and his OMA partners outside while they argued the design’s merits, the verdict came: “We don’t know what it is, but we can see the design accomplishes what we agreed to” (Dietrich). Radical or not, Koolhaas’ plan had answers for all of the Seattle Public Library’s concerns going into the project and even went above and beyond certain aspects of the library’s goals to serve the community and disseminate knowledge. For this, the library board could not fault him.

Like many of the library’s visitors nowadays, Seattle Public Library board members initially failed to understand Koolhaas’ perception of the library’s twenty-first century challenges – and this failure caused members to believe that Koolhaas’ design was truly radical. Always a stickler for research, Koolhaas spent three months investigating libraries of the world, their successes as well as their failures. He concluded that even in an age when technology threatened the extinction of the printed word entirely, the public was not ready to give up on either books or libraries. People still considered libraries a prime source for general information and knowledge. The problem for most patrons, however, was the fact that libraries were often “stuffy, confusing, and uninviting” (Goldberger). From a more operational standpoint, libraries also faced the logistical problem of expanding book collections that needed constant rearrangement (Goldberger), as well as an expanding realm of technological sources that needed to be addressed and incorporated (Lacayo). As Koolhaas himself put it, “The library’s insistence on one kind of literacy [the literacy of books] has blinded it to other emerging forms that increasingly dominate our culture” (Proposal 4). Koolhaas’ challenge, then, was to decide how, in a twenty-first century saturated with multimedia, online knowledge and 100,000 Google hits per search, a library could reconcile the seemingly old-fashioned book and printed page with the technologies of the future.

The solution, in Koolhaas’ eyes, lay in the one similarity all these forms shared: the storage of information. Koolhaas claimed that new libraries do not “reinvent or even modernize the traditional institution; they merely package it in a new way” (Proposal 4), and in his plan for the Seattle Central Library, Koolhaas planned to repackage information and knowledge. He hoped to create “an information store, where all media – new and old – are presented under a regime of new equalities” (Proposal 8). The library as an institution would no longer celebrate just the printed book. In addition to books, the library would present information and knowledge through other forms – the most prominent of which would be technology, an addition that Koolhaas claims “enables the realization of ancient
Program in Writing and Rhetoric

ambitions – totality, completeness, dissemination, accessibility” (Proposal 8). Here, he refers to totality, completeness, dissemination and accessibility in terms of information; with the introduction of technology to the library, patrons would have online databases, journals and websites available to them at the click of a mouse. The amount of information this would introduce to the library collection would be huge, a logical and important step for an institution whose basic function, as declared previously, lay in promoting knowledge and continuing education. Besides, the incorporation of technology into the library as an institution was especially logical in Seattle, the city that originally spawned technology super-giant Microsoft and received a $3 million in contribution to the library in the company’s name (Gilmore).

Koolhaas’ concept for the Seattle Central Library as an information network is not so surprising when taken in the context of his previous work with library design. Though neither was ever built, Koolhaas designed two library models for design competitions: the Bibliothèque de France in 1989 and the two Bibliothèques Jussieu in 1993 (OMA). Like the new Seattle Central Library, they foregrounded the concept of a library as a network of information, printed and otherwise. Koolhaas’ Bibliothèque de France, for example, was created for a competition whose goal was to create a collection of five different libraries that together would contain “the world’s entire [post-World War II] production of words and images” (S, M, L, XL 608). Koolhaas called the Bibliothèque a “utopia of fully integrated information systems” (S, M, L, XL 608), a place where books were not excised, but where other types of information were just as celebrated and available. Koolhaas accomplished this by presenting the building as a “solid mass of information” with all five libraries in one building (Koolhaas, Conversations 25). Each particular library was designed according to the function it served, and was not dependent upon the structure of any other library. For instance, the reference library was made into a continuous spiral reminiscent of a parking garage, connecting five floors of book stacks, study carrels and study booths. The cinemathèque for videos and media, on the other hand, was angular, spanning three floors vertically with auditoriums and viewing booths. The five library sections fit together into a cube, and Koolhaas simply excavated public spaces such as reading rooms from the shape (S, M, L, XL 613). Ultimately, this library model confirmed that, at heart, libraries were still staying true to their basic function: to be a center of accessible knowledge and information – only now this information came in the form of books, computers, databases, videos and other resources.

Koolhaas reintroduced this concept of the library as an updated information storehouse with his two Bibliothèques Jussieu for the University Jussieu in Paris, France (OMA). In this project, Koolhaas worked only with two libraries, a science library and a humanities library, but his ultimate goal was the same: to consolidate everything within one building so that information was concentrated instead of dispersed. He accomplished this by envisioning a malleable building surface, folding and twisting parts of the structure into each other and then stacking functional platforms to create useable space. As a result, the floors of the Bibliothèques are not stacked traditionally, yet there is an “interior boulevard” (S, M, L, XL 1308) that brings all the library elements together (see figure 4). This boulevard

Fig. 4. An inside look at the Bibliothèques Jussieu.
sweeps the visitor into a land of knowledge – knowledge contained in books as well as in electronic sources. Koolhaas himself claims that the library visitor is “seduced by a world of books and information,” as the Bibliothèques Jussieu constitute a “three-dimensional network, not a building” (S, M, L, XL 1308). Like Koolhaas’ previous Bibliothèque de France, the network here was a centralized one of information and knowledge, presented in a new and modern way.

In many ways, the Seattle Central Library represented the same type of network. It too was a celebration of information in its many forms, and this allowed Koolhaas to actually take aspects from his un-built French bibliothèques and realize them in the new Seattle library. Take, for instance, the building’s basic structure. Concerned with preserving maximum flexibility by merging functional and public space, as so many modern libraries do, without “strangling [any of] its own attractions” (Proposal 10), Koolhaas adopted the stacking platforms idea from his Bibliothèques Jussieu project (see figure 5). In this new design, each platform would be dedicated to a separate function, and flexibility would occur within each platform without compromising the function of any other program (Proposal 10). Koolhaas also found that this method of division allowed for the different types of media to be connected in a way that supported and played off of each other. For example, nonfiction volumes were given their own “books” platform while technological sources were placed on a different platform labeled “assembly,” a name given for the platform’s primary purpose as a gathering place for groups. Other platforms and functions included “headquarters” for library management, the “store” for fiction, periodicals and other collections, and “operations” for book sorting and parking (Proposal 24). These five platforms are a prime example of the “reaffirmation” and “repackaging” of the Seattle Central Library mentioned previously. By separating areas by function and placing them on different platforms, Koolhaas did not necessarily introduce any new radical programs to the library. Instead, he took what the library already had and repackaged it in a way that was logical and made the most of every function.

Continuing in the tradition of the Bibliothèques Jussieu, Koolhaas took these five platforms and stacked them untraditionally on top of each other. Instead of making a rectangular tower, the platforms are thrust in different directions, some forward and some backwards, making an “irregular silhouette” (Lacayo). But perhaps more surprising than this set-up of unaligned platforms is the fact that, for all intents and purposes, Koolhaas simply threw a blanket of glass and diagonally-latticed steel over the whole thing and called it finished building. As New Yorker critic Goldberger claims, he essentially built a diagram of “boxes floating in space,” filling in the open gaps between platforms with public spaces such as a reading room and a reference area. This approach created an exterior to the Seattle Central Library that almost defies proper description, though many try. As mentioned in the introduction, the building has been described by critics as everything from “a big rock candy mountain of a building, twinkling in the middle of office buildings” (Lubow) to “a stack of falling books,” or even perhaps “Lego pieces stuck together” (Gilmore). It should be noted, however, that despite the colorful descriptions
that have come as a result, the aesthetic appeal of the Seattle Library’s exterior was never Koolhaas’ goal. In his world, form follows function; beauty is a byproduct but not an intention of the work (Lubow). What this means for the building’s spectators is that their focus should lie on what is contained within the walls of glass and steel: the books, the technologies, the knowledge, as that is where the focus of the building itself lies.

What awaits inside the Seattle Central Library is as stunning as the outside: eleven stories and 363,000 square feet of space containing, among other features, a cathedral-like “Living Room” atrium, a reading room that overlooks downtown, a four-floor span of non-fiction nicknamed the “Book Spiral,” and a “Mixing Chamber” of 150 new computers (Gilmore). Many of these features are certainly creative – after all, who besides Koolhaas ever conceived of a parking lot-style book stack? – but the price of this novelty is that many spectators are misled into believing that the Seattle Library has completely redefined the library as an institution. After all, it is form that strikes before function. In his initial proposal, however, Koolhaas submitted that redefinition was never his intention and a closer look at salient features in the library supports this reading on a physical level, as opposed to the more conceptual levels discussed earlier.

Take, for instance, Koolhaas’ “Mixing Chamber.” This area, found atop the “assembly” platform on the fifth story (“Floor by Floor Highlights”), is a prime example of how the Seattle Library does not redefine the traditional library, but instead takes its basic values and expands upon them. At first glance, the Mixing Chamber seems to be a spacious yet mildly intimidating room filled with 150 new computers and a swarm of librarians, each of whom is connected to his or her peers by sight as well as intercom. Even the floor is revolutionary, an odd aluminum surface that is meant to be scratched over time for a “patina” look (Dietrich). But at its heart, the Mixing Chamber is nothing more than an expanded reference desk for information of all sorts, something that Koolhaas himself acknowledges. To him it’s all in the vocabulary: “If you mention in one sentence ‘reference desk’ and ‘mixing chamber,’ the one sounds uninspiring, and the other one sounds as if something is about to happen” (Buchanan).

What this Mixing Chamber does well, besides generating anticipation by its name alone, is two-fold. On one level, Koolhaas has injected life – human life – into a library feature that is generally thought to be mundane by turning it into a “trading floor for information” (“Floor by Floor Highlights”). Most non-fiction reference librarians can be found on the Mixing Chamber floor, meaning that patrons can go to one location for their general, in-depth and interdisciplinary questions. Librarians have access to extensive collections of resources, online as well as printed, and can therefore easily work one-on-one with patrons to answer their questions. Librarians are also encouraged to support patrons in teams, hence the intercom system, which also connects Mixing Chamber librarians to further experts stationed in the non-fiction stacks (Dietrich; “Floor by Floor Highlights”). This new service program places patron satisfaction as a top priority, once again confirming a basic value of a library: commitment to its public.

In addition to introducing a human aspect to the reference section, the Mixing Chamber also introduces technology to the forefront of the new Seattle library, a goal of Koolhaas’ from the very beginning. The 148 computers located in the room represent the biggest concentration of technology in the building (“Floor by Floor Highlights”); in total, the library has 320 computers, 300 more than the previous central library (Dietrich). The computers also show how the worlds of information and knowledge have expanded to include technology. Patrons can use these computers to search the
Internet and the library’s many online databases for information (see figure 6). In this way, the Mixing Chamber connects technology to books by presenting both as legitimate and reliable sources of knowledge. On a more literal level, technology in the Mixing Chamber and books from the stacks are physically connected by a dumbwaiter; reference librarians can page books in the stacks, which can be sent down to the main desk. Theoretically, this can cut the time it takes to search for a book in half (Dietrich).

And what of those book stacks, exactly? The Seattle book stacks are like no other book stacks the public had ever seen, save for those who followed Koolhaas’ work on the Bibliothèque de France. Koolhaas ultimately borrowed from his previous design to create Seattle’s innovative “Book Spiral,” the parking lot-style book stack mentioned earlier. Arguably the most distinctive feature of the new Seattle Library, based on critics’ responses alone, the Book Spiral actually covers four continuous floors and holds over a million books (“Floor by Floor Highlights”). In reality, the “spiral” aspect of the Book Spiral is not as dramatic as the name would have it seem; it is actually more a “continuous, gentle spiral of shelves, a kind of interior avenue for the library stroller” (Lacayo). Other critics compare it to a parking lot, with its square ramp and switchback style (Lubow). Various levels of the Book Spiral are accessible by chartreuse-colored escalators and stairways – all vertical movement in the library is tracked by the color chartreuse, including the cabs of elevators – that cut through the middle of the ramps (Goldberger).

The Book Spiral too has a two-fold function, both of which seem to contradict the commonly-held belief that the Seattle Central Library is entirely radical, that it redefines the library as an institution. First, the Spiral is undeniably dedicated to books. With its four-story span and 10,000 total shelves, the Book Spiral can hold 1.45 million volumes at capacity – half a million more books than its predecessor. This figure represents 75% of Seattle’s entire collection, whereas the old building only displayed 35% of its non-fiction (Dietrich, Gilmore). This expanded number of books available to patrons supports Koolhaas’ and OMA’s initial research findings mentioned previously. Books are not becoming irrelevant; if anything, they are more important in a growing world of information, which is why the building contains so many. Like any traditional library, the new Central Library has reaffirmed the necessity and value of books and the printed word.

What the Seattle Library does, however, is repackage the way these valuable books are presented. In his research, Koolhaas found a “kind of sadness” about the way traditional libraries structured their collections: “[The library] is simply divided into floors and each floor is more or less a random grouping of subjects” (Buchanan). This meant that patrons had to go to several floors looking for a topic, and also presented the problem of librarians having to re-shelve and move books from floor to floor every time the collection grew (“Floor by Floor Highlights”). Koolhaas combated this problem by creating a “single, continuous experience” that made “individual floors almost mute” (Buchanan). The solution also made logical sense: the Dewey Decimal system, by which the library classifies its materials, was a continuous series of numbers. Why not a continuous length of shelves to mirror this? The final product even makes
this connection obvious by including floor mats with the Dewey Decimal codes at appropriate levels (see figure 7). The entire Dewey Decimal collection is available at once, meaning that "people [are able] to move freely among topics, to have those serendipitous encounters Koolhaas loves" (Lacayo). This encourages education and knowledge in a way that no other public library’s traditional book stacks can.

From this perspective, perhaps the Seattle Central Library is not as radical and extreme as its fancy glass and steel exterior would lead the public to believe. It may not be, as Koolhaas continues to boldly claim, “really a traditional building” (Buchanan), but at its heart, the Seattle Central Library is a traditional library: it is a storehouse for information and knowledge of all sorts, dedicated to serving the local community, its public. The building may now take a drastically different form than its predecessors, both in Seattle and worldwide, but Koolhaas has done nothing to dramatically change the basic function of the library. The changes he has implemented are undeniably significant, perhaps even revolutionary, but his intentions are simple: to make the library a more logical, accessible and relevant experience in the twenty-first century, and to update the library to include the vast amount of resources currently available. Instead of being confined to knowledge printed in books, patrons can now turn to technology and even to librarians, who have networked themselves in a way so that every area of expertise is available by speaking to just one person. What Koolhaas has done with the Seattle Central Library, essentially, is expand the resources available for education and make them even more accessible, even more prominent within the Seattle community. He has updated and repackaged the library, but he has not redefined its purpose or function. With the Seattle Central Library, Koolhaas has boldly reaffirmed the principles of the public library building and cemented its place in the new millennium.

On a broader level, Koolhaas has also presented a strong argument for the future of the public library as an institution. In a time when some see “libraries as institutions awaiting extinction in the glow of [technology’s] electrons and photons” (Haas 131), he has created a massive library that will undoubtedly be standing for many years to come. In this way Koolhaas has asserted that the library’s end is nowhere near, that books are still as valuable as they were before, that libraries can indeed cooperate with emerging technologies. He and his building argue that even in a world that is increasingly digital, the library – an institution dedicated first and foremost to the printed word – still has a prominent place in society. And while Koolhaas may be more architect than library aficionado, perhaps he is on to something. As library expert Brian Edwards claims, the library is a “symbolic domain” that demonstrates the value of learning and of the written word, printed or digital – objectives that only grow with time: “More reading, learning and research are undertaken today than in any previous age” (Edwards 207). Library historian Warren Haas agrees, claiming: “The content of libraries is the foundation for all scholarship. They consolidate and give order to the human experience” (Haas 132), and certainly the human experience never becomes obsolete. In this way, perhaps the library as an institution is destined to endure and the Seattle Central Library is only one example of how a library can change and expand to accommodate a new era. Beyond that, perhaps
the library also serves as an example for how pressing historical circumstances often dictate radical changes to institutions and organizations, but how it is still possible – how it is still necessary – to look beyond the aesthetics and innovation and recognize that the heart, the soul and the spirit of these very institutions and organizations will forever remain the same.
Works Cited


Autumn 2005 Honorable Mention

Matthew Gribble

Instructor’s Foreword

Movies tell us that in the wake of a murder, detectives would stretch what appear to be pipe cleaners, or a very taut yarn, through the bullet holes left in walls, in lamps, in the hollow doors of haunted rooms. The yarn was there to demonstrate the location of the shooter – or indeed, shooters – relative to the victim. But the fact is that other forces might have conspired in the murder. (Poison may have been used; bullets may have been fired only as an afterthought; perhaps they were fired by the victim himself, before he died . . .) Yarn can tell us the story only in certain circumstances.

As a researcher and a writer, Matthew Gribble analyzes his crime scene with diligence and care. The crisis: The shortage of nurses in America. The question: How and why did this shortage become a persistent problem? Matthew affixes strings of yarn to a number of gunshots: the increasing average age of the workforce, long hours, work that is often menial or clerical, and finally, relatively low salaries.

But these strands lead to new questions, wider causes which have nothing to do with social yarn. These new questions have to do with rhetoric and the enduring association of nursing with “women’s work” and “femininity.” Matthew has the audacity to ask how the rhetoric of femininity actually functions. How and why are we compelled to accept images and tropes as ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ when they are anything but normal and natural? Is it possible that the rhetoric of nursing is responsible for the shortage? Or perhaps it is the rhetoric of femininity and masculinity as such? But how did such a crime take place, right under our noses, when so many of us never noticed that an injustice ever took place? This essay is brilliant and provocative because it will not stop until the crime scene has been analyzed to the author’s satisfaction – indeed, until we as readers start looking for the scene of the crime in the occupations we disparage, in the films we watch, and in our own lives.

What I love most about Matthew’s essay has something to do with my appreciation for the work of Frances Glessner Lee, the woman who founded the Department of Legal Medicine at Harvard in 1936. Lee created a series of dioramas of unsolvable crime scenes to train student detectives. By studying these dioramas in miniature, she wanted her investigators to learn how to analyze and solve crime in a variety of situations. Matthew’s argument shares this spirit and this is why I think many PWR students will benefit from analyzing the research model he has provided: Look at how he uses the rhetoric of nursing to understand the profession’s current problems. See how the rhetoric of nursing comes to stand in for the wider rhetoric of other ‘feminine’ occupations. Notice all the work that this author is doing – in miniature – to unsettle the tired rhetoric of femininity and masculinity as whole.

Scott Herndon
Gender, Art, and the Nursing Shortage: 
The Effect of Gendered Visual Rhetoric 
on the American Healthcare System

Matthew Gribble

The photograph on the cover of a recent pop CD reveals much more about American attitudes toward nursing and femininity than it does of the model’s body (see figure 1). Its visual rhetoric expresses a sexualized and fantastical vision of the nurse as the model’s image is replete with the codes of femininity: she wears heavy make-up, sports a butterfly tattoo, and her hunching posture and tight clothing compress and exaggerate her most obvious sexual characteristics. She does not smile, but her expression instead indicates a distaste for and simultaneous resignation to something. The title of the CD, Enema of the State (1999), provides one clue as to what the model finds so unpleasant, but such associations are mostly native to the male and adolescent minds of the album’s target audience. Even conceding the title to be part of what art critic Henry Sayre calls the “extended narrative structure” of this image, the title begs interpretation, and “we are invited to read a different story than the one [the artist] tells” (85-86). An equally valid reading of this image is that the nurse-figure is challenging her objectification even as she yields to it; that through her self-conscious coquettishness she offers a passive and incomplete defense against her gender-typing. She is represented, therefore, as being
limited by her gender to indirect modes of argument, apparently being too weak-willed for a more direct objection to her objectification. She at once represents the standard American nurse, the sexual fantasy involving the nurse, the lingering potency of gender-typing, the most objectionable codes of femininity, and, through the parallel arrangement of her breasts with the nursing hat, the subtle and lasting mental link between the most obvious and outward signs of femininity and the nursing profession.

At the same time that such visual rhetoric as this is released for public consumption, hospitals across the country are finding it difficult to recruit an adequate number of nurses. Sandra McMeans, representative of the American Nursing Association, to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs states, “Health care providers across the Nation are having difficulty finding experienced registered nurses [RN] that are willing to work in their facilities . . . [and projections] show that the situation will only get worse” (U.S. Congress, Looming Nursing Shortage 11). According to one model, the number of registered nurses is projected to peak around the year 2012, then decline steadily such that by 2020 there will be approximately the same number of nurses as in the year 2000 (Buerhaus 2952). This means that in 2020 the supply of registered nurses will be nearly twenty percent below the number required.¹

Borrowing tools from a number of seemingly unrelated disciplines will allow me to understand the processes guiding visual rhetoric and to consider such rhetoric’s tangible effects on the American healthcare scene. This paper will rely on the quantitative foundations of sociological data, the abstraction offered by art criticism and social theory, the intimacy of mind accompanying psychoanalytic theory, and the cultural-historical framing that comes from a detached consideration of popular culture. In addition, the rhetoric of modern biology will be employed to help illustrate the dynamics I discuss. This multidisciplinary approach will not only afford me a greater understanding of and appreciation for the dynamics of visual rhetoric, but will also help me to begin to critique traditional gender-typed conventional imaginings of the nurse and American notions of femininity as well.

A “Girl Job”

To begin with sociological data: Some of the most often cited social causes for the nursing shortage are the increasing average age of the workforce, the long hours (often with mandatory unpaid overtime), the application of RNs to menial and clerical work and the relatively lackluster salaries. Equally important, but much less often discussed, is the heavy gender imbalance in the profession’s ranks. David A. Eubanks notes that only 5.9 percent of registered nurses are male, and mentions that in a recent study “students of all ages [grades 2-10] were quick to point out that nursing is a girl job” (U.S. Congress, Looming Nursing Shortage 32-33).² Before addressing the reasons for such a widespread perception of nursing as a feminine career track, it is necessary to first think about what exactly it is about the nursing profession that can be construed as feminine, which in turn requires a closer examination of what “femininity” entails.

¹ Other models have yielded different results. For example, a study conducted by the Health Resources and Service Administration’s National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, “Projected Supply and Demand Shortages of Registered Nurses: 2000-2020,” estimates not a rise, peak, and decline in the number of nurses but rather a steady decline, with a 12% shortage in 2010 and a 20% shortage in 2015. This study suggests a 29% shortage by 2020, rather than the 20% suggested by Buerhaus et al. (U.S. Congress, Who Will Care 13).

² This study was conducted in mid-2000 on 1,800 American students by the Healthcare Group of J. Walter Thompson Specialized Communications.
The American notion of femininity can be broadly characterized as including all things intuitive and emotional rather than reasoning; yielding rather than forceful, passive rather than active, squeamish at violence, pretty, domestic and both mentally and physically weak. Weighed against this definition, it immediately becomes unclear how the nursing profession can be viewed as feminine. A nurse’s daily duties might include the fast and accurate insertion of a needle, the drawing of blood, the checking of the ears and throat for infection, and the instant calculation of pressure. The nurse’s job of “assessing a patient’s status and intervening whenever there is a problem” requires considerable steadiness of mind and hand (U.S. Congress, Looming Nursing Shortage 22). While some consider it to embody the nurturing aspect of femininity, weighed against the standard American conceptions of gender, nursing should not be considered a feminine trade.

What, then, is considered “feminine” about nursing? I would suggest that what is feminine is not the act of nursing but the perception of the nurse, an ideal codified and reinforced by countless images and cultural references. But to begin to consider whether and how images can simultaneously contain and create the popular notion of nurse as “hand maiden,” it is necessary to develop a framework for looking at how such images relate to each other and to social practice (U.S. Congress, Looming Nursing Shortage 32-33).

The social critic Griselda Pollock offers in her essay “Feminism/Foucault – Surveillance/Sexuality” an especially provocative, though ultimately incomplete, method of approaching images of gender in the workplace. Pollock draws from the French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault to define representation as a form of social interaction, one in which a body or space is subjected to the “gaze” of a viewer, becoming not just the object but also an imagining, a perception of the object (14). Representation is specific, instantaneous, ephemeral and unique. The success of these representations depends on endless repetition – effective representations require confirmation and reinforcement and so are mentally clumped with similar representations. Different representations come together to form discourses, collections of disparate and often contradictory representations, which in turn clump to form an intricate, self-reinforcing and invisible “régime of truth.” These result in an “obvious” perception accepted as fact (14-15). It is significant that in successful transference of representation “the very act of representation is occluded,” as it suggests that representation is only successful when it no

3 The inverse of the definition of femininity will serve as my definition of masculinity: reasonable, forceful, active, unmoved by (or in some cases enthused by) violence, un-domestic, and both physically and mentally strong. Also, “man” and “woman” in this paper refer to social constructions of gender, not to anatomy.

4 It may be beneficial to take a look at Pollock's exact wording:

Representation is to be understood as a social relation enacted and performed via specific appeals to vision, specific managements of imaginary spaces and bodies for a gaze. The efficacy of representation, furthermore, relies on a ceaseless exchange with other representations. Across the social formation there are diverse assemblages of representations, called discourses, some of which are specifically but never exclusively visual. These combinations interact and cross refer with other discourses, accumulating around certain points to create so dense a texture of mutual reference that some statements, and some visions, acquire the authority of the obvious. At this point, the very fact of representation is occluded and what Foucault has named a régime of truth is established by the constant play and productivity of this relay of signs [...]

Such a frankly Foucauldian account, however, locates representation exclusively on the side of power. Precisely because it operates in the field of power, however, representation as a process is flawed, balked, disrupted, and often overwhelmed by the material it attempts to manage. While representation is an attempt to manage social forces, it inducts and then is shaped by resistance. Insofar as representation constructs relations, these relations are social. (Pollock 14-15).
longer draws attention to itself (14). In the second part of her argument, Pollock divorces her definitions from those of Foucault by insisting on an interdependent quality of the social interaction, presenting representation as a societal equilibrium of contradicting perceptual influences, with the régime of truth both influencing and being influenced by the social framework acting in response to the régime of truth.

This definition of representation as both constructing and being affected by social relations has profound implications for the gendering of nursing. According to her definition, the perception of the feminine nurse does not need a basis in reality for it to come into the public awareness; what matters is that this rhetoric be repeated so often that it develops into a régime of truth and that the image, through this régime, be codified into social relations.

There is a major problem with Pollock’s theory, however, in that it does not depart enough from Foucault’s. As her argument requires that the régime of truth be identically cast for, by, and within each person in a social network for social relations to be the same across the group (as, under her model, each perception originates in isolation within the mind of each perceiver), it is highly unlikely for there to be any widespread sharing of perceptions across a group. While Pollock allows for the induction and shaping of representation by social resistance, her allowance only extends insofar as “representation is an attempt to manage social forces” (15). As she defines society’s effect on the act of representation as exclusively reactionary, she does not allow for individuals or even groups of individuals to make the first move and contribute to internalized representations. It is therefore necessary to establish a more fluid construction of representation, one where the interaction between representation and social relations can flow in either direction. For complex perceptions to be held across a group, the interaction must be able at any time to act progressively or retrogressively. Such an allowance would allow us to explore how gender-specific representations of nursing and society-wide gendered perceptions of nursing interact from either direction, providing the first step to an explanation of how so many children would come to link nursing with femininity. In her essay Pollock describes how the dynamic would work in the first direction, so what remains to be done is to explain how the dynamic could operate in the reverse.

This step would be daunting, but Pollock herself provides a clue as to where to begin. She notes, “Finally, insofar as it makes any appeal to vision, and operates upon the domain of the visual, representation becomes prey to complex issues of fascination and anxiety, curiosity and dread, not theorized by Foucault in his analysis of surveillance. The domain of the visual is an important territory of sexuality, of the psycho-symbolic theorized by psychoanalysis” (15). Just as Pollock draws upon psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan (and to feminist re-readings of these writers) to develop her framework, I will now turn to the French psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok and their essay “Notes on the Phantom, a Complement to Freud’s Metapsychology” to fill in her argument’s holes, turning from broad social theory to the much more individualized field of psychoanalytic thought.

**The Diffusion of An Idea**

In their joint essay Abraham and Torok use case studies to explore the idea of the “phantom,” their term for a negative cross-generational influence on the subconscious. Reflecting on the effect of the phantom, they ask, “How could [a] thought, alive in the father’s unconscious, become transferred into the unconscious of his eldest son, everybody’s
favorite, and remain so active there as to provoke fits?" (173). They suggest that there can be indirect transference of unconscious cues from one person to another within a group, implying at least one mode of feedback from an external social relationship into a person’s internal unconscious. They later assert that a son impressed by another generation’s trauma “appears possessed not by his own unconscious but by someone else’s” – that a mindset external to the son’s psyche can penetrate and overwhelm the son’s unconscious. In this way, they claim, a social relation (for example, familial relationships) can internalize an external representation; unspoken ideas can root and take hold. Like Pollock/Foucault’s representation, “the phantom is sustained by secreted words . . . it gives rise to endless repetition and, more often than not, eludes rationalization” (175). The internalized framework’s continued existence depends on the repetition of its premise and of similar thoughts. Thus, the method they propose by which the phantom survives in the host’s mind is nearly identical to how a régime of truth maintains itself. “Extending the idea of the phantom, it is reasonable to maintain that the ‘phantom effect’ progressively fades during its transmission from one generation to the next and that, finally, it disappears. Yet, this is not at all the case when shared or contemporary phantoms find a way of being established as social practices, practices along the lines of staged words” (176; author’s italics). Abraham and Torok suggest that the phantom naturally goes away unless it becomes codified into social practice, a distinction paralleling and adding significance to Pollock’s note that “insofar as representation constructs relations, these relations are social” (15). Abraham and Torok’s phantom can therefore be viewed as a specific kind of representation: a set of perceptions and values unconsciously inherited from a parent and reproduced and confirmed through social practice.

The dynamic as it is so far presented is somewhat abstract. To review and clarify the process, it might be helpful to shift to the language of medical science. In particular, there are metaphorical rewards for comparing the dynamics of the rhetorical cycle to the two-part life cycle of a virus, though it would not hurt to keep in mind David Summer’s warning that “all such metaphors should [probably] be distrusted. Art just is not biology, nor is biology art” (406). While the viral cycle can help to illustrate the rhetorical dynamic, it is important that we not misconstrue them as being identical.

In the first, lysogenic part of the viral cycle, the virus replicates its DNA without killing its host. The phage injects viral DNA into the bacteria, where it is integrated into the bacterial chromosome and becomes a prophage. The prophage can either begin the lytic cycle, or it can allow the bacteria to reproduce and carry the prophage DNA along to its daughter cells (Campbell 333). During the lytic cycle, instead of the virus’s DNA being embedded in the bacterial DNA, the bacteria’s DNA is hydrolyzed. The phage DNA directs the cell to make and assemble phages instead of maintaining the bacteria’s vital functions. A phage-directed lysosome digests the cell wall, bursting the cell and releasing a swarm of new phages, which will go on to infect other bacteria and continue the cycle (332).

The cycle of visual rhetoric follows a similar arc. In the internalized portion of the cycle, analogous to the lysogenic portion of the viral cycle, an idea repeats itself in the unconscious, accumulating similar representations around itself until the system of representation swells to the size of the régime of truth. Once it is absorbed into the régime

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5 In other words, the bonds between the DNA molecules are broken by water molecules and the hydrogen and hydroxyl of the water molecules attach to the ends of the formerly joined DNA molecules. This effectively destroys the functionality of the bacterial DNA.
of truth, a perception can either reinforce itself by propagating similar or consequent representations in the mind, or it can modify a person’s behavior and thereby establish new social relations. Once the representation (on whatever order of magnitude) is codified into social relations, it leaves the internal cycle and becomes part of the external cycle, which parallels the lytic. A representative mode can be extracted from the social milieu and interjected into the unconscious, functioning like an introjected superego. This internalized perception cannot long remain in the mind, however; to prevent the idea from disappearing it must manifest itself into “staged words” – social interactions. Thus, while a social framework can give rise to an internal suggestion, the suggestion will not stick unless it can be confirmed in another social practice. Just as in the lytic cycle the phage destroys its host, so the social relation externalizes and destroys the internalized representation to reproduce en masse similar social circumstances.

I will now illustrate the cycle of visual rhetoric with one possible argumentative progression related to the figuring of the nurse (see figure 2). In this example, one train of thought related to the gendered rhetoric surrounding nursing is explored, but it is to be understood as an illustrative example only, not as any sort of universally-held sequence of thoughts. Different specific thoughts other than the ones incorporated here might be the basis for a regime of truth; what matters is the more general sequence and development of the argument.

We begin with a single personal perception, drawn from outside the person’s intuition: the observation “All the nurses I know of are female.” This thought joins with similar perceptions to form the more general expression, “Most nurses are women.” This thought is channeled into the next, broader concept, or discourse: “It seems that nurses are always women.” This leads to an “obvious” perception accepted as fact: “Since I am a man, becoming a nurse is out of the question.” All of these thoughts influence the social conditions, but it is the régime of truth that has the greatest impact on social practice. Because the man in this example perceives the profession of nursing as incompatible with his gender, he chooses not to go into nursing. This contributes to the social reality of...

Fig. 2. The Cycle of Visual Rhetoric as Applied to a Gendered Perception of Nursing.
few men in the nursing profession. From this status quo a commonly held perception originates: “Most nurses are women.” The thought that “there is something feminine about the job” follows only afterwards, and a commonly held “obvious” perception regarded as fact emerges: “Women should be nurses, men should not.” This view finds parlance in the visual rhetoric of films, television, and popular music album covers, reinforcing the unpopularity of nursing as a man’s profession.

Though it is impossible to use this general dynamic to conclusively trace the direct origins of a particular social practice to any particular representation, or to demonstrate a particular representation to be an exclusive reflection of a particular social relationship, this model is useful because it allows an observer to monitor larger trends in internalized representations (perceptions) by looking at their manifestation in social practice and externalized representation (in films, paintings, or other media). Since the dynamic is cyclic and not linear, it can be observed equally well from any point along its continuum. Therefore, by monitoring the content of a sampling of easily accessible artistic works, it should be possible to infer the large-scale psychology behind the works, a psychology which, once it has taken hold, can guide decision-making and thereby influence reality. If it can be established that the general representation of the nurse in public-domain art is feminine, it then becomes possible to trace the representation of the nurse as a feminine being from the general psychology behind the art to the ideas’ eventual reception in audiences’ minds. If a man were to internalize the representation of nurse as feminine, it is likely that his perception might lead to a lessened identification with the nursing profession as he would identify the profession as incompatible with his perception of himself as male. This would partially explain why so few men go into the nursing profession. To search for evidence of this dynamic, I will now turn to popular-market depictions of nursing with a critical eye for the representation of the nurse as feminine.

The Nurses of Film and Television

Perhaps the most convenient place to start is with the recent popularly-aimed comedies Meet the Parents (2000), a film about a male nurse named Gaylord trying to propose with his would-be-in-laws’ blessing, and Scrubs (2001-present), a hospital-set television show. The usefulness of Meet the Parents and Scrubs for indirectly monitoring trends in popular perceptions through publicly accessible representation lies in their broad appeal: each has a large target audience and has developed a considerable following. To quantify this broad-market success somewhat: Meet the Parents was the seventh largest-grossing film of the year 2000 and has made over 330 million dollars since its release; and Scrubs has remained on the air since October 2001 (Gray, NBC).6

The opening credits of Meet the Parents feature multi-part harmonizing of the lyrics, “Show me a man who’s gentle and kind and I’ll show you a loser.” Gaylord is first described as having “a real gentle touch,” and the juxtaposition of this description with the song suggests that since he is successful as a nurse, he displays feminine attributes and therefore fails as a man. This notion of nursing as an unseemly profession for a male is a major source of comedy throughout the film, but this paper will only focus on three particularly illuminating moments. When the topic of his job first comes up before his would-be-in-laws, each reveals a bias against the profession. When told that Gaylord

6 Gray’s website, boxofficemojo.com, is the source of the box office data. Although the website’s name is suspect, the Los Angeles Times prints his editorials and says that his website is followed closely by industry professionals, lending a credible ethos to his raw statistical data.
had been transferred to triage, his soon-to-be-fiancé’s mother naively asks him, “Oh, is that better than nursing?” as if nursing were a stepping stone to something more socially acceptable. His would-be-father-in-law points out, “Not many men in your profession, though, are there Greg?” hinting that there is something inherent in the job to drive men away from the profession. The reply, “No, Jack, not traditionally” is followed by a long pause as the conflicting perceptions grate against one another. In a later scene, Gaylord prays over the evening meal, emphasizing the “kind and gentle and accommodating” nature of God. These are more than just traits of God: they are the traits he hopes for his father-in-law to exhibit, and also the traits which he holds most dear. Greg’s valuing of kindness, gentleness and accommodation implies for the audience a connection between these traits, typically seen in conjunction with “feminine” types, with those who would choose to work in nursing. Lastly, when Greg tells Pam’s future in-laws of his profession, they burst into tearful laughter. “Nursing!” “Ha, ha, that’s good.” “No really, what field?” When it is revealed that he “aced his [Medical College Admission] test,” his reasons for not becoming a doctor are immediately called into question by the other characters. It is clear that this is not done out of interest so much as out of surprise and disapproval, evident in the way Gaylord’s praise of nursing is immediately interrupted and the conversation redirected. Throughout the movie the depiction of male nursing is shown as something socially unacceptable and intrinsically oriented towards femininity, coded here as gentleness. In a recent episode (“His Story”) of the popular NBC show Scrubs this notion is repeated even more directly.

One of the central plot strands of the Scrubs episode “His Story” is Doctor Elliott Reid’s scandalous romance with an effeminately-named man, Paul Flowers, who turns out to be a nurse. She describes him as “nice” and “humble” and “so cute too!” but her rhapsodizing is cut short by his entrance in nursing uniform. “Hey . . . a nurse? – Paul.” She is so taken aback by his professional identity that she forgets her lover’s name. Later she moans, “I’m dating a murse!” Her disgust for the perceived gender-occupation contradiction is so great that she has to invent a term, “murse,” to express it. Later, after a tiff, the two rendezvous in a supply closet. Paul stops their make-up canoodling session to demand whether she is kissing him because 1) she feels “sorry” for hurting him emotionally or because 2) she continues to have hopes for their relationship. Such discussion of emotions and “the relationship” are tags of femininity in modern gender-relations, and it is significant that the male character of the nurse adopts the mannerisms most closely identified with amorous femininity. Stepping out of the supply closet, Elliott tries to hide her lover’s professional identity from a coworker. Flowers then complains to the coworker, “She’s covering because she’s embarrassed that she likes a nurse, and I really can’t figure out why.” The reply is swift and matter-of-fact: “Well, that’s because you’re doing a woman’s job, son.” Flowers acknowledges the perception of nursing as feminine, but his defense of the compatibility between his masculinity and his choice of profession is so tongue-in-cheek as to be unreliable: “What I do for a living, it doesn’t make me feel like any less of a man. Neither does my love of baking, or gardening, or the fact that I occasionally menstruate.” His defense is a sarcastic recognition of nursing as feminine, reinforced by lines like “Screw that, I’ll cook for you. I’ve only got one apron though, so bring your own if you want to wear one.” Paul’s sarcasm undermines any easy categorization, making his actual self-identification as masculine or feminine

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7 Triage is emergency room nursing and, according to the film it is where the most skilled nurses work.
8 Specifically, the family of Pam’s sister’s fiancé.
unclear. While the perception of nursing as feminine is discussed fairly openly, the sincerity of the counter-argument is suspect, and the humor of the episode derives not from the audience’s recognition of Elliott’s view as biased or false but from the audience’s identification with her discomfort over her lover’s confusing gender-role identification as a feminine male nurse.

In both of these representations, the male nurse is exceptional, constantly forced to defend his unusual choice of career. Perhaps the most obvious feature of the representation of nursing as feminine is the sheer volume of women represented as nurses in contrast to the number of men depicted as nurses. It is somewhat rare to find any representation of the male nurse at all, and where they exist, representations of the male nurse are usually framed in the context of being among many females. In the *Scrubs* episode, for instance, Paul Flowers is the only male among the nursing staff. Thus, even as these depictions foster a perception of nursing as being too feminine for men, they reinforce this perception by emphasizing the comparative suitability of the profession for women.

Interestingly, there is a class of works specifically created to offer a counter-argument to the widely-held perception of nursing as feminine. In looking at works that attempt to act as “female appropriation of, resistance to, and negotiation with mass-produced culture,” and works that try to be genderless reconstructions of the definition of nursing, it quickly becomes apparent that long-held perceptions are neither quickly nor easily displaced (Penley 320).

The web-based ‘reality TV show’ *13 Weeks*, developed by Access Nurses and plugged on the ABC news channel, hopes to “change the way you think about nursing,” but along the way sends very mixed messages about the gendered identity of the nurse (Raw Productions). The program’s promotional video short flashes the words “COMPASSIONATE,” “ADVENTUROUS,” and “HEROIC,” signaling a gender ratio of one part feminine-nurturing to two parts masculine-active. It presents nursing as suitable for either gender, but particularly compatible with conventional masculinity. The show’s cast of six characters, however, does not reflect this intended gender ratio. Two thirds of the cast are female, and the male nurses are somewhat suspect as affirmations of heterosexual masculinity in the nursing profession. One of the two males, Ron Cornado, is most often shown in floral-print Hawaiian shirts. He gushes constantly about his love of acting, has exaggerated vocal inflection, and frequently uses expressions with homoerotic undertones, such as “I just want to make sure this man holds me like he’s never held another man before in his life.” (Raw Webisode 2) He is depicted using flamboyant gestures and for half of his introductory clip he speaks with his back to a closet. The scene in which he is shown working in the hospital is underscored by a saccharine-sentimental piano interlude. The last frame of his introductory clip shows him blowing a kiss. While Mr. Cornado’s orientation may or may not actually be gay, the rhetoric of the representation of him in the video short is charged with every conceivable trapping of stereotypical homosexuality short of erotic interaction with another male. His presentation in the video carries with it an implicit idea of nursing as softening or perverting heterosexual masculinity.

In contrast, the other male, Nick, is depicted as being aggressively stereotypically heterosexual. The cast website lists his favorite activities as “enjoying football, auto racing, playing pool, bowling, and working out.” The text of his biography calls him “your typical all-American boy” and links his interest in nursing to his survival of intense car-accident violence, which is described in full and bloody detail. At first glance, Nick seems...
to be the perfect marriage between someone with an interest in nursing and conventional masculinity.

The exaggeration of Nick’s masculinity, however, suggests a psychological compensation. As art historian Lisa Tickner sadly notes, “Men moving into art – an area identified with ‘feminine’ sensibility and increasingly occupied by women art students – might feel the need...to distinguish [their trade] from the pastimes of women and schoolgirls and to adopt the mask of a heightened and aggressively heterosexual masculinity” (Tickner 55). The unblemished completeness of Nick's machismo suggests that it may be put on for effect, that because he perceives his career as feminine he might feel a need to embellish his masculine traits to feel secure in his gender. Although 13 Weeks attempts to fight current perceptions of nursing as feminine, the minority of males in the group, along with the questionability of their displays of masculinity, makes it ultimately unsuccessful as an attempt to revolutionize gendered perceptions of nursing. The show reinforces the very stereotypes it seeks to destroy by indirectly implicating nursing as an attack on conventional masculinity.

A Coloring Book

The Northeast Indiana Organization of Nurse Executives (NEIONE) decided to take a different tack to address the insufficient number of men and women going into the nursing profession (C. Sternberger). Rather than exclusively challenging adults’ largely-cemented perceptions of nursing, it aimed to target all age groups: addressing the usual target of adults and the fairly revolutionary target group of elementary school students. To focus on the latter, NEIONE commissioned an “ethnically and gender diverse” coloring book aimed at third-graders. More than 53,000 paper copies of the You Can Be a Nurse! coloring book have been distributed to date, and this figure does not factor in Spanish-language editions of the coloring book or the online version in either language (C. Sternberger).

You Can Be a Nurse! does a commendable job of representing nursing without exclusive gendering. The caption for page four of the coloring book reads, “Both men and women are nurses,” and there are roughly equal numbers of male nurses and female nurses depicted in its pages (E. Sternberger). Rather than sort nursing tasks by their relative masculinity or femininity, the matching of individual to task seems to have been done completely without concern for gender norms. A woman is shown on the “Nurses teach us to stay healthy” page and a man is shown on the “Nurses take care of grownups” page. By rendering distinctions between male nurses and female nurses arbitrary, the coloring book goes beyond simply inverting the nursing gender roles to questioning the underlying need for such roles. In doing this, You Can Be a Nurse! restructures the discourse of representations away from polar definitions of gender, offering instead a truly genderless vision of nursing as a profession.

Conclusion

In short, one of the major contributing causes to the nursing shortage is that much of the population feels uncomfortable entering nursing because of a perception of the profession as feminine and therefore incompatible with a masculine self-identification. These gender-role perceptions are created and confirmed in popular visual representations of the nurse, such as popular films and photography. To improve the anemic representation of males in the nursing profession’s ranks, it is necessary to end the perception of
nursing as feminine. This requires breaking the cycle of representation by substituting a representation based on a contrary perception. The *You Can Be a Nurse!* coloring book offers a rare rhetorical reconstruction of nursing and of femininity. It will be several years before its effects will be felt, as the audience for the work is still in its childhood, but the successful depiction of the un-gendered nurse is a cause for hope and for future improvement in the nursing staffing situation.
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Winter 2006 Winner

Cecilia Yang

Instructor’s Foreword

Some essays are written in unfamiliar rooms, where hands search in the dark for objects to balance the body. Others develop as if from afar, taking shape in a wind that curls and collects dust from field and roof, pollen and leaves from distant trees. One essay senses the hinge of an open door as it moves into the hallway ahead; the other becomes aware of a faraway valley, feels the mist in the air and notices in the sky the orange dome of streetlight. This second kind of essay slowly reconstructs what has happened on the other side of the mountains.

Cecilia Yang’s essay could not have been written if it did not work in both ways. Her essay is a personal journey as much as it is a study in politics, history, and rhetoric. It is itself a memorial for those who have suffered in unspeakable anguish, not only in the massacres of World War II, but in the long and painful shell game of politics that has followed. Her essay was painstakingly constructed, researched, written and rewritten, translated and retranslated, cut and expanded and polished.

You cannot read this essay and not feel a deep and almost unspeakable conviction in its claims, urgency, and haunting beauty. Cecilia has given us an essay that shows that the intellectual, the aesthetic, the ethical, and, indeed, the political are capable of coalescing in the form of the research essay. This kind of writing cannot be demanded all at once in a classroom. But the fact that it was produced in a classroom is proof of something. The writing workshop can still do what is so hard for it to allow: To say yes to dissolving itself, if only for a little while. To let go a bit in the presence of art, making it possible for one’s students to reconfigure the class as they go far, far beyond its humble structures.

Scott Herndon
The Memorial Hall for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre: Rhetoric in the Face of Tragedy

Cecilia Yang

In Germany and in several European countries, it is a crime to deny the existence of the Holocaust.

Regarding the Holocaust, there are “thousands of books, museum exhibits, and documentary and feature films . . . because the determination of the surviving Jewish community never let the world forget.”

In comparison, the Nanjing Massacre is relatively unknown to this world. Compared to the Holocaust, “virtually nothing is in print about the Rape of Nanking . . .

– Yin, The Rape of Nanking: An Undeniable History in Photographs

0 Ground zero

Memorials are symbols, and both are black holes.

Memorials are objects that serve the memory of the dead, built so we never forget; they are trump cards (revealed with trembling, anxious fingers) played in the fear of amnesia. Looking like mere objects but evoking the powers of memory, memorials are potent symbols, elevating the status of their otherwise tangible selves.

Black holes are the end product of astronomical asphyxiation: burning their last remnants of fuel, dying stars sputter their last breaths before exploding into fiery supernovas, which then collapse into the extremely dense matter of a neutron star. As time passes, gravity pulls its matter even more tightly to its core; radius shrinks but density explodes.

If human tragedy is the supernova, its residue becomes the dense matter that forms memorials. Memorials strive to mirror black holes, attempting to compress the heavy weight of human tragedy into its core, the confines of architectural structure. Is this possible? Can memorials encapsulate the sorrow and inexplicable chaos of catastrophe within stone, bronze, wood, ink – mere earthly materials?

Can you condense the tragedy of an entire city into the mold of symbols?

How do you memorialize catastrophe?

1 The year that Alabama drops rape charges against the ‘Scottsboro Boys’

July 1, 1937. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident officially marks the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War, fought between Japan’s Imperial Army and China’s National
Revolutionary Army. The Japanese invasion of China, part of a strategic plan to control the Asia mainland, lasts eight 1 years.

**August 13, 1937.** The Japanese army invades Shanghai, international trade center and gateway to central China. A day less than a month later, Shanghai is captured and the victorious Japanese, led by Senior General Iwane Matsui, march towards Nanjing 2, then the capital of China.

**December 13, 1937.** Nanjing, a city 2,400 years old, one of the “Four Great Ancient Capitals” of China (Zhōngguó Sì Dà Gudū), falls to the Japanese.

_Nanjing, special correspondent Imai, December 17 – On this day of shouting and excitement, the cheers of one hundred million countrymen resound. Today, the deafening cries of banzai rising to the top of the city wall are the marvel of the century. Jubilation is breaking out here, in a bold, splendid ceremony to celebrate our entrance in the city. It has been four months since this army assembled its troops for the holy war in central China, and as the magnificent result of our fighting, we have captured the enemy capital and gained ascendancy in all of China. Here, we have established the foundation of peace in East Asia. Can anyone look at the Rising Sun flag waving so magnificently over the headquarters of the Nationalist government without tears of emotion? As he tries to convey to his homeland the actuality of the extremely majestic and soul-stirring ceremony, the pen of this reporter trembles with emotion and excitement. Over Nanjing are clear skies like those of Japan, deep blue with clear air and not a single cloud . . . (Honda 183)

This article, written by reporter Imai Masatake for the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shimbun, celebrates the Japanese capture of Nanjing. The accompanying photograph, titled “Ceremony of Entering the City,” visually depicts this same event, showing victorious Japanese troops, led by General Matsui, parading through the city’s Zhōngshān Gate (Yin 48). The uniformed officers sitting upon identical tall black horses, backs straight and hands gloved, are stately figures of modest triumph. Soldiers are lined up stiffly along the streets in perfect rows, their faces expressionless in the blank-eyed soldier gaze, their heads turned in identical angles. Shadows fall across the hard solemnity of their cheekbones: they are the perfect images of men. Their shadows stretch across the dust of the road in a perfect barcode of greys. It is winter, 1937 in Nanjing.

Chinese artist Li Zijian also painted the city that year, but the rhetoric of his images of Nanjing is vastly different. Looking at his canvas, viewers confront a mountain of tangled bodies, where light glints off twisted, disjointed limbs like a brain’s folded grey matter. Bodies upon bodies are piled on top of each other, corpses mixed with the living (but it is apparent that this heterogeneous mixture will fall into the homogeneity of death soon).

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1 In Chinese culture, the number eight (bā, 八) is considered a lucky number because it sounds like the word “prosper” (fā, 发).

2 Nanjing’s city flower (also the national flower of the People’s Republic of China) is *Prunus mume*, a species of Asian plum. The tree originates in China, but has grown in Japan since ancient times. In Chinese, *Prunus mume* is called méi, and in Japanese it is called ume, but in both languages it shares the same character (梅). When used in Japanese poetry, such as haiku or renga, ume is a ‘season word’ (words associated with a particular season) for early spring.
Not a single complete, whole body can be detected in the chaos of limbs – only bits and pieces can be spotted among countless lumps. Elbows jut out, legs and arms extrude in sharp angles, bending in every possible configuration. Hands are tightly bound with rope or outstretched, tendons taut. Blood seeps onto the ground of the painting, forming a lake at the foot of the mountain of human remains. Some faces blankly stare, some are twisted in pain, some are eternally frozen into mute screams. In the background, slate-blue gunpowder smoke curls toward the sky, and dirty snowflakes of potassium nitrate pollute the Yangtze River. Bright orange-red streaks from fuses occasionally glimmer across the atmosphere saturated with bleak blue-greys and drenched with blood. Other mountains of bodies, looking like charred indigo\(^3\), fill the background of the piece.

In a twist of fate where the political art of the East meets the religious iconography of the West, Li Zijin’s masses of twisted bodies echo the imagery of Dante Alighieri’s *Inferno* and Auguste Rodin’s *Gates of Hell*, a piece in which eternally tormented souls form the hollows and projections of a 5.4 meter tall, 3.9 meter wide, seven ton sculpture of black bronze (Takenaka). In Dante’s *Inferno*, Rodin’s “acknowledged source of inspiration” (Faxon), the *Gates of Hell* are thus inscribed:

THROUGH ME THE WAY INTO THE GRIEVING CITY,
THROUGH ME THE WAY INTO ETERNAL SORROW,
THROUGH ME THE WAY AMONG THE LOST PEOPLE.

BEFORE ME WERE NO THINGS CREATED
EXCEPT ETERNAL ONES, AND I ENDURE ETERNAL.
ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER.
(Dante, *Inferno*, III.1-3, 7-10)

The eyes of the viewer are meant to roam uneasily over the tumult of Li’s painting, too, occasionally resting on several figures purposely set apart by choices of hue and saturation. A young man, eyes closed, face turned upwards as if in deep sleep, clutches at his chest with his right hand, blood leaking through his fingers and dripping down his stomach.\(^4\) An infant\(^5\) crawls on the peak of the corpse mountain, his small face scrunched with pitiful wailing, cheeks tearstained, tiny hands clutching at the breast of his dead mother.

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\(^3\) Purple Mountain (Zinyin Shān, 紫金山) is located on the eastern side of Nanjing. At dawn and dusk, its peaks are often enveloped in dusty violet-tinged clouds. The Purple Mountain Observatory, sitting on the third peak, was completed in 1934. It still houses ancient astronomical instruments invented by the Chinese; however, much of this original equipment was destroyed or stolen three years from the day it began operations.

\(^4\) There is a devil back there who carves us so cruelly, putting the edge of his sword to each in this realm
once we have circled through the suffering road,
for the wounds have closed before any confronts him again.
(Dante, *Inferno*, XXVIII. 37-42)

\(^5\) Here, as far as could be heard, there was no Weeping except of sighs which caused the eternal air to tremble;
These resulted from grief without torture, felt by
The crowds, which were many and large, of infants
And of women and of men.
My good master to me: “You do not ask what
Spirits are these you see? Now I wish you to know,
Before you walk further,
That they did not sin . . .
(Dante, *Inferno*, IV. 25-34)
lying beneath him. A ripped robe exposes ripped wounds around her ribcage. In the foreground, two Japanese soldiers survey the scene. One crosses his arms in leisurely inspection, the other wipes blood from his sword, both similarly unaffected by the atmosphere of permeating grief and agony. These figures are only a few of the many that are clustered tightly together on Li’s canvas of oils.

The title of Li Zijian’s piece is *Nánjīng dà túshā*, or The Nanjing Massacre. He depicts the same place and time that Masataki had also known and glorified with words quivering with emotion. And yet, how starkly different the two pieces are. In fact, so different that we may wonder how it is possible that both pieces can be depicting the same event, how the grisly terror contained in Li’s painting can have any connection with the bright exhilaration contained in Masataki’s article.

The Nanjing Massacre is known by several other names, including the “Rape of Nanking” and the “forgotten holocaust of World War II” (Chang). After the city of Nanjing had fallen to the Japanese Imperial Army on December 13, 1937, war atrocities occurred in almost unfathomable numbers over a proportionally minute period of time. The terror that ensued, the extreme brutality of the Japanese soldiers, the intensity of death that pervaded the city is difficult to believe and grasp: within the time span of only “six weeks” (Chang), over 250,000 Chinese soldiers and innocent civilians (including the elderly, women, and children) were slaughtered, both systematically and indiscriminately. More shocking than the number of the dead, however, is the manner in which they were killed, which has been revealed by the testimony of survivors, witnesses and participants in the Massacre alike.

Tang Junshan, survivor and witness to one of the Japanese army’s systematic mass killings, testified:

*The seventh and last person in the first row was a pregnant woman. The soldier thought he might as well rape her before killing her, so he pulled her out of the group to a spot about ten meters away. As he was trying to rape her, the woman resisted fiercely . . . The soldier abruptly stabbed her in the belly with a bayonet. She gave a final scream as her intestines spilled out. Then the soldier stabbed the fetus, with its umbilical cord clearly visible, and tossed it aside.* (Honda 164)

In his confession, *First-hand Experience of the Nanjing Massacre* (1984), former soldier Kozo Tadokoro wrote:

*At the time, the company I belonged to was stationed at Xiaguan. We used barbed wire to bind the captured Chinese into bundles of ten and tied them onto racks. Then we poured gasoline on them and burned them alive . . . I felt like [I was] killing pigs.* (Yin 174)

In his *Personal Account of the Nanking Massacre* (1984), former soldier Kazuo Sone wrote:

*To boost the morale and courage of the new recruits during the war, we experimented with bayoneting the enemy. That meant using POWs or local civilians as live targets. New recruits without any battle experience would learn from this practice . . .

The human targets wailed and howled in extreme pain. Their blood spurted from open wounds. At this point, the recruits would be frightened by what they had done. The horrifying

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6 Synonyms for *túshā* (屠杀): butchery, slaughter.
scene softened the murderous look on their faces. But when victims continued to scream in pain, the blood gushing from their bodies, the soldiers would stab aimlessly and repeatedly, hoping to end their lives quickly and escape the ordeal, until their live targets became motionless. (156)

The way in which prisoners of war met their fate was another distinguishing feature of the Nanjing Massacre’s brutal killings. After the Japanese victory at Nanjing, Chinese soldiers who were unable to escape by crossing the Yangtze River or by fleeing into the International Safety Zone were rounded up by Japanese soldiers, and instead of being treated humanely (as the Geneva Conventions dictate), they were systematically slaughtered through “strict orders from top commanders of the Japanese Imperial Army” (78). The International Military Tribunal for the Far East (also known as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal), which met from 1946 to 1948 to prosecute Japanese leaders for war crimes committed during World War II, concluded:

Large parties of Chinese soldiers laid down their arms and surrender outside Nanking; within 72 hours after their surrender they were killed in groups by machine gun fire along the bank of the Yangtze River. Over 30,000 such prisoners of war were so killed . . . That these estimates are not exaggerated is borne out by the fact that burial societies and other organizations counted more than 155,000 bodies which they buried . . . these figures do not take into account those persons who were destroyed by burning or by throwing them into the Yangtze River or otherwise disposed of by Japanese. (78)

Toshio Ohto was an officer ordered to take charge of the disposal of bodies on the western Xiaguan Wharfs. At his trial in Fushan, a city located in northeast China, he revealed that innocent civilians, in addition to the POWs, met the same, brutally executed fate:

Out of the 100,000 bodies, 30,000 were buried or burned. The rest were tossed into the Yangtze River. I assume other troops must have disposed of at least 50,000 on their own. Among the bodies we disposed of, most were civilians. I saw our troops still shooting at them with machine guns when I arrived at Xiaguan Wharfs. I remember many of them were still alive after being shot. There were about 350 still alive among the 20,000 disposed of by my command. I ordered my soldiers to use iron loading hooks to finish them of before loading them onto boats or tossing them into the river, using the same hooks . . . (92)

This method of killing is reflected onto Li Zijian’s painting. His piece, painstakingly painted with graphic detail and vivid color, complements the photographs that also depict the results of the mass executions of the Nanjing Massacre. Painters, with their abilities to overflow voids left by the deficiencies of our imaginations, can convey what grainy black and white photographs cannot.

More than sixty years later, we can still see inconsistencies between Japanese and Chinese accounts of the Nanjing Massacre. Contributing to the escalating tensions between the two nations that still persist to this day, the stark contradictions between Li and Masataki’s pieces continue to manifest as literature, historical records, paintings, sculptures, and even memorials.

2 $F=-kx$, where $x$ is equal to the span of the East Sea

The Nanjing Massacre (only) lasted for six weeks, but war atrocities of the same nature were committed in other areas of northern China until Japan drew from World War II
The Massacre was “only vaguely known until after the war” (Fogel 12), as the only recorded evidence thus far were the writings – which had to be “smuggled to the outside world” (12) – of some Chinese and a few Westerners who had stayed in Nanjing during that time. During the Massacre, Japanese soldiers had either destroyed or concealed incriminating evidence at the scene of the crimes: bodies of murdered Chinese POWs were burned or thrown into rivers, and rape victims were killed “so that they could not live to bear witness” (Yang 246). Additionally, during the war, authorities within Japan suppressed evidence of these atrocities, exercising “strict censorship control over both foreign correspondents and their own writers at home” (Yang 246).

In a survey conducted in 1996, “nearly eighty-four percent of some 100,000 Chinese . . . chose the ‘Nanjing Massacre’ when asked what they associate most with Japan” (Yang, Challenges). Yet, the Nanjing Massacre still remains widely unknown to countries outside of Asia to this day, even long after it occurred – why is this so? Politics constitute one reason. Not only is Japan guilty: the U.S. and other Western powers significantly suppressed knowledge about Japanese war atrocities committed during World War II in the interest of rebuilding a Japan that could compete with China during the Cold War. As Japan was the only “clearly viable Asian ally of the Western camp in the confrontation with Communism, the Second World War tended to be treated as a dead issue . . . [other Asian countries] were under Communist rule, threatened by insurgency, or dependent on Japanese economic aid, so were not in a position to pursue issues affecting them which had resulted from the war” (Hicks viii), thus it was possible for Japanese officials and business circles to avoid references to events that stained their national history, such as the Nanjing Massacre.

Furthermore, those who did hear about the Massacre found it difficult to believe, since its nature stretched the limits of plausibility. Despite diaries and personal accounts of the Chinese, Japanese, and Westerners who testified to the nightmarish brutality of the atrocities committed, the overall extent of horror was difficult to fathom. According to historian Mark Eykholt, this disbelief in the Nanjing Massacre was “rooted in the feeling that a modern people such as the Japanese could not act in such uncivilized ways” (Eykholt 13). Additionally, to this day, the Japanese government has not yet issued an official apology for Nanjing Massacre, a decision that both amplifies the “collective amnesia” (Chang) that continues to surround the event, and contributes significantly to the tensions between China and Japan today. Worsening the tension are the efforts of “revisionist,” or extremist, groups within Japan that do not merely shift responsibility but go a step further to completely deny, or lessen the magnitude, of the Nanjing Massacre.

Until the 1980s, China was mostly silent about the Nanjing Massacre, and the subject “remained in the background of Chinese identity with respect to Japan” (Eykholt 26). However, in the 1970s, after revolutionary fervor settled in China, the two nations began to seek better relations, nudged by a secondary impetus: opportunity costs. Economics were the “real linchpin of developing Sino-Japanese relations” (26) – each saw in the other the possibility of gaining scarce resources without a significant loss of their own. Only when China and Japan began to develop ties of friendship did the undercurrent of uneasy past memories surface, leading to deepening cultural, political, and rhetorical tensions that have lasted until today.
During the 1980s, certain groups within Japan attempted to purge their history of past war atrocities. In 1987, news reporters “both inside and outside of Japan accused Japan’s ministry of Education of toning down Japan’s war imperialism in public school textbooks by changing terms such as aggressive war into offensive war, blaming atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre on the resistance of enemy peoples, and claiming that Japanese invasions were actually Japanese advances into other countries” (28). Historical textbooks became viewed as potential canvases upon which one could exercise artistic nationalism. In 2001, David McNeill, talk show host of a local radio station in western Tokyo, inspected a current Japanese textbook Nihonshi and found that:

The Nanking Massacre is not mentioned. The Nanking “Incident” is, as a footnote on page 234 to a one-sentence report that the Japanese army captured Nanking after fierce resistance. The footnote reads: Konotoki, nihonhei wa hisentouin wo fukumu tasuu no chugokujin wo satsugai shi, haisengo, tokyosai bande ookiina mondai tonatta (Nanking Jiken). My translation of this: “During this time, the Japanese army killed many Chinese, including noncombatants, something that became an important issue at the Tokyo war crimes court after Japan’s defeat (the Nanking Incident).” (McNeill)

And that is all it says.

Textbooks are a fertile, thus especially dangerous, medium for distorting historical truth, as one set of text can prolifically affect multiple young minds. The attempt by revisionist groups to erase the existence of the Nanjing Massacre, which had already been veiled, was shocking. It set off a storm of protest, creating opportunities to bring to the surface many of the “submerged aspects of Sino-Japanese relations, such as a desire by some Japanese to assert a more benign view of Japan’s role in the war and a desire of many Chinese to remember publicly the negative aspects of past Sino-Japanese interactions” (Eykholt 28). The two nations struggled between the paradoxical desires to establish friendly ties, as well as defend their country’s honor from another’s attack.

The following are only a few events from twenty years’ worth of the two nations’ internal and external conflict:

1987: Chinese officials canceled the scheduled visit of Japan’s Minister of Education, Ogawa Heiji, and also threatened to cancel the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Susuki Zenko, which had been “planned to coincide with the celebration of the tenth anniversary of Sino-Japanese friendship” (31).

1994: Japan’s new justice minister Shigeto Nagano “said what many Japanese officials are thought to believe but few dare utter . . . ‘The Rape of Nanking’ was, he said, ‘a fabrication.’ Japan in World War II, he added, was not an aggressor but a liberator of colonies” (Shigeto Nagano).

Mid-1990s: In China, the label “Angry Youth” (fènqīng, 愤青) emerges, referring to the millions of young activists united on central issues such as war atrocities committed by the Japanese in China during World War II as well as Japanese leaders’ regular visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, a memorial in Tokyo that honors the Japanese war dead, actions that are seen as legitimizing the country’s past militarism. One such fènqīng activist, art instructor

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7 Annelids (the phylum consisting of segmented worms) may reproduce asexually by fission, a quick method of reproduction in which the posterior part of the body breaks off and forms a new individual.

8 In Chinese, fènqīng can mean either “striving youth” or “idiotic youth,” depending on the speaker. ("Hear China’s Angry Youth")
Wang Lei, informs newspapers how he vents his politics through art (knowing that the Chinese government is wary of group activism):

For one recent piece, [Wang] erected a wooden statue of Japanese emperor Hirohito and invited Chinese passersby to whip it with a chain. After spending nearly $3,000 on his political pieces, he hopes a gallery will pick up the tab for his dream project: creating bronze statues of Japanese politicians and then melting them with a blowtorch. (Osnos)

1996: the Chinese press “fired another round of criticism” (Yang 237) at Japan when the city of Nagasaki succumbed to pressure by conservative and right-wing groups to replace photographs of the Nanjing Massacre in its new Atomic Bombing Museum.

1998: While visiting Tokyo, Chinese president Jiang Zeming “publicly [demands], and failed to get, another apology from Japan for its past aggressions” (Ghosts from China and Japan).

2005: China stated that it would block Japan’s effort to join the UN Security Council until Japan is “properly repentant” for its past lethal imperialism in China. Earlier, in the spring, Chinese mobs had thrown bottles and rocks at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing as well as smashed up some Japanese businesses during brief rampages in Shanghai. James Mulvenon, Asia specialist at the Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis in Washington, stated that “this could possibly be the worst period of Sino-Japanese relations since World War II” (Marquand, Nationalism Drives China, Japan Apart).

2006: Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi “[rejects] Chinese and South Korean criticisms of his five visits to the Yasukuni Shrine” (Japan-China friendship).

2006: Chinese premier Wen Jiabao states that relations between China and Japan cannot improve until Prime Minister Koizumi no longer visits the Yasukuni Shrine.

Though the struggles between the two nations materialize differently each time, they revolve around shared foci: Japan’s denials and refusals to atone for its past aggressions and atrocities. Of all these conflicts, it seems that the Yasukuni Shrine has been a significant contributor to the multilayered accumulation of tension: the visits to one particular memorial have continually remained one root of the disputes. But how can the act of commemorating the dead lead to reverberations ringing of anger and protest, leading to controversy and eventually ultimatums? Commemoration is remembering lives lost and sacrificed; it seems a necessary, humane thing to do.

Located in Tokyo, Japan, the Yasukuni Shrine (in Japanese, Yasukuni Jinja9) sits upon the slopes of Kudan Hill. Built in the style of the Japanese Shinto shrine and sharing features with Buddhist temple architecture, the Yasukuni Shrine opens with traditional torii10 gates, constructions of two upright supports topped with two crossbars that separate the secular world from the spiritual. Though torii are usually made of wood or stone, painted vermilion, the first two gates of the Yasukuni Shrine are respectively constructed of steel and bronze. Sixteen-petaled chrysanthemums11 stamp the wooden Divine Gate and fluttering white curtains adorn the Main Sanctuary and the Hall of Worship.

9 The Japanese word jinja literally translates to “peaceful nation shrine.”

10 The kanji of the torii (鳥居) translates into “bird dwelling,” suggesting that the form and structure of the torii resembles a perch for birds. This is no coincidence; in Shintoism, birds are considered the messengers of the gods.

11 Chrysanthemums were cultivated in China as a flowering herb as far back as the 15th century BC. The flower was introduced into Japan around 8th century CE and was adopted by the emperor as his official seal.
evergreens, maples, carpets of fern and moss cluster together in the Shrine’s garden, their emerald shades reflecting onto the surface of a black pond, where colors of koi fish flicker and gleam.

The Meiji emperor built the Yasukuni Shrine in June of 1989 to commemorate the lives lost during the Boshin War, a civil war fought in Japan that directly led to the Meiji Restoration. Since then, the Shrine has been dedicated to all those who died for Japan and its Emperor, men and women, soldiers and civilians alike. As of the year 2004, the Shrine’s Book of Souls was inscribed with 2,466,532 names of the war dead, now remembered and honored as kami within the memorial. In Japanese, kami means noble, sacred spirit; the word evokes a sense of quiet deference or adoration for the spirits and their authority achieved by virtue. Because the Japanese believe it is wrong to go near kami in a state of impurity, temizuyas – ritual water basins, offering long, slender stems of wooden ladles – are located at entrances to Shinto shrines. The kami of Yasukuni themselves, the spirits of the dead, are believed to reside within the deepest, darkest recesses of the honden, or the Main Sanctuary, located along the east-west axis that runs from the bottom of Kudan Hill (Breen). It is here that the Yasukuni priests, the only ones allowed to enter the honden, make offerings to the souls every morning and evening of every day of the year.

Through its careful design, the Yasukuni Shrine seems an effective, if not quintessential memorial. With its serene architecture, its air breathed by resting souls and spirits, pristinely kept gardens, wise twists of the Japanese Black Pine, all watched over by the Yasukuni priests, the Shrine seems a perfect sanctuary for intimate reflection and personal memories. It is the perfect place to quietly commemorate the dead, and reflect upon the lives lost so that you could keep your own. In this spiritual haven, with its serene echoes of quiet deference, it may be difficult to comprehend how this same place is the source of heated controversy and a constant victim of verbal whiplash by other nations during the past few decades.

The main reason for the controversy lies herein: of the 2.5 million kami housed within the Shrine’s Main Sanctuary, over a thousand are convicted Japanese war criminals. Of the 1,068 convicted, fourteen were executed Class A war criminals, officers of the Japanese Imperial Army who had committed “crimes against peace” during World War II, as determined by the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. On October 17, 1978, these fourteen were enshrined at the Yasukuni shrine as “Martyrs of Showa” to be worshipped as heroes. And of these fourteen, one was Iwane Matsui, leader of the attack against Nanjing on December 13, 1937.

Asia specialist James Mulvenon asks, “Try to imagine [German] Chancellor Angela Merkel going repeatedly to pay her public respects at a cemetery where a dozen high ranking Nazis and members of Hitler’s inner circle were buried. Do you think that might be upsetting?” (Marquand, Nationalism Drives China, Japan Apart)

The Yasukuni Shrine was built to commemorate the dead, but since its construction, it has been cohesively and problematically tangled in nationalism and politics. For instance, in a popular children’s board game in Japan, landing on a square that represented death also showed instant enshrinement at Yasukuni. The rhetoric of the board game effectively instilled nationalism in the children, teaching that dying for one’s nation was true honor,
for it leads to a desirable reward: glorification at Yasukuni. This same rhetoric spread beyond the rectangular confines of a board game to lyrics of popular war songs. During World War II, Japanese soldiers sang:

You and I are cherry blossoms of the same year
Even if we’re far apart when our petals fall
We’ll bloom again in the treetops of the Capitol’s Yasukuni Shrine.
(Tsubouchi)

These are comforting lyrics. They persuade us to believe that there is no danger in death due to battle. Patiently bear the pain of temporary separation from your life and your comrades, for in the afterlife, your spirit will be rewarded. In time, your soul will break free from the fetters of your former body, from the suffocating soil of the earth; it will find the roots of a Yasukuni tree, travel up its trunk to its flowers: still tightly enclosed buds, then burst free in a bright, dazzling explosion. After this liberation, your spirit will be free to soar on the breeze winding through the swaying branches, then travel to the treetops, above the rustling leaves, to joyfully meet the souls you thought you had lost: it will be clear exhilaration.

The rhetoric of these lyrics takes advantage of the natural human urge for companionship and friendship. It takes advantage of the fears people face in thinking they will lose the ones they love, by offering an alternative – a reunion in the afterlife. This is what dying for one’s country guarantees.

The nationalism that pervades the Yasukuni Shrine still pulses today. Items once used by the Japanese Imperial Army, such as war flags, are sold as souvenirs at a museum gift shop that sits to the north side of the Main sanctuary. While visiting the same museum, a visitor will discover a photograph, magnified “perhaps ten times” (Breen), of Justice Radhabinod Pal, the only judge at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal who thought the Japanese innocent of all war crimes. Thus, the Yasakuni Shrine affiliates itself not only with a pride in its soldiers or its people, but a nationalism that implies the innocence of their nation. This same nationalism is evident in the Yasakuni Shrine’s official English website:

War is truly sorrowful. Yet to maintain the independence and peace of the nation and for the prosperity of all of Asia, Japan was forced into conflict. The precious lives that were lost in these incidents and wars are worshiped as the Kami (Deities) of Yasukuni Jinja.

Moreover, there were those who gave up their lives after the end of the Great East Asian War, taking upon themselves the responsibility for the war. There were also 1,068 ”Martyrs of Showa” who were cruelly and unjustly tried as war criminals by a sham-like tribunal of the Allied forces (United States, England, the Netherlands, China and others). These martyrs are also the Kami of Yasukuni Jinja.

Finally, let us worship at Yasukuni Jinja and offer our gratitude to the Kami and resolve to become fine citizens of our nation. The white doves^{12} that fly above the Jinja also await your visit . . . (Yasukuni Jinja)

Long ago, the Yasukuni Shrine decided not to extricate itself from nationalism and politics, but now it has gone a step further, to the point of rewriting history. In this sense,

^{12} One species of dove is the Luzon Bleeding-heart (Gallicolumba luzonica), known for a stain of vivid, dark red at the center of its white breast. At first sight, it is hard to believe that the bird has not recently been wounded.
the Shrine merely functions as another textbook: its architectural lines and forms become the ink of the pages, and its visitors the readers who lap up its words. The Shrine has tied the act of commemorating the dead to loving one's country to exonerating murderers of crimes to denying history, so that its visitors cannot do one without doing the others. In this light, the Yasukuni Shrine has collapsed into a perversion of a memorial. While it was once a place for solemn remembrance and reverent gratitude, it now functions as a nationalist weapon and a political tool.

But there are no laws stating that a memorial must cleanly sever nationalism from the act of commemoration. However, there are definite guidelines memorials should follow, based solely on common ethical sense. Of these, the Yasukuni Shrine has violated at least one by refusing to acknowledge and attempting to rewrite history in the name of nationalism.

However, if we momentarily strip away Yasukuni's atmosphere choked with nationalism, we can evaluate how effective it is in its commemorative capacity – the main feature of most memorials. If memorials are meant to offer emotional healing or closure to those affected by the deaths they represent, how does the Yasukuni Shrine do, in this light? Is this particular ideology of the traditional memorial at least consistent with Yasukuni's? By offering the spirits of the kami a sacred resting ground that hums with serenity and eternally inscribing their names into the Book of Souls, the Yasukuni Shrine certainly does provide comfort to the ones grieving – whether they are loved ones or strangers – by ensuring that the dead will be forever remembered (or at least until the Shrine exists).

But though the Shrine heals, it also wounds those affected by what happened in Nanjing of 1937. Those who lost children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, lovers, spouses, friends – we can only wonder how they cope, how they are expected to heal, knowing that the very ones responsible for their losses are being worshipped and glorified. War memorials operate in the clause of Catch-22: if you commemorate a soldier, you will, at the same time, cause pain to the memory of those he killed during the course of battle. But if you do not commemorate the soldier, you erase the memory of his life, and essentially kill him, giving him a second death. For all memorials that commemorate the war dead, this dynamic is inevitable, not just limited to Yasukuni. In order to pay your respects to a dead soldier, you will offend those he killed. In most cases, those he killed were also trying to kill him.

This rhetorical cycle, however, cannot apply to certain kami at the Yasukuni Shrine. The lives taken by Japanese soldiers in Nanjing did not happen as an inevitable, natural result of battle. The enemies – the Chinese people – were not killed while defending their country, they had not been seeking the sweet reward of eternal enshrinement as kami; in reality, their lives were abruptly cut off, unjustly stolen. And Yasukuni does not only exonerate this crime, but even goes as far to glorify the criminal.

One form of rhetoric implies that society victimizes an inherently innocent individual. When creating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in America, veterans in charge of its construction insisted that it be free of politics; they wanted viewers to "Honor the man, not the cause" (Wagner-Pacifici). By this framework, the man is innocent, only a victim of extenuating circumstance and inescapable dictation. However unfavorable the outcome
of war, the man should still be honored for his contribution to his country; his individual mistakes or faults should be disregarded. If this same concept of forgiving the man, regardless of how despicable his actions may have been, is applied to the Yasukuni Shrine, one is essentially forgiving unforgivable crimes against humanity, crimes of inhumane, horrific, grisly brutality – bloodshed that is not a natural result of war. However, unlike the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Yasukuni Shrine does not even ask us to forgive the atrocities the Japanese soldiers committed, but denies they even existed, instead glorifying the guilty as martyrs as well as intentionally distorting history. These conscious decisions of the Yasukuni Shrine are almost childlike; by denying the guilt of their soldiers, they are naively refusing to believe in the existence of the cruel, terrible capabilities of man.

With the Yasukuni Shrine, it is impossible to venerate the dead without accepting glorification of unjust murder. The memorial houses an internal conflict, a conflict that manifests externally into the conflict between nations. Because of its pride, the Yasukuni Shrine has been an impediment to healthy, international discourse, continuing to anger countries that were once (or still continue to be) victims of Japan’s fatally imperialistic past. The title of the memorial has proved to be quite ironic.

3 Nanjing counterattacks Tokyo

Amidst the heated textbook controversy of the 1980s, and in retaliation to verbal denials of the Nanjing Massacre by certain Japanese officials and extremist groups, the Memorial for Commemoration of the Victims of the Japanese Military’s Nanjing Massacre (Qīnhuá rénjūn nánjīng dàtūshā yùnăn tóngbāo jìniànguān) was built, covering an area of 28,000 square meters in an area within China’s former capital. It is more than a little sad that it took threat to give proper recognition to the dead, as its construction was delayed by almost half a century, but that is another story.

The Memorial for Commemoration of the Victims of the Japanese Military’s Nanjing Massacre (the Memorial) opened in the year of 1985. It is not a single structure, but rather a composite of several individual memorials, united by a shared ground and purpose. The Memorial also houses several non-monumental buildings, including one office, seven departments and sub-departments, including an administration office, and departments of research, exhibition, and supplies; it is also affiliated with the Research Association of the Nanjing Massacre by the Japanese Military. As a memorial, the Nanjing Memorial does not merely suggest history, but actively works to reflect it.

Though the Yasukuni Shrine and the Nanjing Memorial seem to occupy opposite ends of the spectrum – one honors the dead, the other the executioner – both are driven by an identical motive: the desire to reassert one’s own historical truth while commemorating lives lost, all in one collective structure. Additionally, both memorials are tangled in nationalism. The Yasukuni Shrine was melded and evolved by Japanese nationalism, and the creation of the Nanjing Memorial was a Chinese nationalist reaction to that Japanese nationalism. Since both memorials share a rudimentary rhetorical framework, can the Nanjing Memorial escape the fate that befell the Yasukuni Shrine; can it succeed where it fails? Can it avoid gluing commemoration to patriotism; can it refrain from distorting history for the benefit and honor of one’s own nation?
And can the Nanjing Memorial transcend those very pitfalls to become an “ideal” memorial, one that heals, not wounds? Does the Memorial successfully emerge from the chaos of the Massacre, its confusing, anxious, frightening makeup, to offer a calm presence, one that can finally bring closure to the event?

4 From the corpses the flowers grow

The Memorial was built by Jiangdong Gate (meaning Gate East of the River), one of the mass execution sites during the Nanjing Massacre. It was built literally above the “Ten Thousand Corpse Ditch” (wàn rén kēng13), whose etymology is described by a nearby monument, carved from the relief of stone.

On December 16, 1937, the Japanese Army imprisoned ten thousand disarmed Chinese soldiers and civilians in the courtyard of the former Army Prison. That evening, the prisoners were escorted to Jiangdong Gate. The Japanese troops set massive fires to civilian houses to light up the area while employing heavy and light machine-guns to shoot the crowd . . . The victims fell one after another into pools of blood . . . A few months later, when the weather grew warmer and the bodies started to rot, charity burial societies buried the remains of more than ten thousand in two huge ditches. Therefore it is called ‘Ten Thousand Corpse Ditch’ (Yin 103).

In one black and white photograph taken only moments after the same massacre, a helmeted Japanese soldier surveys the scene. Rocky, uneven soil has been unearthed to form a long ditch that carries a river of tightly packed bodies. Left hand resting upon his belt, right hand lightly gripping a bayonet, the soldier gazes at the heaps made of parallels, diagonals, and perpendiculars filling in gaps. The glare of the sun glances off the dead bodies like flat rocks of a riverbed. A second photograph, taken in 1985 of the same location during the excavation of the Ten Thousand Corpse Ditch, shows that the clothed corpses have disintegrated into a saturated river of splintered bones, dotted with the roundness of skulls.

The colors of the Memorial, sitting upon the memories of thousands massacred, are bleak and somber. Buildings are carved from light grey granite, all inscriptions are composed of thick black brushstrokes, pines and cypresses of dark juniper green are ordered into grave, obedient rows. In order to enter, a visitor must first face and pass through – it cannot be ignored or walked around – a looming grey stone wall boldly declaring ‘300000’ and the word ‘victim,’ inscribed in Chinese, English, and Japanese. After descending stairs on the opposite side of the wall, one faces a bleak, barren desert, in which buildings and statues and monuments are isolated from each other by expanses of grey and beige cobblestone (or éluanshi, which literally translates to “goose14 egg stone”). Withered trees are plunged into the hard sand, casting their shadows into streaks of grey shades that stretch across the expanse.

13 The character kēng (坑) as a noun can mean pit, hole, or tunnel; as a verb, it can mean ‘to bury alive.’

14 A Chinese legend explains the origin of the Lantern Festival, which occurs on the fifteenth of the first lunar month. In the legend, the Jade Emperor of Heaven had decided to destroy a town with a storm of fire for killing his favorite goose. A good-hearted fairy, hearing of the emperor’s impending vengeance, warned the townspeople to light lanterns throughout the town on the appointed day. The townsfolk listened and followed her instructions, and from the heavens, it looked as though the village was ablaze. Satisfied that his goose had already been avenged, the Jade Emperor did not destroy the town.
In the southwest corner of the Memorial stands a building shaped in the form of a coffin (its roof is the lid, its half buried body mirrors paneled sides of oak), housing the bones excavated from the Ten Thousand Corpse Ditch. Inside, bones emerge from sand enclosed by large glass panels. Transparent folds of black cloth in the background, lit by the sun, are softer mirrors of the harsh contours of femurs and ulnas in the foreground. It is an aquarium of corpses. In one section of the exhibit, the bones have been kept in life’s original connection, in jutting skeleton form, though some are missing skulls (those are scattered throughout the exhibit, gouged by bayonets, whispering of bullet holes). Grainy and dirt-encrusted, they look like enlarged bumps of sandpaper. Little cards with bold black numbers identify the skeleton as a number: in death, they are nameless, faceless, and unidentifiable. In another aquarium, instead of retaining human links, bones are scattered in protruding disarray, looking like centuries of driftwood collected from the sea. Body is no longer discernible from body, mirroring the fashion in which they were carelessly tossed in death. Facing these exhibits is facing concrete evidence of the Nanjing Massacre, meeting its tangible truth.

Is this display of the dead unethical? In order to create these memorials, bones were unearthed from the soil and placed on public display — this treatment could be considered disrespectful to the memory of the dead. But how could it be, when the earth that covered their bones was not a fitting or decent grave? The bones did not rest in peace; they were buried without the world’s and their enemy’s acknowledgement of their suffering and pain. They were shamed, then tortured, then suffocated in dirt reeking of injustice. To be broken free from this soil so that they can tell their stories — that is not disrespect but liberation.

The memory of the Nanjing Massacre has been in danger of being forgotten. The shocking display of chaotically strewn bones evokes in us a homeostatic desire to reconnect them, and simply by realizing this desire, we would simultaneously be piecing together the scattered, fading memories they represent. Thus, the shattered bones are literal representations of fragmented memory; to piece together these shards means to remember and commemorate the Massacre. “To dismember is to fragment a body and its memory; to remember is make a body complete” (Sturken). Consequently, the bones form a dichotomy of life and death: if we, the visitors to the memorials, the ones still filled with potent life, keep passing on the stories of the dead — then the dead have not yet truly died. On one hand, this particular memorial is a grisly, jolting reminder of death, but on the other, it actively asks for a preservation and nurturing (multiplication) of life. The bones of the victims are more than mere endoskeletal remnants; they have life, if we allow it. With our voices, we can preserve them better than chemical preservatives ever could.

These bones form the rhetorical skeleton of the Nanjing Memorial. They remind us of what is most important: preserving the memory of the Massacre. Nothing can follow the absence of memory; if we cannot remember, then all the Memorial attempts to do is rendered meaningless.

15 Artist Damien Hirst places formaldehyde-drenched animal corpses into glass cases. These, too, are stark contradictions of life and death: they appear as they did when they were alive, yet they reek of the sterility of chemical preservatives. In one piece, a tiger shark is Hirst’s corpse of choice. It floats in an aquarium of light, dirty turquoise gelatin, looking like a cross-section of the deep ocean. Its title is The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living.
An inscribed wall forms the southwest corner of the graveyard of the Memorial. Like the entrance wall, it is also meant to be shaped in the image of a tombstone, and it is also bleakly grey. However, in contrast to the entrance wall that so unflinchingly displays the number of the dead, this wall is instead inscribed with three thousand names of victims, each name representing ten thousand more. Whereas a ‘300,000’ evokes pure volumes of numbers, the names of this wall evoke associations with individual identities – it is more personal. Thin trees behind the monument softly place their leaved branches on the stone tops of the wall, seeming to peer down at the inscriptions below. A wreath of stone on the center bottom of the wall encircles one single Chinese character, diàn¹⁶, which means ‘to make offerings to the spirits of the dead.’ To grasp the enormity of the Nanjing Massacre is to possess the ability to imagine that each scribbled brushstroke, perhaps measuring only a few inches in length, holds the sufferings and deaths of ten thousand who once were alive. This ability to grasp quantity surely surpasses, or at least painfully stretches, the average powers of imagination.

Though perhaps more personal than the stark simplicity of the entrance wall, this monument continues to focus on numbers, the statistical magnitude of death. Three hundred thousand – the number that the Memorial has accepted as the factual death toll, has been a “highly charged issue” (Fogel xiv), a fiery point of controversy between the Massacre’s doubters and believers. At the highest range, the believers argue that more than “300,000 were killed and 80,000 raped,” and at the lowest end, Japanese extremists “argue that fewer than 100 were killed and very few raped” (6). Tanaka Masaaki, “the most vocal proponent of the extreme revisionist position” (Yamamoto 244), even dedicates seven of his seventeen chapters in his book What Really Happened in Nanking: the Refutation of a Common Myth to discussing the exact number of deaths.

The Memorial’s director, Chu Chengshan, states that one of the Memorial’s purposes is to “preserve historical truth and spread the seeds of peace” (Qinhua rijun nanjing). However, when it emphatically insists on the exact number of deaths through various monuments, the Memorial is essentially contributing another belligerent, heated voice to the controversy. If such accusations have repeatedly proven in the past to rouse defensiveness and patriotism from within Japan, can the Memorial honestly fulfill its claims to contributing to peace? If an insistence on an exact number has been unable to bring a repentant apology, is the Memorial effective in trying to establish a shared truth, a factual history?

Also, an emphasis on numbers may shift the focus from another important aspect of the Nanjing Massacre – the brutality of the murders. What was terrible about the Massacre were not only the vast quantities of death, but the cruel ways in which humans were killed. Historian Joshua Fogel has commented, “Whether 200,000 people were killed or 240,000 does not alter the dimensions of the horror” (Fogel 6). The obsessive focus on the number of the dead has often hindered the hopeful conclusion of China’s tension with Japan: the attainment of official apologies from the Japanese government and historians alike.

16 The eyes of one not well-acquainted with the Chinese language may see a similarity between the character diàn (奠) and the character zhēn (真), which means truth.
Some in Japan seem obsessed with particularities such as death figures without paying attention to the greater political and moral implications of the wartime transgressions in general. When asked by an American historian to explain why it is so difficult for the Japanese to accept the Nanjing Incident and to admit to the shameful behavior in Nanjing, a prominent Japanese historian replied somewhat indignantly, “For me, to apologize for things that can’t be ascertained as facts is very difficult. To apologize for something that can’t be ascertained, like Japan killed 300,000 or 400,000 people, what does it become?”

He may be quite right with respect to the exact number of casualties, but . . . the issue at stake was not in obtaining the exact figure but in admitting that what happened in Nanjing was both tragic and shameful (Yang 247).

As the monuments within the Memorial constantly indicate the numbers of the murdered, it seems to be impugning the Japanese, accusing them as the transgressors. By consciously rousing indignation and defensiveness from the very ones whom they seek an apology from, its claims to spreading peace are questionable, as it seems to hinder, rather than pave the way, to peace.

However, though the concept of numbers has proven to rouse controversy and verbal war, the blatant display of ‘300,000’ is necessary in the long run. The number is not merely a mathematical collection of digits, but a physical gauge of the war atrocities committed against the people of China. Eykholt connects the act of denying the number with the act of supporting “imperialist aggression”:

Japan was only the last in a line of aggressors that waged war on Chinese soil. Consequently, the Massacre joins a string of events, such as the Opium War and the burning of the Summer Palace, that represent the violence of imperialism, and death figures are a central part of the Massacre as a larger symbol of the destruction that foreign encroachment wrought on Chinese soil . . . Three hundred thousand deaths is more than just a number over which scholars argue. It is a multilayered symbol that for Chinese signifies the unjustified pain inflicted on China by Western and Japanese power . . . (Eykholt 49)

To forget these numbers is to forget, or disregard, the extent of a people’s suffering. Though the number itself is not the most important aspect of the Massacre, as it was the nature of the atrocities committed in the Nanjing Massacre that was the most terrifying aspect, the numbers still emphasize magnitude, thus emphasizing the magnitude of brutality. Thus, if it is important to stress the nature of the brutality, numbers are vital. Though they may incite controversy and worsen tension, the numbers on the monuments are important and do need to exist, if we truly desire a complete understanding of the Nanjing Massacre. An apology from the Japanese government for the true number of deaths would be infinitely better than an apology for a false one, even if more time and effort must be expended in attaining it.

The Memorial is at conflict. On one hand, it must truthfully attest to the brutality suffered by the murdered, and numbers are a necessary medium for emphasis. However, this desire to preserve historical truth comes at the cost of immediate conflict – anger, defensiveness, further polarization towards denial – instead of beginnings of peace, one of its stated goals. The Memorial must realize that these two desires are paradoxical, and thus it cannot have both. One must be forsaken to attain the other.
However, peace is attainable in the long run. But this more stable peace rests on healthy discourse between the two nations, and healthy discourse is only possible when the two nations share a basic historical framework. Only when the two nations agree on certain fundamental points, can they begin to examine, acknowledge, deal with the details of the Nanjing Massacre, and make progress towards peace. No single, static structure, like the Memorial, has the capacity to be a substitute for some necessary components for peace: an indeterminable period of time, layered with continual effort, justifiable compromise, and change. The Memorial must realize the limits of its capabilities, and not claim to fulfill what it does not.

7 Even after death, the head of Orpheus still sang his mournful songs as it floated down the river Maritsa

The Memorial effectively shocks visitors with reminders about the magnitude of the Nanjing Massacre. But it even more successfully sears onto the visitors’ minds memories of the brutality for which the Massacre is infamous.

Beneath the ‘300,000’ wall of the Memorial, resting on sandy-colored stones peppered with grey, is a sculpture of black bronze, slightly greening at the edges. The sculpture is a severed head that seems to just have ceased rolling on the ground; a lock of damp hair, breathing its last humid breath, falls and rests on his forehead. His eyes roll back into this head, staring blankly. His mouth is slightly open, a swollen tongue pushing against teeth underneath tightly drawn lips. His skin is rough, tensing into lump folds, stippled with so many cavernous pits that it is hard to detect the slash running down diagonally from the left side of his nose to his left jaw.

Beheading was a common form of punishment employed by Japanese soldiers, and a method of death that had origins deep within the Japanese culture and traditions of the sword. The soldiers “dwelled with great relish upon the sword as a weapon and as a bushido spiritual symbol, inculcated by the military culture from the day a man became a soldier” (Yin 132). During wars, it was a form of initiation; after beheading his first victim, a soldier would be proving his courage and fearlessness, attaining the experience necessary to ultimately become a seasoned, honored war veteran. In his confession, former soldier Hakudo Nagatomi recounts his first experience with beheading.

On my first day in China, back in 1937, I proved my courage by beheading twenty Chinese civilians. It is very hard to say this, but the truth of the matter is that I felt proud of Japan . . .

. . . the Japanese officer proposed a test of my courage. He unsheathed his sword, spat on it, and with a sudden mighty swing he brought it down on the neck of a Chinese boy cowering beside us. The head was cut clean off and tumbled away on the ground as the body slumped forward, blood

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17 Bronze is a copper alloy, which may form blue or blue-green salts after losing electrons that encircle its nucleus.
18 In 1645, famed swordsman Miyamoto Musahi wrote in Go Rin No Sho that the ideal warrior follows the “twofold way of pen and sword.”
19 Eleven virtues associated with bushido:

義 – Gi – Rectitude
礼 – Rei – Respect
忠義 – Chügi – Loyalty
悌 – Tei – Care for the aged

勇 – Yu – Courage
誠 – Makoto – Honesty
忠 – Chu – Preservation of ethics
孝 – Ko – Respect/piety to one’s elders

仁 – Jin – Benevolence
名誉 – Meiyo – Honor, Glory
智 – Chi – Wisdom
spurting in two great gushing fountains from the neck. The officer suggested I take the head home as a souvenir. I remember smiling proudly as I took his sword and began killing people. (Pitman)

Hiroki Kawano, a former Japanese military photographer, was a witness to the frequent beheading of Chinese soldiers and civilians alike.

I've seen all kinds of horrible scenes . . . headless corpses of children lying on the ground. They even made the prisoners dig a hole and kneel in front of it before being beheaded. Some soldiers were so skillful that they took care of the business in a way that severed the head completely but left it hanging by a thin layer of skin on the victim's chest, so that the weight pulled down the body down to a ditch. (Yin 132)

However, beheading was not merely a method of ending life, but a form of entertainment as well. A series of 'killing field' photographs taken on Nanjing’s Píngshí Street captures the exact moment a Japanese sword slices through the neck of a man. In the photograph, the head is weightless, floating several inches below where it should be; it is separated from its usual foundation by an empty sliver of cavernous black. A blank expression rests on the face no longer connected to the slumped body; with its legs slumped underneath, the corpse almost bows to the audience of Japanese soldiers. A multilayered circle of Japanese soldiers enclose the spectacle, their faces hidden underneath inky shadows below the brims of their caps; two can be seen taking photographs – the caption suggests “for souvenirs” (Yin 138). The man (or is it a corpse?) is in a posture of quiet surrender – his hands are not tied behind him, but instead of resisting, they are placed softly on the tops of his knees. This same pose of defeat, in which the hands of the victims are neither tied nor used to fight, can be found in other photographs depicting beheadings. By surrendering to death, the victims are not only being murdered, but in a sense committing suicide at the same time.

As a form of entertainment, beheading was not only a spectator sport but an interactive game. On December 13, 1937, the Japanese newspaper Tokyo Nichinichi Shimbum ran the headline: “Contest to kill first 100 Chinese with sword extended when both fighters exceed mark – Mukai scores 106 and Noda 105.”

Two brave fighters of the Katagiri unit, Sub-lieutenant Toshiaki Mukai and Sub-lieutenant Takeshi Noda are in a rare race to kill 100 Chinese under the Purple Mountain outside Nanking. So far, Mukai has a score of 106 and his rival has dispatched 105 men. They greeted each other at noon.

Noda: Hi! My number is 105, what about you?
Mukai: 106 is my number!

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20 Píngshí, 平时, meaning ‘in normal times’ or ‘in peacetime.’

21 The issue of whether a decapitated head retains consciousness after separation from the body has been debated; however, no definite answer has been established.

22 Under the *bushido* ideal, if a samurai failed to uphold his honor (through defeat, disgrace, or mortal wounds) he could regain it by performing *seppuku* (ritual suicide). With seppuku, he could end his days with his transgressions erased and with his reputation enhanced. The samurai would plunge a knife into his abdomen, which was believed to release his spirit. Sometimes the samurai who was performing the act would ask a loyal comrade to cut his head off at the moment of agony.
Both of them laughed heartily.

But the two contestants have found it impossible to determine which passed the 100 mark first. Instead of settling it with a discussion, they are going to extend the goal by 50.

Mukai’s blade was slightly damaged in the competition. He explained that this was the result of cutting a Chinese in half, helmet and all. The contest was ‘fun,’ he declared, and he thought it a good thing that both men had gone over the 100 mark without knowing that the other had done so. (Yin 182)

Survivors of such ‘killing contests’ have provided eyewitness accounts, consistent with the Japanese newspaper report. Tang Junshan, a shoemaker born in Nanjing, was twenty-two at the time of the Second Sino-Japanese war. He was discovered hiding in a trash bin by Japanese soldiers, who escorted him and a group consisting “entirely of civilians” (Honda 164) to the grounds of a clothing factory. There, they were divided into four equal groups and made to stand on the four sides of a pit that had already been dug. Tang recounts, “Four of the soldiers went around slicing off the heads of the people in their assigned group while the other four, including the collaborators, picked up the severed heads and lined them up. In other words, the four teams were having a head cutting contest” (164).

With this particular monument, the Memorial effectively evokes memories of one particular, ghastly form of murder. At the same time, by placing a statue of this nature in the Nanjing Massacre Memorial, it seems to imply that beheading was a form of torture specific to the Massacre, or that only the Chinese suffered at the blade of the Japanese sword. However, decapitation is a form of punishment stretching across the history of the world, responsible for deaths ranging from the Bible’s John the Baptist to Seif Adnan Kanaan, who died at the hands of Iraqi terrorists in 2004 – it is certainly not limited to Japanese aggressors and Chinese victims.

In the Sino-Japanese War, some Chinese civilian and military leaders offered prizes for Japanese heads. As a result, Chinese soldiers mutilated the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers even prior to the first major battle of war in mid-September 1894. (Yamamoto 23)

Thus, the presence of such a statue is hypocritical, for Japan could use the same exact statue as a memorial to their own murdered soldiers from the first Sino-Japanese war. However, in the previous example, the act of removing the head was less brutal in that it was done to corpses, not to those still alive. Distinguishing features of the beheading of the Nanjing Massacre were its frequency as a method of death, the ritual of initiation associated with it, and its use as a form of entertainment – features that cannot be applied in rhetorical defense.

Still, the Memorial must avoid hypocrisy at all costs, for the past foreshadows and warns of its potential danger. The past has shown that when small errors regarding the history of the Nanjing Massacre are made, certain Japanese groups descend upon the error, vulture-like, to discredit it. They then use the error as justification to disregard the entire evidential basis of the Nanjing Massacre, hoping to ultimately bleach away an unwanted stain from Japanese history.
It has become a preoccupation of some [Japanese nationalist historians] to expose the technical discrepancies in existing accounts of the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing, however minor they may be, and to immediately claim, explicitly or implicitly, that the whole incident was “made up.” The recent backlash against inclusion of records of Japanese aggression and atrocities in many war museums in Japan largely deployed similar tactics. Inaccurate photographs or video clips showing Japanese atrocities became an excuse to remove entire sections. (Yang 242)

The Memorial, as well as all historians, must be painstakingly meticulous in portraying history accurately. One small error could potentially capsize its entire mission. One small error could push one audience to impenetrable close-mindedness, make them withdraw even deeper into their shells, the barrier that obstructs them from acknowledging and atoning for past atrocities.

8 Enantiomorph

What is worse than misrepresenting history, though, is widely transmitting this distortion.

In the past, the Chinese government has used the Nanjing Massacre as a “political tool” to keep public attention focused on development and unity.

Any doubts about this were dispelled in 1996 when the Communist party, fearful that Chinese people were ignoring this monument to the glory of the Communist strength and wisdom, made visits to the Memorial mandatory for schoolchildren. This was part of a larger program to reenergize loyalty to the Party among Chinese citizens. The Memorial is one more way that the Chinese government asserts its control over how people commemorate the war with Japan. (Eykholt 36)

Sadly, the Nanjing Memorial has somehow become like Yasukuni, unable to separate commemoration from patriotism.

Since its opening in 1985, the Memorial of Victims of the Nanjing Atrocity has been designated as one of the “Sites of Patriotic Education” in China. One is told in lessons from the Japanese atrocities in Nanjing that “backwardness invites bullying” and “if the country is not strong, its people suffer.” The national orientation is quite clear. (Yang, Challenges)

On its official website, it even proudly lists the awards it has earned: “Advanced Institution in Building Spiritual civilization in the Nation,” “Model Foundation for National Patriotic Education,” “National Patriotic Education for Middle and Elementary School of Students” . . .

If anything should emerge from the Nanjing Massacre, it should be the memories of the lives lost. These lives can and should be remembered without needing to glorify one’s country. A bridge between commemoration and patriotism does not exist naturally; it must be intentionally formed. The victims of the Massacre are first and foremost tied together by their shared suffering, and not an ethnic identity. To honor the dead is to tell their individual stories, recognizing their distinct identities as human beings. Remembering the

23 When snails are retracted into their shells, they secrete a type of mucus that when dried, covers the entrance of their shells, forming a trapdoor-like structure called the operculum. Operculum powder is a crucial ingredient of incense in both China in Japan.

In China, incense is burnt at the graves of ancestors as a New Year tradition. In Japan, incense holds a vital role in Buddhist and Shinto shrine ceremonies and rites. It is thought to be a method to purify the surroundings.
diversity of those who died helps us understand more accurately the true extent of loss. If we fall into patriotism, and treat the dead as a collective country, the uniqueness of their individual identities dissipates, and we cannot understand that the death toll of the Nanjing Massacre is more than a mere number.

Since it has the authority to educate the youth of the nation, the Memorial must be serious about its responsibility to preserve historical truth. When reaching out to minds of future generations, future transcribers of history, future determiners of history, all must respect and keep the history of the Nanjing Massacre intact. It is unavoidably immoral and regressive to use historical tragedy for individual benefit or as a means to attain patriotic unification. The Nanjing Memorial, lured by the same temptations as the Yasukuni Shrine, is inching nearer to committing the same crime, that of rewriting history.

When describing its aesthetic appearance on its official website, the Nanjing Memorial states that the black and white granite of its architecture forms the pages of a history book. But wait, history books been mentioned before – the Memorial itself was borne out of the textbook controversy, and it furthermore fights textbook with textbook, similarly seeking to inscribe its version of truth onto an eternally historical record. It does not seem a coincidence that its rhetoric mirrors that of the enemy. But by employing an identical expression of fierce resistance, it must avoid the fate that befell the rhetoric: succumbing to shamelessly disfiguring history for individualistic gain, and thus being rendered an ineffective, meaningless symbol.

9  The mixed ancestry of the thousand armed: a brief interlude

For a moment, we will travel across the East Sea.

Along the coastline of Japan, warm breezes from the salty sea and natural volcanic springs bathe the steep mountains of Atami, which in Japanese literally means ‘hot ocean.’ Deep within Mount Izu, damp foliage wraps itself around a statue of Koa Kannon, bodhisattva of compassion in Asian Buddhism, known as Guanyin in China and the Goddess of Mercy in the west. She stands upon a lotus flower, light cloth draped across her body, pressing her hands together in a posture of prayer. A trace of serene concern can be detected in her eyes and in the slight tautness of her brow.

She was molded by the hands of potter Shibayama Seifu, who was commissioned by General Iwane Matsui to build such a shrine in his hometown. Matsui was personally appointed by Emperor Hirohito in 1937 to be commander of the Japanese Shanghai Expeditionary Force during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The clay that formed her form had been shipped to Japan from the battlefields of Central China; it was stained with the blood of both Japanese and Chinese soldiers. Tanaka Masaaki rhetorically asks, incredulousness buzzing through his words, “Would an officer as honorable and ethical as General Matsui have ordered or sanctioned the massacre of 300,000 Chinese?” We are

24 The roots of a lotus are embedded in the mud, the stem grows up through the water, and the heavily scented flower lies above the water, basking in the sunlight. In Buddhism, the lotus is the symbol of the progress of the soul from the “primeval mud of materialism . . . the waters of experience...into the bright sunshine of enlightenment” (The Lotus).
supposed to fall into harmony with his words, believing wholeheartedly when he tells us that “Matsui Iwane was the most illustrious Japanese officer of his time . . . the man whom I respected than anyone else on earth” (Tanaka 2). Masaaki is diligently or desperately trying to gather honor (scattered from shame and scandal) the general had lost when he was sentenced to be hanged at Sugamo Prison, perhaps because of personal love. For when Masaaki hears this fate, decided by the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, he claims to have been so devastated that he was unable to eat.

To Masaaki, Matsui’s gesture of building this memorial, with the very representation of compassion, is the very act of compassion. He claims that Matsui was a “staunch advocate of a united Asia” (Masaki); thus, allowing Chinese and Japanese blood to mix into a single entity reveals that Matsui saw the Chinese and Japanese as equals – how, then, could Matsui allow such a bestial, animalistic slaughtering of the Chinese to occur? Japan has no reason to apologize for wartime atrocities that according to Masaaki, are nothing more than the “falsest of falsehoods” (Masaki).

Onsen (Japanese hot spring) water is often thought to have healing powers, according to its mineral properties. In this area filled with promises of purification and cleansing by saturated steam, filtered through miniature crystals of calcium and lithium, Kannon stands, facing the direction of Nanjing. Kannon, the symbol of mercy. Who is she forgiving?

Matsui’s Buddhist confessor Hanayama wrote of the conversation he had with Matsui on either November 29 or December 9:

* I am ashamed of the Nanking Incident...I participated in the Russo-Japanese War as a captain, but the division commanders at the time and now are totally different. In the Russo-Japanese War, the handling of the captives and other managements were excellent. But it did not go like that this time . . .

* After the memorial service, I gathered up everybody and warned them with tears of anger. Both Prince Asaka and Lieutenant General Yanagawa were there. [I told them] we came all the way to stand on the majesty of the Emperor, but the dignity [of the Imperial Army] was lost at a stroke through the brutal acts of the soldiers. But then everyone laughed. To my displeasure, a certain division commander even uttered, ‘of course.’ (Xu)

Kannon stands, a symbol of compassion, facing Nanking. Built by Matsui, who was responsible for the takeover of the city of Nanjing, who later confessed his guilt and shame. Masaaki sees no connection, instead replacing Kannon with the image of his hero, unable to tear himself away from Iwane Matsui’s personal claims to him that “he had never heard a word about a massacre in Nanking until the Tokyo Trials began” (Masaki 5).

The blood of the victim and the aggressor bleed into the same clay. The blood of the murdered is mixed with his murderer, abruptly severed from his homeland, his necessary grave, fated to forever stay on foreign soil that buzzed with the desire of expansion and conquest of his home and family. Then he is subject to claims, coming from those such as Masaaki, that this punishment only reveals the kindliness and compassion of a general

who led the attacks. He is sculpted into a symbol of mercy, which is something he was denied. The blood in the statue must be writhing in despair.

Japanese troops were supposed to be devout Buddhist believers. When they entered a Buddhist temple, they burned incense and prostrated themselves before the images of the Buddha. Most soldiers had the insignia of the temple stamped on their bags or uniforms. They prayed to deities for their safety, and even had Buddhist priests of their own (Xu 110).

In Nanjing of 1937, there were more than “three hundred Buddhist temples with some one thousand monks and nuns in the cities” (110). Nothing prevented the death that pervaded the city from seeping into the sacred, religious grounds.

On the third day, Japanese soldiers came to the temple looking for girls and spotted Monk Long Hui. Monk Long was a Manchu in his forties, of white complexion and without moustache or beard. They mistook him for a woman and stripped off his clothes. When they found him a male, they were angry and pulled him naked to the stone terrace by the gate where they dashed him against the stones and broke his skull.

The Japanese soldiers who violated these women and girls also forced others to do so. One Japanese soldier guarding Zhonghua gate forced Chinese passers-by to follow suit after he himself raped a girl. Whoever refused was killed. When a monk arrived on the scene the Japanese soldier told him to “enjoy, enjoy,” but the monk closed his palms and chanted: “I put my trust in Buddha Amita.” The Japanese ridiculed him and cut off his penis. The monk writhed in pain for some time before bleeding to death. It was a time of suffering for Chinese Buddhists. (115)

Through their actions, the Japanese soldiers suggest a separation between piety and war, stating that they are two distinct concepts that can be exercised in isolation from each other.

In the balmy forests of Atami, Kannon strives to be a memorial. She was sculpted out of good intention, but this intention stemmed from naiveté. Mixing the blood of the Chinese and Japanese war dead, she candidly calls for peace. But mixing disparate sources of blood does not dissolve the separation between the murderer and the murdered. It may appear to create literal homogeneity and metaphorical unification, but it cannot blend and erase the identity of the victim; the markers on red blood cells do not disappear so easily. Though she sought to be a noble memorial in the beginning, in the end, she became a symbol of hypocrisy, a tool of nationalism, and an offering to grief instead of peace. Her original function has become completely deleted.

The Yasukuni Shrine is a reflection of the statue of Kannon, sharing the same lofty intention but terrible destiny. The serene architecture of Yasukuni, embossed with fragile chrysanthemums, is only a metamorphosis of what laid hidden beneath the cold, hard cocoon of the bodhisattva.

But if the Nanjing Memorial is not careful, Kannon could instead metamorphose into one mammoth, weighty mass of dry cobblestone, skeletal remains, and withered trees,

26 Blood transfusions can end in disaster (hemolytic anemia, renal failure, shock, and death) when blood from incompatible groups is mixed together. This occurs because the body, in an “immune response,” generates antibodies against unfamiliar antigens, which only end up destroying the infused blood.
winged with slates of black and grey granite. The Memorial must halt its rhetoric that increasingly adopts the form of Yasukuni’s, if it does not want a similar fate.

We now return to the Nanjing Memorial.

10 Black-figure pottery technique

Relief sculptures form a wall that encloses the southern side of the Memorial. This memorial consists of uneven slates of rocky panels joined together in front of thin, tall trees. The pieces of rough granite have been divided into three main panels, each section given a distinct name and shape, but unified under a common theme, as all show different aspects of a single event – the Massacre.

The first panel, named jiénán (jié, 截, meaning to plunder or coerce; nán, 難, meaning disaster), closely resembles battle scenes depicted on amphoras or kraters, ancient Greek vases, sharing the same visual features of positioning the figures of bodies so that their torsos uniformly face the viewer, but their heads are turned to display the rigid angles of their profiles. Humiliation and subjugation are uniquely carved into this piece, into the folds of cloth and sharp turns of limbs jutting from the stone. Harsh cords of rope run horizontally parallel through the length of the panel, girding bodies to each other, herding the victims as they march in a procession of death. Faint traces of chain link texture in the background further intensify the atmosphere of oppression. The hands of the prisoners are battered, either bound behind their backs or showing palm up in desolate defeat.

Some figures are hunched over, withdrawing into themselves as they close their eyes, shadows falling and erasing their faces. Others manifest the internal torture they feel through the twists of their mouths that distort silent screams. All have their eyes closed, either determinedly refusing to see, or blinded by the splinters of rope bound around their heads. The texture of the panel consists of the smoothness of youthful skin to the deep wrinkles outlining the skulls of the old. At least one prisoner is already dead: his hands are tied and secured to the highest part of the stone wall; in death, his head tipped forwards, folding the torso upon its emaciated stomach, his legs pulling down his body like weights, stretching out his body. Viewers see no face but the back of his drooping skull.

On the second bleak panel, titled Túshā, (屠杀, meaning butchery), extreme chaos has manifested through the scattered confusion of limbs. Bodies are strewn across sharp fragments of stone looking like broken glass; a man’s head with the eyes gouged out is located in a central crack, masks of faces are flung onto the stone without bodies, headless bodies tighten in anguish. Looking like it was carelessly thrown, a body is folded across the top of the memorial. A screaming mouth emerges from the rocky wall, pushing against a placenta of stone. Legs fold without anatomical order, looking like elastic limbs of dolls.

To pose again the question we asked in the very beginning: as a memorial, does the Nanjing memorial offer emotional comfort to those affected by the loss of death? After seeing these panels of stone, the answer cannot be yes. The walls of the memorial, irreversibly etched with butchery and knife-edged pain, seek to shock and unsettle us, evoke in us an even
deeper sense of grief. The Memorial does not try to offer us closure on the Massacre; it wants us to realize how terribly and brutally lives were ended, it wants us to feel an anguish sharpened by knowing that those lives were taken without purpose. The Memorial implies that if we seek some sort of healing process, we must take matters in our own hands – the dead are already dead, we are the only ones who can seek justice for them.

But what form does this justice take? Will an act of contrition from the perpetrator suffice? An apology does seem to be one end the Memorial seeks: an offering of apology, hundreds of origami cranes are strung together with colored thread at the entrance to the indoor exhibits, carefully folded into avian shape by visiting Japanese students. With this miniature, delicate memorial, the Memorial implies that it is accepts and encourages the act of apology.

And indeed, not only the Memorial, but the rest of China has shown that it desires nothing more than repentance, implying an association between regret and closure.

When Azuma Shiro, former soldier and participant in the Rape of Nanking and eventual confessor, died of cancer, China expressed condolences and sympathy to his relatives. Qin Gang, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, explained why he earned such sympathy from China, despite his role in the terror and brutality of the Massacre:

> Half a century later, Azuma had the courage to review the history of the aggression, defend the truth, and apologize to the victimized country, so his sense of justice and efforts to promote Sino-Japanese relations win our respect. ([Nanjing Pays Tribute to 'Conscience of Japan'](nanjing pays tribute to conscience of japan))

Even Nanjing Massacre survivor Jiang Fugen – whose five family members were killed by Japanese soldiers – stated that “I used to hate the Japanese so much . . . but when I saw the old Azuma in tears, bowing and kneeling before us in repentance, I couldn’t hold back my tears” (Pitman). China has proved to be willing to forgive, but forgiveness cannot occur and progress cannot be made when no sincere apology or repentance exists.

But let’s say an apology finally emerges from the hesitating mouths. What happens next?

Apologies are expressions of regret, but can regret offer closure on human tragedy? They cannot place tragedies in the past (especially ones executed with such gruesome ruthlessness) to fossilize as a moment in history that merely came and went. Catastrophes cannot be compacted; their reverberations will forever ring throughout all of history. Official recognition of the Nanjing Massacre and subsequent statements of regret cannot erase its terror and sorrow. Apologies, however noble the intent, cannot offer a satisfying, just closure. Thus, what is left for the Memorial to seek?

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28 The story of a young Japanese girl, Sadako Sasaki, explains how the paper crane earned its status as an international symbol of peace. Sadako Sasaki was only two when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. At age eleven, she was diagnosed with leukemia, a disease that occurred more due to radiation in the atmosphere because of the atomic bomb. Her best friend told her about an old Japanese legend that said anyone who folded a thousand paper cranes would be granted any wish. Sadako's only wish was to get well so that she could run again. She started to work on the paper cranes and completed over 1000 before dying on October 25, 1955 at the age of twelve.

In China, cranes have long symbolized longevity, and often appear in artworks as carrying the souls of the departed to heaven after death.
Sometimes Ino’s reflection, sometimes her mirror opposite

A nation is not conquered until the women’s hearts lay on the ground.

– Cheyenne Indian saying

In the same area of the Memorial as the coffin-shaped building, a statue looms high above the house of bones. Standing on the precipice of action, knees bent, she is ready to spring from the pebbles with which she shares the same sandy color. She is a vertical opposite to the horizontal passivity of scattered bones. Her right hand is clutched in a large, Rodin-esque fist; her left hand is sharply splayed. Subtly lined cords can be seen hard under the skin of her neck, and she seems completely unaware of her robe that has been torn across her chest. If it were not for her face, her body could be easily mistaken for a man’s. The strands of her hair, wet with sweat, damply gather into a loose bun that is falling apart at the nape of her neck. Her face parallels the essence of her body: her brow is furrowed in determination, her eyes blaze fiercely. The title of this sculpture is Muqin, or Mother.

Though titled Mother, no tangible feature of the statue seems to point at a maternal identity. Her hands are empty, not leading a child; her arms are empty, no infants rest at her breast. This particular memorial, attesting to female power, solely links the concept behind the word Mother and adjectives synonymous to strength. What could be the Memorial’s explanation behind this particular connection?

The Nanjing Massacre is not known as the Rape of Nanking without reason. Its name rose from the vast numbers of a particular crime for which the Massacre is most remembered.

According to the judgment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), “approximately 20,000 cases of rape occurred within the city during the first month of the occupation” (Yin 193). And this is a low figure – other statistics have pointed to 80,000.

It seems as though nothing stood in the way of the Imperial Japanese Army’s assaults on women. Yomiuri Shimbun military correspondent Yukio Omata testified that “There was hardly any soldier who did not commit rape. Most of [the women] were raped and then were killed after the act” (186). Age was certainly no deterrent: “In some cases, the Japanese sliced open the vaginas of preteen girls in order to ravish them more effectively” (Chang 91). Young girls to elderly women were frequent victims of rape.

The IMTFE continues, “Many cases of abnormal and sadistic behavior in connection with these rapes occurred. Many women were killed after the act and their bodies were mutilated” (Yin 186). Li Kehen, an eyewitness in Nanjing, wrote in The Five Months Following the Fall of Nanking that “There were so many bodies on the street, victims of group rape and murder. They were all stripped naked, their breasts cut off, leaving a terrible dark brown hole; some of them were bayonetted in the abdomen, with their intestines spilling out alongside them; some had a roll of paper or a piece of wood stuffed in their vaginas” (Xu 195).

Aware of the terror and danger, the women of Nanjing desperately tried to elude their fate, searching for ways in which they could protect themselves.

29 The Samurai cult of the bushido “had no place for women, except as hostages or spoils of war” (Honda).
Almost all the young women had their faces smeared with soot from the bottom of cooking pots, and dressed in old, ragged oversized jackets making themselves look dirty, old, and ugly. Some of the girls cut their hair and disguised themselves as young men. . . . One 82-year-old woman, Ding Rongsheng, told the author that when she was hiding in the safety zone she did not wash her face for a whole month. Many of the other women, in order to avoid being raped, pasted lots of medicinal plasters all over their bodies. When the Japanese soldiers saw them, they turned away with disgust. At first this worked . . . (Chang)

But these attempts could not save them in the end. They were defenseless against the Japanese soldiers; women were violated and mutilated without regard to location: in the streets, in alleyways, even in front of family members. On Friday, December 17, 1937, a foreign resident wrote in his diary that “Another [woman] had her five-year-old infant deliberately smothered by the brute to stop its crying while he raped her” (Xu). And even worse: “Fathers [were forced to] rape their own daughters, brothers their sisters, sons their mothers” (Chang 95). There seemed no limit to human degradation and sexual perversion. And those who tried to resist were tortured by familiar, commonly employed methods. Xue Jialin, survivor of the Nanjing Massacre, testified:

> Japanese soldiers came to our village and forced me to lead them to where ‘flower girls’ hid. I would rather die than do this kind of inhuman thing. I refused and angered them. An officer cut my lips open with his sword and chopped off my teeth. (Yin 214)

A picture of Xue Jialin accompanies his testimony.

Photographs are instrumental to the proof of the Rape of Nanking. These photographs show victims in the very process of being raped, victims forced to pose either before or after violation, and mutilated corpses of rape victims – it is unquestionable, irrefutable evidence. In one, a woman pulls down her shirt, clearly crying; her face is twisted in painful distress, eyes looking down. Her pants have been taken off, exposing her genitalia. In another photograph, also taken by the perpetrators themselves, a woman is bound to a chair in a spread eagle: her arms and legs are tied to fully expose. It is unclear whether she is dead or alive. Her mouth is slightly open, gaping, a black slit in a swollen face. She is naked except for her stockinged legs and petite, cloth shoed feet. She is a victim of gang rape: the caption states that she was “repeatedly raped by Japanese army men”30 (Yin 197).

Photographs of such nature are placed within the Memorial’s indoor exhibits, functioning as a graphically explicit, incontestable memorial. With these images, the Memorial cleanly and frankly draws a line between the identity of the victim and the identity of the perpetrator, placing blame unabashedly. Even its name, The Memorial Hall for Victims of the Japanese Military in the Nanjing Massacre, reminds visitors of exactly who, and only who, should be blamed for the Rape of Nanking.

However, the mass raping of women during wartime is not unique to Nanjing, 1937. For instance, in 1971, Pakistani soldiers raped an estimated 200,000-400,000 women

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30 When going through captured stores on Peliliu and Okinawa, many years after the Massacre, historian Frank Gibney discovered a “quantity of condoms regularly issued by the army to its soldiers. On the wrapping of each was a picture of a Japanese soldier charging with the bayonet. The caption below simply read Totsugeki – “Charge!” (Honda xx)
in Bangladesh after a failed rebellion. And there was Rwanda. There was the former Yugoslavia, too. And now there is the Republic of Congo – have you heard about it?

When the Memorial, in seeking the origin of responsibility, points at who they believe the culprit to be, they only succeed in revealing a deeper, unsolvable problem that befalls all humanity – a universal genderization of genocide. War somehow creates an archetypal ritual, in which the violation of rape somehow becomes a statement of conquest – the woman becomes a tool of rhetoric. The universality of this phenomenon is a source of terrifying mystery, and an accusation against the perceived enemy is in reality an accusation against all humanity. Believing itself to deconstruct the chaos of the Massacre, the Memorial only confirms our fears – the fear of man’s capability to hurt and inflict such pain.

And there are no words that can express this agony of rape. Can anything convey the haunting memories that never leave the victim’s body, her senses, her heart “that races and skin that crawls whenever something resurrects the only slightly buried terror” (Brison 44)? In the face of such destruction, language fails, and rhetoric does not exist.

Rape is an excruciating, searing violation of the mind and the body. No one can “survive” a rape. No one can keep her former self intact; no one can return to the life she once had. Rape is a disintegration of the self, and so in a sense, death. As one rape victim expressed, “I will miss myself as I always was” (38). Rape is more than brief physical suffering; its aftermath is an isolation in which pain heightens and throbs, agony that cannot be measured by time. She finds herself afraid. She has nightmares that overlap with reality. She feels inexplicable guilt, she feels the stifling weight of shame. She feels forever tarnished, desecrated, soiled. And nothing can slow down the anxiety and fear quickly pulsing through her blood.

The immediate psychological responses [to rape] . . . include terror, loss of control, and intense fear of annihilation. Long term effects include the physiological responses of hypervigilance, heightened startle response, sleep disorders, and more psychological, yet still involuntary, responses of depression, inability to concentrate lack of interest in activities that used to give life meaning, and a sense of foreshortened future. (48)

Testifying to the repercussions of rape, one victim has said:

> For the first several months after my attack, I led a spectral existence, not quite sure whether I had died and the world went on without me, or whether I was alive but in a totally alien world. The freedom to move about in the world without debilitating fear, and any hope of returning to the pleasures of life as they once knew it . . . (9)

Now multiply it all by 80,000. And that is only Nanjing.

How painful it must be to believe that you live in a world in which you can be attacked in any place, in any moment of time, simply because you are a woman. The universalism of what the Rape of Nanking represents – crime stemming from gender – is a significant contributor to the damage caused by the Massacre. Additionally, another such universal concept that worsens the pain is the inability to speak of it. Taboos, a culturally-instilled phenomenon, not limited to any one nation, prevented many rape victims
from speaking of the incident. While interviewing survivors of the Rape, journalist Honda Katsuichi noted:

*I was surprised at how many women I met in the course of my journey who had been raped by Japanese soldiers. Yet it was rare for the victims to talk of these humiliating experiences in any detail, even though they had happened in the distant past. This kind of reticence is not something unique to Chinese women, but the fact that I was a man and had also come from the same country as the Japanese soldiers made it all the more difficult for them to talk.* (Honda 21)

Chang agrees, stating, “Not a single Chinese woman has to this day come forward to admit that her child was the result of rape” (Chang 89).

Perhaps this inability to speak was no less painful than the physical excruciation of violation itself. Perhaps this suppression of pain, this seething of silent humiliation and anguish, was what made the Rape as terrible as it was. Perhaps the statue of the woman is not standing tall in her determination to live, but walking bravely, fearlessly, to a different fate, one that waited in water: between 1937 and 1938, “a German diplomat reported that ‘uncounted’ Chinese women were taking their own lives by flinging themselves into the Yangtze River” (90). The emotional and physical devastation of the Rape cannot be captured. The trauma cannot be fit into any symbolic system, for there is no logic behind such an atrocity, and there is no way to convey the damage done to the women in Nanjing (or anywhere else).

Unable to speak, she instead expresses her agony through destruction, creating death herself, death not represented by some official death toll statistic, death that is only a fragment of a cycle.

Unable to bear the humiliation, the girls’ mother ordered them to commit suicide, forcing them to drink a mixture of fuel oil and cheap liquor. The girls became feverish, collapsed, and rolled on the floor in agony. At that moment, the next group of Japanese soldiers showed up, and the mother strangled her daughter with her own hands. (Honda 117-118)

Many children were secretly killed . . . numerous half-Japanese children were choked or drowned at birth. (Chang 89)

Conflict resides within the bodies of the children of the Rape. The weight of wreckage, despair, and inexplicable terror contained in one droplet of their blood is unimaginable.

What suffering, what excruciating pain, what fear, what terror the women of Nanjing went through. It was so terrible that they could not say. And since they could not say, we will never even come close to knowing, to understanding. And if we do not know, how can we accurately represent it within a memorial, within rhetoric? A single sand-colored statue and a smattering of photographs cannot serve as memory to the suffering of the women who were raped. Nothing exists that can encompass the devastation and sorrow of the Nanjing Massacre.

If human catastrophe is a supernova, no memorial can strive to be a black hole, condensing tragedy into a mere metonym.

The Memorial must realize that in the face of human tragedy, all rhetoric and language fails.
In the northeastern area of the Memorial, the footprints of over sixty survivors, cast on bronze blocks, were assembled piece by piece to form a stretch of pavement forty meters in length and 1.6 meters in width. Two blackened statues of survivors stand by the ground imprinted by those who walked out of the Nanjing Massacre alive.

The figure of one statue is pulling down the neck of her blouse to reveal a scar, her face contorted by choking tears. The other, balancing with a cane, softly gathers the rippled folds of cloth to reveal scars on her lower leg. In contrast to the fearless and giant Mother, these are frail, small, battered, and old, who though they have survived, are deeply and forever scarred by the past. Though these sculptures are a representation of life, it is a life exhausted and dejected. The physical frailness of these sculptures reminds us also of the fragility of their legacies, and the fear they must feel in knowing that their stories may not remembered or believed. Showing their scars (the memories of the Massacre are encoded in their flesh), they quietly (but desperately) point at the tangibility of their evidence, hoping to win our trust and loyalty. In contrast to the Mother sculpture, a symbol of maternal care, these sculptures, fragile and small, seem to invite our maternal care, inciting within us a desire to protect, somehow help.

The bronze blocks of footprints are greater than what they appear to be; there is a depth to the small tablets carefully pressed with tiny feet, the small toes sometimes curled. We can only understand the power of each bronze block when we learn of the story of the one who possessed the footprints.

One survivor, Peng Yuzhen, who was eighty five when imprinting eternal forms of her feet, tells her story:

One day after the Japanese army occupied Nanjing, I went to the river at Bailuzhou to wash diapers. A Japanese soldier on the city wall saw me and fired at me, injuring my right leg. Blood streamed down from my leg and I couldn’t move, simply lying on ground. Later, my husband Peng Zhaoxi rescued me home. Since then, my right leg [has been] disabled.

(Qinhua rijun nanjing)

The nature of Peng Yuzhen’s story merits a second look at her bronze block. Indeed, her left footprint is visibly pressed cleanly into the mold, whereas her right footprint is withered and shrunken, shorter and thinner than the left; instead of smooth contours, the right footprint is textured like leaves. Memories of lives fill the creases of the prints on the blocks. Through the creation of this memorial, survivors have immortalized a piece of their souls, transferring their own spirits and the spirits of the dead to be contained within the vibrating atoms of cast metal. This memorial acknowledges and proposes a solution to the inevitable physicality of the body, for next year, 2007, will mark the seventieth year anniversary of the Nanjing Massacre.

The sculptures of the survivors look to you, their eyes in their tilted faces filled with beseeching, to remember them. And how can you not? They did not survive the Massacre just to be killed by different death: the memories of their suffering erased and forever purged from history.

31 In Greek, atom means ‘indivisible.’ It is the smallest possible particle of a chemical element that retains its chemical properties.
But remembering them, mourning them is all we can do. If you were not in Nanjing in
the year 1937, you cannot understand the devastation that befell the people of the city.
You cannot imagine the extent of their suffering. You cannot feel the pain they felt. You
cannot seek justice for them, because there is nothing that can redeem what was lost.
Apologetically, we must confront the statues that gaze so sadly at us, and tell them the
truth: we can do nothing more.

13 Columbidae

On December 13, 1994, a woman, a young girl, and a little boy stand in front of the
entrance wall to the Memorial, infamously emblazoned with three hundred thousand.
Seeking the blessing of the dead before they begin to share their stories to the unwitting
world in the film The Rape of Nanking, they release three white doves at the same time,
each cluster of white fluttering flashes a hundred thousand souls, may they rest in peace.

Nobel laureate Elie Weisel has said that to forget a holocaust is to kill twice.
The amnesia that surrounds the Nanjing Massacre is the second rape.
We cannot allow a third.

Author’s note: With the help of my father, I translated the following from Chinese to English: inscription on the ‘Ten
Thousand Corpse’ memorial (in section four), Nanjing Memorial director Chu Chengshan’s mission statement (section
six), the Memorial’s description of its facilities (in section three) and aesthetic structure (in section eight), and the names
of awards the Memorial has won (section eight).
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Winter 2006 Honorable Mention

Aaron Quiggle

Instructor’s Foreword

How does the field of rhetoric shadow the slow gait of human life? How does it transform as we move through shopping malls and airports, wait patiently while we idle in racks of Hawaiian shirts and khaki slacks, fall asleep while we poke at our faces and pinch our bodies in the mirror? And if, in a move of renunciation, we should aim for some other kind of life? If we were to leave the mirror and the popular magazine and the shopping mall, open a book charged with another kind of language, another set of values? Where might rhetoric go? How might it change?

Aaron Quiggle suggests that anorexia is as much a problem of language as it is an ailment of the body. He invents the phrase “the rhetoric of anorexia” to model a renunciation of what is unhealthy in our popular culture. Aaron establishes the problem by drawing on a host of sources, from medical research, to social studies, to a comprehensive analysis of advertisements in Cosmopolitan magazine. On his reading, although the urge to renounce the empty rhetoric of popular culture is rooted in a desire for health, as a project it is destined to failure. For popular culture incorporates everything it can, even its own counter-culture. There does not appear to be a way out, no end to saying, “No.”

Out of this quicksand, an alternative emerges. What kinds of texts, Aaron asks, arise out of popular culture, but nevertheless resist sinking back into the empty rhetoric of magazines like Cosmopolitan? Aaron suggests that the hyperbolic play of language that so marks the novels of Samuel Beckett and James Joyce might offer what is necessary to break the cycle of renunciation.

Brilliantly combining research, creative reading and transformative leaps of mind, Aaron Quiggle reinvents the research essay before our eyes, transforming it into an argumentative art form of his own design. By the end of the essay, he provides us with a new way to discuss modernism and its relation to popular culture: For if anorexia is caused by a dismay with what popular culture has given us, perhaps Joyce and Beckett can give us the nutrition we need. Play without despair, belief without the nothingness of cynicism: What an urgent vision this is.

Scott Herndon
In Search of an Anorexic Rhetoric:  
A Theory of Language, Meaning, Society, and Mental Illness  

Aaron Quiggle

. . . you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange 
pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it’s done already, perhaps they have said me already, 
perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the door that opens on my 
story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am. 

– Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable

The Problem

How do we relate to the body in 21st century America? On the one hand, it appears that 
through technology we have found and created replacements for the body. Computers 
and robots do our labor for us. The body seems easily replaceable. But while it has faded 
in importance in the workplace and our daily lives, the body has come to haunt us. It is 
estimated that 11 million Americans have an eating disorder of some kind, 25 million more 
have binge eating tendencies, and over 39 million American women fall into deep depression 
at one point in their lives (Hoek 34; American Psychiatric Association, Practice Guidelines 
90). But though a proportionally smaller number of American women will be anorexic at 
one point in their lives (5.5 million), perhaps no eating disorder or depressive disease haunts 
us more, or poses more of a problem, than anorexia (APA, Practice Guideline 31).

I think we will learn something important by investigating anorexia as a kind of rhetoric: 
a symbolic way of communicating, understanding, and creating meaning. Though it may 
seem obvious to some, I take rhetoric to be a social construction: the language of anorexia, 
and the multitude of meanings bound to it, are created, dictated, and materialized by 
cultures and societies. Understanding the visual and linguistic phenomenon of an anorexic 
rhetoric is therefore inextricably connected to understanding the rhetoric of society. By 
conceptualizing anorexia in this way, analyzing a patient and the way her illness speaks sheds 
light not only on her particular struggles, but also on her culture and the way her culture 
speaks. The rhetoric of anorexia becomes a profound sociological lens.

There are clear rewards for using this lens. In my investigation of anorexia, I will 
not only create the framework for investigating the rhetoric of mental illness in general, 
but also use it as a tool for creating a new kind of literary interpretation. By looking at 
anorexia as a rhetorical enterprise we can begin to see how modernist works of literature 
such as those by Samuel Beckett and James Joyce are anorexic in theme. This work will 
reveal that sociology is not so far from literature and that social change is not so far from 
literary invention. I want to suggest that our final turn to the dynamics of these particular 
modernist works of literature reveal the ultimate struggle of anorexia. This final turn to 
modernism helps us envision an alternate way to think about anorexia: anorexia as a desire 
to heal. As I will show, Beckett’s The Unnamable and Joyce’s Finnegans Wake approximate 
a rhetoric of anorexia by repudiating the language of society and trying to formulate a self
in the process. But these rhetorics do not collapse into an anorexic rhetoric. By seeing how these texts manage to avoid this collapse, we can begin to see where the anorexic rhetoric fails. And perhaps we can learn about the anorexic patient herself, looking for better ways to satisfy her urge for autonomy in ways that do not lead to sickness, misery, and death.\(^1\)

In order to undertake a social study of anorexia, I will turn to one of America’s enduring arbiters of popular imagination – *Cosmopolitan* magazine. What can a common household magazine like *Cosmopolitan* reveal about the nature of anorexia? I examined the representation of body image in the advertisements of thirty-six issues of *Cosmopolitan* magazine from 1973, 1987, and 1998, looking for evidence of how our society’s conception of the ideal body has progressed into a diagnosable anorexic body. As I will show, these advertisements’ obsession with dieting and weight loss, which are in themselves symptoms of anorexia, become more pronounced over the decades, reinforcing an anorexic ideology (Robertson 2). This trend appears to be complemented by several recent studies which have also examined the development of the ideal body in other American glamour magazines. But these studies are often problematic. For instance, one study investigated the change in body dimensions of *Playboy* models, showing that “there was a significant fall in weight [and] . . . the bust and hip size decreased, indicating a trend toward a more ‘tubular’ . . . body shape” (Morris 593). There is an inherent and misleading difficulty here. This study clearly demonstrates a significant change in the figure of the ideal woman for men. It does not, however, necessarily show that this is an example of society’s ideal. A man’s conception of the ideal body ought not be equated to a social conception of the ideal body. Given that *Cosmopolitan*’s stated mission is “to help contemporary women achieve their goals and live fuller, more glamorous lives,” I believe this magazine will stand as a more accurate reflection of America’s conception of the paradoxically ideal and contradictory body than a magazine such as *Playboy* (Absolute Magazines).

**An Understanding of Anorexia**

> I have to puke my heart out too, spew it up whole along with the rest of the vomit, it’s then at last I’ll look as if I mean what I’m saying, it won’t be just idle words.
>  
> – Samuel Beckett, *After the Final No*

As a medical problem, anorexia has been studied from many angles. Some, such as the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) have defined the illness in terms of its symptoms. For example, someone is diagnosed as anorexic if they weigh less than 85% of their expected weight as indicated by their height and age, if they are intensely fearful of gaining weight or being fat, if their body weight or shape overly affects their sense of self-worth, if they purge their food, or if they binge eat (DSM 544-45). The problem with such a conception of anorexia is that it understands the illness only in terms of its symptoms – symptoms which the illness itself causes. In other words, symptomatic studies foreclose the etiology of anorexia. Not surprisingly, many in the medical field have argued that anorexia is a physiological disease with a genetic etiology (Wade 469-71).

Others have left genetics and biochemistry behind and attempted to understand the etiology of anorexia as a fundamentally cultural problem, arguing that it is a socially bound

\(^1\) Anorexia has the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Twenty percent of anorexics die within 20 years of having this illness. Forty percent never recover (American Psychiatric Association, *Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Eating Disorders* 25).
disorder, and the increasing prevalence of anorexia is due to the change in the ideal female body. These researchers have argued that the dramatic change in the form of the ideal female body is not only closely tied to a drastic increase in disordered eating and anorexia, but that “the increase in prevalence of dieting behaviors [is] related to th[e] shift in size of fashion models towards a thinner ideal” (qtd. from Champion 214; King, 341; Ogden 172).

One group of scholars has combined etiology with the study of sociology and physiology, arguing that although anorexia is a medical syndrome, it is a culture-bound disorder, “a collection of signs and symptoms which is restricted to a limited number of cultures primarily by reason of certain of their psychosocial features” (Keel 747). This position is closer to my own. But while it helps us begin to link the social and psychological factors in anorexia, the cultural position does not work hard enough to understand what is linguistic about this illness.

Although these researchers are right to investigate the causes of anorexia, they miss the complete picture, for they ignore so many of the dynamics of what I have termed the symbolic life of anorexia, which is defined by the individual’s attempt to form an internalized language for herself.

In this paper, I want to analyze the symbolic life of anorexia in a holistic sense – as a psychological, social, and rhetorical problem. Both the symptomatic and causal approaches to our primary question on the nature of anorexia fall short, I think, of a holistic understanding of the illness. Though they rightly observe its social significance, they neglect to ask how something becomes socially significant in the first place. The form of their research cannot ask the question: How is it that a society expresses its body ideal? One of the ways society does this is undoubtedly through language. The rhetoric of image and text in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* helps create, through visual and written language, the conception of the ideal female body. Anorexia is indeed an illness caused by social values, but these values are assuredly archived, maintained, and reproduced by language (as I think the symbolic worlds of all mental illnesses are). Therefore, an investigation which comprehends anorexia as a mere societal problem will miss the very root of the illness. To understand anorexia we must also understand how it is involved in the use, creation, and understanding of language itself. To understand the illness of anorexia we must understand the interplay of physiology with the rhetoric of anorexia.

Towards an Anorexic Rhetoric

*What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later? . . . But it is quite hopeless. . . . And at the same time I am obliged to speak. I shall never be silent. Never.*

– Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

An anorexic rhetoric can be defined by an inherent contradiction, a paradoxical ambivalence. On the one hand, an anorexic rhetoric is an empty rhetoric, a null set. In this light, *Cosmopolitan* is an anorexic rhetoric *par excellence*. This empty rhetoric is the rhetoric of a girl looking in a mirror at her naked, disfigured body, only to think that she is fat. This girl looking in to the mirror does not see what she is; she sees only what she is not. ‘Fat’ takes on a peculiar form. She is fat, more than enough, only by her emptiness, her not being enough. Like her, we become obese by feasting on emptiness – in our sitcoms, in our magazines, in our mirrors. The anorexic rhetoric therefore demonstrates our
Program in Writing and Rhetoric

un-fulfillment and suggests that we will all be fulfilled by possessing some meaningless shampoo, or pair of shoes, or dress, or car. Or more precisely the anorexic rhetoric is a paradox defined first by its emphasis on meaning being external. This first step is a rhetoric of consumption, consumption of materials and, more profoundly, consumption of meaning embodied within the materials. Then comes the next step; in its secondary phase the anorexic rhetoric becomes a rhetoric of renunciation. It is a kind of purging rhetoric of defiance, one which refuses to digest the prescribed meanings of advertisements and of society it has swallowed. The secondary phase recognizes that these cultural meanings give no genuine feeling of meaningfulness and it is in this sense that a twenty-two year old woman suffering from anorexia complains that “there’s no meaning . . . there’s no meaning . . . there’s no meaning” (Robertson 56). In the rhetoric of consumption, she must try to formulate meanings for herself by adopting the dictated meanings of society. But in the rhetoric of renunciation she must create her own meanings by what is left in her own control: purging what she feels is an empty set of social meanings and attempting to formulate a self, an autonomous subject, an ‘I,’ by delving into an inner space now emptied. This rhetoric of renunciation is a sort of ascetic rhetoric in that it creates meaning and thus the self by turning its back on culturally dictated meanings.

I want to suggest that it is the rhetoric of consumption that is the problematic phase, whereas the rhetoric of renunciation, the attempt to turn objects into subjects, is a meaningful endeavor. The problem is, however, that the tightening grip of capitalism, the pervasiveness of Hollywood dreams and Cosmopolitan images and values have made it nearly impossible to succeed in avoiding the rhetoric of consumption without lapsing into the rhetoric of anorexia. The difficulty lies in the fact that to create a self, to give meaning to oneself, to formulate a language for oneself, one must ingest the language of one’s society. The language of society, or more particularly of popular culture, has created an ideology grounded on notions of emptiness and sameness. This ideology is an infinitely expansive entity that seeks to incorporate everything around it – especially those beliefs and motivations that at first seem resistant. In gradually popularizing and trivializing these countercultural beliefs and motivations until they become as empty as it is, the ideological web of sameness effectively eliminates the significance of the notion of difference. This reduction of difference has profound implications. It effectively eliminates the subject and her ability to individuate. Individuation depends upon the difference between the self and the world. We become ourselves by pushing up against the world and it is at these moments of conflict where we and the world stand at odds with one another that we become ‘selves.’ We become individuated by being other than the subjects and objects around us.

The new language of society effectively expunges difference. In a recent issue of US Weekly, for instance, we open the magazine to a picture of a famous Hollywood actor playing with his child. “Stars – they’re just like us” the tagline reads (Davis 28). This article neglects to mention the huge discrepancy in pay between this actor and us, the fact that he probably spends much less time with his family than most fathers, the fact that he doesn’t hold a nine to five job, that he has the paparazzi ceaselessly waiting for him to falter. In other words, the notion of difference is transformed into a notion of sameness, and it is this notion that stands at the heart of our social life. A peculiar paradoxical dynamic thus emerges. The rhetoric of renunciation and its devaluation of popular culture arises and gains power only at the moment when sameness becomes the only option the rhetoric of consumption can provide. In other words the rhetoric of renunciation and its devaluation
of the external exist only because of such an emphasis on the rhetoric of consumption. If we are to understand an anorexic rhetoric as both an affirmation and a rejection of socially dictated meaning we must first explore how our popular culture gives, creates, and understands its meanings: how it creates and becomes a rhetoric of consumption.

**The Age of Meaninglessness**

Why? It is a set of a swigswag, systomy, dystomy, which everabody you ever anywhere at all doze. Why? Such me.

– James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*

In *Autism and the Crisis of Meaning*, published in 1996, sociologist Alexander Durig argues that we live in a society vacant of meaning. This crisis of meaning, he argues, is “our society’s creation” and “most pressing social problem” (13). Capitalism and technology have emphasized external values and have neglected the fact that we ourselves are meaning, we constitute meaning, and we give meaning to things (214-15). For Durig, meaning is not only imposed on us, but we are also agents in imposing meaning on the world. Capitalism’s agenda of what is meaningful and what is not has created a biased and inherently judgmental definition of normality, a definition that necessarily excludes most people from it (xi). Manifestations of technology and popular culture, such as *Cosmopolitan* magazine, idealize this impossible normality. An ideal which is by definition unattainable. And yet the failure to achieve the status of the impossible ‘normal’ leaves one feeling empty and alienated. In order to restore meaning in a world obsessed with external and meaningless trivialities, which have been disguised as meaningful elements of a fulfilling life, we must look to our inner space and construct our meanings from within. This is precisely what the rhetoric of renunciation struggles, and so often fails, to accomplish. And this is exactly how it sometimes collapses into an anorexic rhetoric.

The anorexic rhetoric desperately tries to protect itself by creating meaning from within. It tries to find meaning within itself but it does not posses the linguistic tools necessary to create meaning and, therefore, a self. Nineteenth century philosopher Condillac argued that the mind (or the self) is “contingent upon language processes” (198). I want to suggest that the self depends not only on processes of language but on nutritive processes of meaning. What matters is not the form or fact of language as such, so much as the meaning embedded within it. So if what we care about is language as a form of meaning, or more precisely, if we are to look at language as the primary means for communicating meaning, we must first investigate how advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* communicate or fail to communicate meaning.

**The Rhetoric of *Cosmopolitan***

You are what you have.

– John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

What is it that *Cosmopolitan* has been saying to us all of these years? There must be a subtle power to its message or else it would not stop so many people on the way to their morning coffee, or grab the attention of so many businessmen traveling home from a business deal, or captivate so many parents waiting for their child’s little league practice to end. It works, in a way, by proposing that we become something by buying something. In other words, the advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* implicitly suggest that without possessing that which is advertised one is deficient and incomplete. Publicity creates glamour;
publicity creates a “sense of being envied” (Berger 131). To become something is to have something. It is now so easy to see what we have found so elusive about this magazine for so long. What is not attractive about these ideas? Phenomenology is, in its essence, reduced to passivity. Cosmopolitan and its advertisements offer us a world in which we can become something by simply reading its words before we fall asleep at night, or at a traffic light, or in the grocery store line. The cultivation of a self does not depend upon intellectual curiosity or a heightened level of self-awareness. The self feels nourished by looking at an advertisement and buying its product. Such a view is easy and comforting, but this ease and comfort do not come without a price. In order for advertising to work effectively it must situate itself in the consumer’s anxiety. If the consumer were not already anxious, fearful that she is deficient, advertising would be ineffective. What becomes so inherently dangerous about this advertising is that it offers the illusion of fulfillment. The consumer finds it difficult to abandon these illusions because advertisements give her a language which creates a rhetorical world where these illusions have value. At a certain point, popular culture becomes so all-encompassing that the consumer finds that she cannot escape these illusions because she has no other language with which to do so. The only language she has is the language that she has been given, the one she has received and accepted through popular culture. This way of communicating, of creating meaning, of using language is the rhetoric of consumption.

The Ideal Body and the Effectiveness of Advertising in Cosmopolitan

And things, what is the correct attitude to adopt towards things? And, to begin with, are they necessary? What a question.

– Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable

Now it is time to look at the magazine itself, to listen to what it has to say, in the privacy of our bedrooms, in airports, on waiting room tables. The portrayal and significance of the ideal body in Cosmopolitan has drastically shifted over the last thirty years. I want to suggest that by analyzing its advertisements for hair products and skin creams we can
gather insight into the ways in which “popular women’s magazines may influence attitudes in the general public concerning body image, dieting and anorexia” (Robertson 15-16). In 1973, women were bigger and had larger breasts (Morris 593). But less of the body was depicted and when it was it was well clothed. The effectiveness of the advertisement depended little on the depiction of the model and more on the name of the product and the language used within the advertisement to sell the product, which effectively exacerbated the reader’s anxieties and fears.

The very first advertisement in the July 1973 issue of *Cosmopolitan* pitches a cover-up stick called ‘Erace’ (see figure 4). There are two headshots of the same girl, one without the aid of the stick and another with it. The pictures are hardly distinguishable. What sells the product is not the girl’s stunning figure, which we never see, but rather the name and tagline of the product which situates itself in the reader’s anxiety. “Erace . . . because we all have something to hide” reads the motto. It is not merely that we all have blemishes and tired lines; it is that we all have sinned and possess dark secrets. ‘Erace,’ thus not only erases the various imperfections of one’s face, but it cleanses one’s soul, *it redeems*.

The rhetoric of a second advertisement similarly argues that ‘pH plus,’ a skin cream, not only cleanses and softens the skin, but also softens and purifies the soul (see figure 5). The top half of this one page advertisement is a picture of a middle-aged, fully dressed woman looking out into the distance, contemplative, distressed, unfulfilled. The bottom half of the page is a vita for the product. “Individuality,” it reads, “inside me there’s a person.” The woman in the picture looks the way she does because she is missing a part of herself, the part that can be found by buying this skin care product. The final line reads, “It’s partly for your skin, and partly for your soul.” What is obvious in both of these advertisements is that they are not selling their products as such, they are selling an internal state of being, which their products ambiguously symbolize.

The advertisements from 1973 illustrate a particular phase in the rhetoric of consumption. Each advertisement is alike in that beneath them all there lies a common message – if you have this product, if you consume this product, you will be fulfilled, you will have meaning. This rhetoric relies on an already existing assumption, an empty assumption, which claims that without these external meanings you are severed from meaning altogether.

A Clairol hair-coloring advertisement encapsulates well the various aspects of the advertising philosophy discussed in the previous section (see figure 6). This advertisement shows three pictures of a brown haired thirty year old woman. Each picture is cropped so that we are unable to see even the entirety of her face. There is no idealized body
here; there is no body at all. How, then, does this advertisement function? It functions by situating itself in the realm of the reader’s anxiety and self-doubt. “The 7 fears of hair color are gone!” the advertisement reassures us. It then lists our seven fears and shows us how this hair coloring foam can alleviate them. It is important to notice, however, that the fears the advertisement mentions are not fears about hair but fears that we will not be loved and that we are essentially worthless. This turn is indicated by the title of the hair-coloring product itself: ‘Loving Care.’ ‘Loving Care’ is meant to be purchased not only to alter your hair color, but to alleviate your deep-rooted feelings of inadequacy. It is as if, the advertisement claims, this product will give you the loving care your parents were never able to give you as a child.

The clearest instance of this dynamic can be shown by a foam-in hair conditioner also by Clairol (see figure 7). This advertisement, like the others, shows two headshots of a girl both with and without the hair product. The product title is, in itself, a potent metaphor – ‘Happiness.’ With this hair product “she can have happiness.” Without it, she has “another case of ‘the drabs,’ . . . dull, drab, or graying hair, which leads to (sob) depression.” The second symbolic displacement in this advertisement, albeit more hidden, is that the pronoun ‘she’ denotes ‘you.’ It is not merely that “she can have happiness,” but that ‘you can have happiness’ if you have this product. This penultimate advertisement is grounded in three presuppositions. First, you need happiness because you are not happy already. Second, happiness is a commodity that can be possessed; you can have it. And, finally, meaning and happiness come from outside yourself.

By the time we arrive at *Cosmopolitan*’s 1987 issues, the way in which the advertisement functions and its portrayal of the female body has drastically changed. No longer does the effectiveness of advertisements rely on various metaphors symbolizing the meaningless state of one’s soul. Instead, the metaphorical language of the 1973 issues have been condensed into a stronger and more concrete language, that of the body itself. Consumers are asked to associate a skin or hair product with an ideal body. External meanings no longer need to be disguised as internal ones. All meanings have been condensed into the language of body image. And the image of the body, too, has changed: the advertisements feature whole figures instead of mere faces, and the bodies of the models that are shown are much thinner, have much smaller breasts, and wear much less clothing.

A ‘Natural Silk’ shampoo advertisement from the July 1987 issue of *Cosmopolitan* gives very different reasons to buy their product than those of 1973 (see figure 8). The product’s name is rather trivial by comparison. Alberto Natural Silk doesn’t offer happiness; it doesn’t even...
offer loving care. What it does offer is a gorgeous, lean, and half-naked body. This is now enough! To have a body like this is to have happiness and loving care. Alberto is, thus, hardly selling a hair product. It is selling a body, a body which is equated with meaning.

A ‘Verve’ body spray is similarly advertised in this same July 1987 issue of Cosmopolitan (see figure 9). The advertisement shows a young colorfully dressed man playfully and flirtatiously spraying what we assume is ‘Verve’ onto a tall, slender, smiling woman. What is so effective about this advertisement is that the playfulness and bliss on these models’ faces communicates a certain ambiguity: is it ‘Verve’ that gives them this feeling of genuine satisfaction, or is it instead one another’s physical company? In other words, ‘Verve’ doesn’t itself claim to give you this joyfulness, but what it does do is associate itself with playful and beautiful bodies. Because we have so much invested in the body already, the advertisement is effective.

By the time we get to the 1998 issues of Cosmopolitan, the modeled woman is thinner and taller. Shampoo and lotion advertisements, like those of 1987, show the entire figure of the woman. But the half-naked models of the 1987 issues have lost the remainder of their clothes. The models are now completely naked and only their beautifully shampooed hair covers their unexposed bodies. Many other advertisements depict sexually explicit relationships. The advertisements no longer sell an ideal female body, they sell the body as a sexual object. Sexuality is equated with meaning.

An advertisement for ‘Pantene Pro-V’ depicts a naked, young, and slender woman, bent over, holding her long blonde hair as if to dry it out (see figure 10). We do not even see her face. The model is posed. This advertisement lacks the motion of many from earlier years. There are no condensed metaphors as there were in 1973. And the complex language of playfulness and happiness that the body symbolized in 1987 too seems to have disappeared. It is the body that sells, and not the body as exuberance or vitality or love. It is the body as sex, but sex in an evacuated context: as objects for mere intercourse.

An advertisement for ‘Lubriderm’ similarly shows the torso of a naked woman, arms covering her breasts (see figure 11). Her head is cropped by the top of the page. We cannot see her eyes; there is no window into her soul. But we do not care about her eyes nor her soul. We care about our eyes and where they place their attention. They shoot to the center of the page locking onto the model’s cleavage. The body is not a metaphor here.
There is no meaning trapped inside. The meaning is embodied in her flesh and hidden between her arms. To have this lotion is to become this object of attention, of admiration, of lust. It is as if it were saying: ‘when you have this lotion all eyes will be on you.’ Eyes of envy, eyes of desire.

**A Theory of Literature**

Lone wild goose, not drinking, not feeding,
flies crying, calls out his longing for the flock.
Who pities his lonely form,
lost from the others in ten-thousand-layered clouds?
I gaze to the end of gazing, still seem to hear him;
so great my sorrow, I seem to hear him again,
while crows in the field, wholly unconcerned,
go on as before with their raucous cawing.

– Du Fu, *The Selected Poems*

Now that we have examined the rhetoric of consumption, I want to explore the corresponding rhetoric of renunciation as we move towards understanding the nature of the anorexic rhetoric. Unlike the rhetoric of consumption, which is so easy to understand because it stands there on the page, the rhetoric of renunciation is difficult to understand because it is defined by a sort of nothingness, a type of silence. It is the quiet reader’s response, the sound of pages turning. Whereas the rhetoric of consumption has a form with no content, the rhetoric of renunciation has content without a fixed form, for we are asked to digest its emptiness ourselves. In this way, the emptiness of consumption emerges in an infinite array of forms. The meaning embedded within the anorexic rhetoric of renunciation does not and cannot reside in the content of language itself because the language we have is expunged, repudiated, foresworn. Meaning instead lies within the space that remains after the discharge; the meaning emerges only once this language has been absented. “Women [anorexics] may create meaning in the space (difference) between words, rather than in the words themselves” (Robertson 74).

The anorexic rhetoric of renunciation reveals its salvation and cure even as it expresses its sickness. The mysterious epigraphs at the beginning of each section of my paper serve as instances, I want to argue, of a rhetoric of renunciation that does not collapse into anorexia precisely because it envisions a counterculture of language and consumption. Samuel Beckett’s *The Unnamable* and James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* are rhetorics of renunciation in that they reject the conventions of popular language and the meanings attached to it. But they help create a new history, a kind of canon that slowly helps us realize what might be forever unrealized without their example: the potentiality of literature itself to create the closest thing we have to an autonomous self unbound to the language, meanings, and objects of society – a self created by the very process of writing.

The task of the anorexic rhetoric, and one which narrowly escapes the fate of anorexia, are quite similar. We can see this in Beckett’s *The Unnamable* as it attempts, like an anorexic rhetoric, to find and create a self, an ‘I,’ by rejecting the objects and language of society. The ending passage of *The Unnamable* makes this point strikingly clear.

... you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, strange pain, strange sin, you must go on, perhaps it’s done already, perhaps they have said me already, perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story, before the
door that opens on my story, that would surprise me, if it opens, it will be I, it will be the silence, where I am. (Beckett 414)

What Beckett is trying to do in this passage, and in the text itself, is to move from object to subject by formulating a self. This attempt is demonstrated by the repeated occurrences of the object ‘me’ and the subject ‘I.’ In the course of this sentence, the object becomes the subject. When “it opens” it won’t be me as object, “it will be I” as subject and this ‘I,’ no longer constrained by pre-established meanings, exists in an unnamable silence, “it will be the silence, where I am.” This goal is, as I noted throughout my paper, close to that of an anorexic, or an anorexic rhetoric. It is an attempt to leave behind the language and objectified meanings of society and create a self. It is a rejection of the advertisements in Cosmopolitan which suggest that you are a self only when you are an object, but it does not end in cynicism or nihilism. If it avoids emptiness, it does so by envisioning an alternate hermeneutics, a new possibility of meaning – a meaning that exists in the space between words. It escapes the collapse of anorexia by creating a language which produces meaning in alternate ways. Similarly, a woman suffering from anorexia can be said to envision an alternate production of meaning, one encapsulated by the rejection of food. The problem is, however, that food does not stand as other in the same way that silence does; food is incapable of enlivening the difference expunged by the rhetoric of consumption. French theorist Julia Kristeva remarks:

I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish myself. . . “I” am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death. . . . During that course in which “I” become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. (Kristeva 3)

What is so interesting about Kristeva’s thinking is that it is not meant to explain an anorexic, it is meant to explain a woman. For Kristeva, to be a woman is to implicitly recognize that becoming and escaping oneself are effectively the same process. In this way, affirmation, the process of becoming depends upon rejection and negation. Food, with its sociological and anthropological history, becomes a condensed, concrete site for a symbolic rebellion. Food, the rejection of it and what it means, becomes the thing that allows these women to reject the abstract ideology that has become popular culture. But unlike Kristeva, Beckett and Joyce offer us a means to transcend the limits of this ideology and establish an ‘I’ by inventing a new malleable, ever fluxing language. This language provides a rhetorical form necessary for formulating a self, a form that manages to resist the allure of the emptiness that is popular culture. Beckett recognizes that to escape the binds of popular culture a vehicle or a form is necessary; a thing is not enough. This is what an anorexic fails to realize. An anorexic attempts to become a self by using an object (food) as an escape, but all things can be incorporated in the structure of popular culture and in this way food fails to operate as an emancipatory vehicle. In other words, an anorexic fails to find a form. Beckett and Joyce offer us this new form. Whereas the symbolic rebellion of an anorexic takes place in destruction and agony, the rebellion of Beckett and Joyce takes form in a generative language – for everything that it rejects it offers infinitely more.

We can see this alternate conception of renunciation in Joyce’s Finnegans Wake, too. In The Finnegans Wake Experience, Roland McHugh argues that much of Joyce’s text is bound by, in philosopher’s Giordano Bruno terms, an ‘identity of opposites.’ Meaning in Finnegans Wake has this very same contradiction as the valuation of meaning contained within the anorexic rhetoric. “Its words are often susceptible to two alternative
constructions which contradict one another” (McHugh 20). Joyce’s language continually contradicts itself, creating possibilities of meaning by reinventing a language which has exhausted itself. Though this linguistic problem of meaning (one that Joyce runs up against again and again in the course of his novel) is exactly the same predicament of the anorexic rhetoric, its urge for invention reveals an alternative, a potential escape into language.

The Ethics of Anorexia

But how can they know he suffers? Do they see him? They say they do. But it’s impossible. 
Hear him? Certainly not. He makes no noise.

– Samuel Beckett, The Unnamable

If the anorexic rhetoric is so common in the healing space of literature why is there so much stigma regarding anorexia, which is defined by the very same rhetoric? Or in other words, why can we not recognize the urge to heal in anorexia? Is it that in some sense the anorexic sees something that we do not, that in some deep inversion they are the healthy and we are the sick? But this cannot be so. We know the physiology of anorexia, and it does not give way, or it gives way to death so easily. The anorexic subject is, in all reality, killing herself. This is what is repeatedly observed, acknowledged, and studied by so many psychiatrists, psychologists, news anchors, popular magazines, and talk show hosts. But what they do not notice — perhaps they are too afraid to notice — is the inherent duality of anorexia as a physical and mental phenomenon. Anorexia is not only a nihilistic stance, purging itself of all values, but it is at the same time a linguistic urge to meaning. The doctors are too quick to observe the rhetoric of consumption (although they often neglect to observe its linguistic origins, the psychological and social battle it wages) and equate its correction by food and therapy. I am suggesting that in order to understand the etiology of anorexia, to diagnose it, and to treat it causally we must focus on something else. Only by understanding anorexia as a rhetorical activity can we understand where it fails along the way, and only then can we offer other linguistic tools, histories, and alternate modes of consumption for formulating an autonomous self in a less self-destructive way. And in doing so, we can do what we have been too afraid to admit — that the anorexic can teach us our own failures in meaning and values. In this way, the supposedly therapeutic relationship of ‘doctor’ and ‘patient,’ ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ can morph into a more profound relationship – ‘human’ and ‘human.’
Works Cited


Essays from the
Introduction
To The Humanities

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Boothe Prize Winners
& Honorable Mentions
INTRODUCTION

The development of writing skills is an important part of the Introduction to the Humanities (IHUM) program, and in the following pages we present the essays that in conception and execution best illustrate the kind of writing we hope to foster. The winning essays and the runners-up, in their careful analyses, creative and persuasive argumentation, and elegance of style, demonstrate what students are capable of achieving in IHUM. Here we find skills in written expression that are not only a foundation for future excellence at Stanford but a harbinger of success in the years that follow.

Teachers in IHUM delight in introducing each year’s entering class to the questions, materials, and methods of humanist inquiry. The program draws faculty from across the university who engage with students on topics about which they are passionate, and the students in turn are able to question, dispute, refine, and synthesize the ideas with which they are presented in small seminars led by carefully selected doctoral teaching fellows. At the heart of the endeavor is an exchange between teacher and student on pressing human questions of this and earlier eras, stimulated by the fascination of finding answers in texts, images, and music drawn from a range of cultures past and present.

The Boothe prize winners and the runners-up not only receive recognition for their distinguished writing, they also learn the steps involved in bringing a manuscript to print. Before appearing in this book, each student author will have experienced the probing exchange between author and editor characteristic of the revision process necessary to bring writing to publication. We hope that seeing their work in this Boothe prize book will inspire these young authors and their classmates to continue writing, and via writing continue to form and reform their ideas as they mature and find their way in life.

We extend our warmest congratulations to the Boothe prize winners for 2005-06. We also celebrate the nominees and finalists, whose names are listed in this book. We are proud of these essays, and trust that you will find in them that bright expression of humanistic curiosity and inspired thought that begins to flourish for students during their first year at the University.

Susan Stephens, Interim Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program
Ellen Woods, Associate Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program
Spring 2005 Winner

Jessica Lee

Instructor’s Foreword

In “Death of the Faces of God” Jessica Lee unmasks the heart of religion in modernity, an awareness of the reciprocity between heaven and earth which renders not only a society based on a particular image, or “face” of God open to critique and demolition, but that very aspect of God himself. For Lee, the necessity for a modern individual to choose between gods, in Peter Berger’s words “the heretical imperative,” is both beneficial for the creation of a “humane world” and frightening in that human beings hold more power over God than they did in earlier biblical religion. Lee’s paper matters because in the background lurks a question central to lives of so many students of religion: how does one grapple with changing and conflicting images of God in the modern world and a deeply held belief that God is a single, constant entity? Her paper begins and ends with the Bible, with judicious analysis of well-chosen evidence filling the intervening pages. Paralleling her chosen topic, Lee’s paper aptly reflects its creator, a student both influenced by tradition and dedicated to rigorous intellectual engagement.

Kirsti Copeland
Death of the Faces of God

Jessica Lee

Hebrews 13:7 instructs, “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith” (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*). In the stories of the Bible, imitation is a sign of flattery: Solomon imitated David; Joshua imitated Moses; Elisha imitated Elijah; and Timothy imitated Paul. The act of imitation, not merely an isolated phenomenon in the ancient tradition of the Bible, continues to wield its presence and increasing power in the present domain of modern religion. That is, in the modern world, a dynamic of imitation exists between one’s actions on earth and one’s veneration to a particular understanding, a particular face of God in heaven. In an attempt to create a male-dominated society, traditional patriarchal society reverently imitates God the Father, a conception of God as an all-powerful male being. Similarly, in an effort to instill moral rectitude among the public, Christian extremists admiringly imitate the God of Wrath, a perception of God as abundant in fury. In their endeavors to imitate the faces of God that they love and worship, patriarchal society and Christian extremists forever taint the simplicity and purity of the art of imitation that we once saw and knew of in ancient times. The act of imitation undergoes a perverse transformation, for it no longer elicits its intended reaction of flattery and reverence to one’s image of God. In their intentions to flatter and revere certain visions of God, patriarchal society and Christian extremists fervently actualize their ideas of God on earth. However, in their acts of imitation, they forge a link between the heavenly and earthly spheres that can be used to judge, attack, and destroy the faces of God that they passionately serve. In *Beyond God the Father*, radical feminist theologian Mary Daly calls all women to dethrone God the Father. In “Disciples of the Prince of Peace?” historian and peace builder R. Scott Appleby calls all Christians to dismiss the God of Violence and War. In the thousands of years that separate the age of antiquity from that of modernity, some variable changed, became subject to manipulation, and, thus, provoked a complete transformation in the art of imitation. As sociologist Peter Berger posits in *The Heretical Imperative*, the modern man lives in a modern pluralistic world, a world of religious uncertainty, where one must choose between gods. This freedom to doubt and choose one God over another empowers Daly and Appleby to choose the inclusive God over God the Father and the God of Peace over the God of War. Thus, a synthesis of Berger, Daly, and Appleby’s arguments suggests that the prospect of the death of the faces of God is possible only in a modern space of uncertainty and choice.

Traditional society’s patriarchal view of God as a supreme male being propels society to apply its male image of God in the heavenly dimension to the earthly realm. This process of transforming a conception of God into an earthly reality is executed through the act of imitation. The apostle Paul writes, “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, 1 Corinthians 11:3). In this verse, Paul encourages the church of Corinth, first, to perceive the relationship that exists between
God and Christ and then to replicate this heavenly model on earth. In heaven, God reigns over Christ. Therefore, on earth, man rules over woman. As Daly argues in *Beyond God the Father*, “If God in ‘his’ heaven is a father ruling ‘his’ people, then it is in the ‘nature’ of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male-dominated” (13). Daly’s logic suggests that the hierarchy that is present in the heavenly dimension serves as a paradigm that demands imitation on the earthly plane. God the Father governs his creation, and so, man the husband naturally and justifiably presides over his wife. In fact, man’s attempt to transfer the nature of God and Christ’s relationship to earthly relationships goes beyond mere imitation, for man assumes God’s role on earth. To the delight of Paul and the disgust of Daly, the history of misogyny reveals the success of patriarchal society’s tendency to act out its view of heaven as a masculine space: the early church fathers referred to women as “the devil’s gateway” and “misbegotten males,” and more recently, Pope Paul VI added that a woman’s vocation is “to become a mother” (Daly 3). The influential feminist theologian Rosemary Ruether stated in “Sexism and God-Language”: “a host of new ecclesiastical and imperial ‘holy fathers’ arises, claiming the fatherhood and kingship of God as the basis of their power over others” (157). Indeed, her statement rings true, for patriarchal society’s conception of a male God has created, through imitation, holy fathers on earth.

In the same way that patriarchal society acts out its view of God the Father on earth, Christian extremists convert their visions of spiritual warfare into acts of physical violence. The God of Exodus is characterized as “a warrior” (*The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Exodus 15:3). Leaders of the Christian Identity movement have used this violent description of God to maintain that the “Lord God is a man of War” and the Bible is “a book of war, a book of hate” (Juergensmeyer 145-46). One such leader, Kerry Noble, preached, “Because God was ‘a man of war’ and took vengeance on his enemies . . . it behooved his followers to do the same” (Juergensmeyer 146). Just as Paul urges the church of Corinth to imitate the hierarchal relationship between God and Christ, Noble insists that, first, Christians must recognize that God is a merciless warrior, waging a spiritual war, and then imitate this warring God. And again, imitation proves successful: while Reconstruction writer Gary North declares that Christians are “destined to dominate the world,” Reverend Michael Bray, an American clergyman who supports the use of weapons against abortion clinic staff, characterizes American society as “in the grip of a demonic force for some time, and the great struggle to liberate it as only begun” (Juergensmeyer 26, 149). Their rhetoric is deeply confrontational, calling Christians to engage in the earthly battle to attain liberation from and dominate evil. To these Christians, God is a warrior, a man of war in the heavens. Hence, they imitate God by transforming themselves into soldiers for Christ on earth: in 1999, a Christian Identity activist shot at a Jewish daycare center; in the 1980s, Bray destroyed seven abortion facilities; in 1994, Reverend Paul Hill, Bray’s accomplice, murdered Dr. John Britton, a doctor who practiced at The Ladies Center, an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Florida (Juergensmeyer 19-21).

By imitating images and visions of God, patriarchal chauvinists and Christian extremists establish a dangerous link between the earthly and heavenly spheres. This link allows critics to judge and reject earthly actions and, thus, empowers critics to dethrone and render impotent the God that these earthly actions reflect. Imitation, a supposedly reverent act, begins to carry grave implications, for the God that one imitates is at the risk of persecution and condemnation. Daly asserts that the purpose of her book is to provoke women to see that “What is required of women at this point in history is a firm and deep
refusal to limit our perspectives, questioning, and creativity to any of the preconceived patterns of male-dominated culture” (7). She writes with an uncompromising tone: women are required firmly and deeply to resist the traditions of patriarchal society. She accusingly points at and calls all women to critique a male-dominated culture: a culture, a product of the human, earthly act of developing and refining a male-drive mentality. And, like Daly, Ruether attacks this earthly construction of a society controlled by males. “When the word Father is taken literally to mean that God is male and not female, represented by males and not females, then this word becomes idolatrous” (158). Ruether’s accusation should not be taken lightly, for she charges patriarchal society with one of the most negative and most feared sins in biblical history – idolatry. Ruether finds the dangerous link: patriarchal society imitates its male image of God, and since patriarchal society commits the sin of idolatry, it follows that God the Father is tantamount to a false god:

“Israel is to make no picture or graven image of God; no picture or verbal representation of God can be taken literally. By contrast, Christian sculpture and painting represents God as a powerful old man with a white beard. . . . Such imaging of God should be judged for what it is – as idolatry, as the setting up of certain human figures as the privileged images and representations of God. . . . Such images of God become sanctions of evil” (158).

More significantly, Ruether’s reasoning cries out that women must not accept this God. In this sense, judgment and condemnation of patriarchal society’s earthly actions are displaced onto patriarchal society’s image of God. Women are left with no choice but to dismiss this domineering image. Or, in Daly’s words, women must engage in the feat of “leaving ‘him’ behind” and “castrating ‘God’” (18, 19). Christian women are called to overthrow the male conception of God that has abused their status in society and individual worth. Accomplishing this feat, Daly explains, “involves iconoclasm – the breaking of idols” (29). She calls women to transfer their judgment of patriarchal society’s idolatrous actions to the society’s image of God. Daly calls women to break, to smash both society’s imitation of God the Father and God the Father Himself.

Similarly, in response to Christian extremists’ imitation of the God of War, Christian theologians instead choose to worship the God of Nonviolence. By exalting the peaceful state of God, these theologians implicitly disapprove of violent actions on earth and, thus, implicitly dethrone the aggressive God that these actions mirror: In “Disciples of the Prince of Peace?” Appleby writes, “The defining mark of the lived tradition of Jesus . . . is the fact that he forgave his tormentors at the hour of his death and prayed for their redemption. If God does not retaliate, they ask, how are we justified in doing so?” (114). For Appleby, Jesus’ life of mercy and compassion on earth uncovers the character of the God he served in heaven: a God that does not retaliate. Implicit in this thought, then, is an objection to Christian extremists’ commitment to retaliation and, thus, a refusal to acknowledge both their earthly imitation of the God of retaliation and the God of retaliation that these extremists serve. Further, theologian Miroslav Volf expresses, “On the cross of Christ, the love of God is there for the others, for sinners – the recalcitrant – enemies” (qtd. in Appleby 116). Appleby adds to Volf’s comment that “the reception of enemies into the eternal communion of God is a mark of the kingdom” (116). The dialogue between the two scholars indicates that Christ’s love on earth points to the existence of a loving God in the kingdom of heaven. These theologians, too, have discovered the dangerous link between the earthly and heavenly dimensions. This link empowers them to overthrow the God of Violence and War. Volf and Appleby’s loving vision of God stands in direct contrast to Bray’s warrior-like God. They renounce the ideology of revenge that individuals like Bray
implement on earth. Therefore, in their theological writings, they tacitly abandon the God of War because, to them, the existence of a merciful God is an unshakable heavenly reality that must be imitated over the God of War. As Appleby begins his essay, he communicates what he plans to argue – that nonviolence is “the heart of the Christian ethic” and “the nonnegotiable dimension of Christian discipleship” (113). An increasing number of scholars such as Appleby are beginning to elevate and exalt the God of Peace and Nonviolence in an adamant manner, for this God, and not the God of War and Violence, is the heart of the Christian path, and this path is nonnegotiable. Their devotion to the God of Love is unyielding to Bray’s warring God. While Daly calls Christian women to desert God the Father, Appleby calls all Christians to forsake the God of War.

Transformed is the art of imitation. How do we, the modern individuals who have inherited an art that contains the potential for such great destruction, respond to a transformation so remarkable, so terrifying? Perhaps it is with a burden to contemplate the thousands of years that lie between antiquity and modernity, wherein a change occurred – the birth of a modern pluralistic world. These emerging Christian feminists and other theologians are able to assess and reject certain traditions’ ideas of God because they function in a modern world where pluralism justifies their severe judgments. In the biblical world, believers chose to worship God based on the inherent quality of his power – a power that could bring protection and blessings to their lives. But, in the contemporary world, where a perilous link has been forged between the faces of God and earthly acts of imitation, an individual is forced to choose a face of God according to the earthly actions that the face engenders. We live in a modern world where our actions are not merely fleeting events on earth, but rather bear significant responsibility to the eternal realities in heaven. In The Heretical Imperative, Berger makes this distinction: “The premodern individual was linked to his gods in the same inexorable destiny that dominated most of his existence; modern man is faced with the necessity of choosing between gods, a plurality of which are socially available to him” (24). Berger’s distinction between the premodern individual and the modern man evokes the sense that the world has undergone significant transitions, from a world of certainty and fate to a world of doubt and choice. Through such a transition, feminist scholars like Daly and theologians like Appleby and Volf no longer feel the pressures of certainty and fate. God the Father and God the Warrior are no longer certain ontological realities demanding their steadfast loyalty, nor are these ideas of God fated to be theirs to inherit. In the modern world of pluralism, Daly may choose the inclusive God over God the Father, and Appleby and Volf may choose the God of Nonviolence over the God of War. Moreover, Berger analyzes the etymology of the word “heresy,” noting that it “comes from the Greek verb hairesin, which means ‘to choose’” (24). Given the heretical behavior of our God-smashing, God-breaking feminists and theologians, Berger’s analysis is appropriate. They are truly heretics in their choice of adhering to portraits of God that are contrary to images and visions of God inherited from the authoritative tradition of the Bible. But perhaps even more interesting is Berger’s deeper characterization of this heresy: “For premodern man, heresy is a possibility – usually a rather remote one; for modern man, heresy becomes a necessity. Or again, modernity creates a new situation in which picking and choosing becomes an imperative” (25). In the modern world of pluralism, heresy is not a mere possibility, but a necessity, an imperative. In a modern society of males oppressing females, and in a modern society of religious extremists assaulting innocent lives, heresy becomes a great need if we are to live in a humane world.
Nietzsche argued the death of God. Looking at the challenges that feminism and violence pose to Christianity, I would argue that God is not dead, but rather that certain images and visions, particular ideas and conceptions of God, are vulnerable to death. Women are called to refute God the Father, Christians are called to deny God the Warrior, and one must confront, with awe, fear, and perhaps disgust, the overwhelming amount of power that humans hold over the earth on which we stand and the heavens to which we look. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’” (The Holy Bible, New International Version, Genesis 1:26). In the beginning, God created humans to rule over the creatures of the earth, but in a modern pluralistic world, humans hold in their grip the power to rule over the faces of God in heaven.
**Works Cited**


Spring 2005 Honorable Mention

Julie Byren

Instructor Foreword:

In the popular imagination, Robert Frost’s most memorable, if deceptively transparent lines, may well be those from his poem “The Road Not Taken”: “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,/ And sorry I could not travel both/And be one traveler,/ . . . /I took the one less traveled by,/And that has made all the difference.” In her elegantly crafted comparative essay on two of Frost’s lesser-known poems, “Directive” and “October,” Julie Byren charts a bold double-path through two very different poetic terrains. Setting these poems in dialogue with each other, she offers the type of nimble literary criticism that seeks to reconcile divergent views, much as the speaker of “The Road Not Taken” wishes he might fold into “one traveler” to take two simultaneous journeys. Julie brings all the strengths of close technical analysis to her argument, dexterously illuminating a methodology for “unscrolling” poems, for demonstrating that complex marriage of form and content at the heart of poetry’s distinctive power. Through a finely wrought synthesis of each poem’s specific technical attributes, Julie argues that the autumnal images and existential anxieties of “October” are answered and partly redeemed in the more mystical environmental voice of “Directive.” Careful not to overstate Frost’s privileging of natural processes over cultural artifice, Julie nonetheless draws our attention to his subtle interrogation of the paradoxical relationships binding humans and nature, art and life, imagination and reality. Julie’s smart and engaging essay ultimately leaves us lingering over Frost’s aesthetic, savoring his ambivalent but insistent inquiry into art’s redemptive powers; her work rewards our continual return to Frost’s writings, showing us more keenly the melancholy, and the magic, of his verse.

Alice Staveley
The natural world undergoes eternal transformation. A perceptive observer might, in fact, subscribe to the belief that it constantly experiences death, and in some ways this is true. The Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone – what we now refer to as natural wonders of the world – all geologically resulted from deterioration of the American landscape. The apprehensive speaker of Frost’s “October,” watching in horror as the crows migrate and the leaves “ripen,” would add that autumn’s waning vitality treads dangerously close to death as well. However, Frost recognizes and responds to this fear in his emphatically titled poem “Directive,” initiating a second speaker, a sort of mentor figure, into a dialogue with the first. This poem watches natural processes of the environment from a more distant perspective, giving insight to nature’s long-term transformation. By exposing the complex layers of perception that saturate human understanding of the natural world, the reader comes to realize that the environment assumes a much more active role in sustaining and preserving life than in destroying it.

The empathetic speaker of “October” (whom I will arbitrarily refer to as “he” to avoid gender confusion) finds the emergence of autumn to be a heart-wrenching onslaught against a seemingly harmless world of flora and fauna. He repeats the long “o” sound that resonates with a tone of sorrow and tragedy. The sound is most apparent in the first octet, in the words “O,” “October,” “tomorrow,” “crow,” and “slow,” among several others (Lines 1-8). The crow, in fact, implicitly signals a warning, as its dark feathers and habit of feeding off carrion have sparked superstitions claiming the crow to be a bad omen. An additional disturbing fact is that the scientific term for a flock of crows is “a murder” (“Crow Facts”). As the speaker becomes more and more anxious to end the tyrannous reign of time over nature, his poetic voice progresses towards desperation. Verbs, which at the beginning are hidden within the lines and relatively passive (“have ripened,” “if it be,” “should waste,” and “may form”), transform into bold demands. Frost positions them at the beginning of each line, so as to emphasize the urgency of the speaker’s requests. These lines stand in stark contrast to the soothing alliterations that appear in the poem’s opening lines (“morning mind” and “wind, if it be wild”) that had produced a rhythmically calming effect echoing the speaker’s initially hopeful description of October. This alliteration is almost entirely abandoned, however, after he repeats the first line in the seventh. By the end of the poem, the speaker’s distress shrinks into hopelessness, and his final plea seems piteously despondent. “For the grapes’ sake, if they were all,” he says “... For the grapes’ sake along the wall.” Saving the grapes becomes a last resort, a final gasp of air before the desolate, inevitable season consumes the world around him.
Given the reality that seasonal changes occur in cycles, lamenting what will return in a matter of months seems superfluous. The speaker’s fears appear misguided. So, what has led him to react so emotionally? Reflecting on the fate of the leaves, he says that the wind “should waste them all,” and the “clustered fruit” of the grapes “must else be lost.” He describes their death as if it were irreversible, lost and wasted. He remains blinded by his conviction that winter is permanent and fails to acknowledge that the leaves and grapes will return in the spring. Notably, he uses the oxymoronic phrase “burnt with frost” to describe the leaves of the grape vine. Not only does the unlikely pair draw attention to the drama of the moment, but it also sheds light on autumn’s paralyzing process as well as the poem’s similarly stunted progress. Frost, a relatively harmless phenomenon to plant life, does melt away. However, there is no revival for something burned. In short, the speaker has converted the seasonal cycle into an irrevocable linear progression towards total destruction. He has reenvisioned nature as a mortal entity. Unfortunately, the speaker’s evaluation of natural processes seems, in fact, to have become inextricably linked to and infested with anxieties regarding his own mortality. It is as if, without a second voice to alleviate his anxieties – to symbolically offer an exchange of dialogue, just as winter gives way to spring – he cannot find a reciprocally hopeful language of renewal.

Desperate for a way to rescue the wildlife, he feels compelled to control or slow down the decomposition process. In hysterics, he rummages around for ways to impose order, most pronouncedly in the structure of the poem. There is an obvious attempt to establish rhyme and a valiant effort to stick to iambic tetrameter; however, because the speaker is simply too frantic, his struggle to confine nature within a set of rules to justify what he sees lacks any sustainable foundation. Thus, the repeated rhymes bear no rhyme scheme and the iambic tetrameter falls victim to quicker interruptions of metrical feet that force the reader to rush through the lines. For example, the first line reflects perfect iambic tetrameter form:

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O hushed October morning mild,
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However, the poem soon deviates from its rigid form, as can be seen in lines nine and ten, respectively:

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Make the day seem to us less brief.
Hearts not averse to being beguiled,
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In line 9, the first two iambs are replaced with trochees (dark grey), and in the next line he even tweaks the syllable count to include an anapest (light grey). Not only does this breakdown reflect deterioration of the environment in autumn, but also the decay of his own hope that nature can be saved. The speaker’s impetuosity culminates in the two-syllable line break in which he shouts “Slow, slow!” warning himself that his agenda cannot be carried out in haste. He needs another way to tackle his own anxiety.

This is where Robert Frost’s “Directive” makes its grand entrance, bringing along with it a new speaker dedicated to mitigating the anxieties outlined in “October” and revealing a new way of perceiving nature’s correlation with humanity. The next speaker addresses the first as a therapist or counselor would address its patient, using the second person voice to communicate directly. The mentor’s goal is to make the mentored more comfortable, an aim the new speaker achieves at the outset by avoiding the demanding
verbs that appear in “October.” Rather, he utilizes linking verbs, twenty in total, and buries most other action verbs within verb phrases. The effect is one that shows no sign of intrusion: he acts more as a guidance counselor than as a lecturer, a role the title of this poem might have indicated. Ultimately, “Directive’s” speaker hopes to assist in “mak[ing] yourself a cheering song,” a perspective of nature that offers happiness and comfort, rather than one of hopelessness and despair.

The guidance provided in “Directive,” however, is surprisingly hard to access. Frost encrypts the message of the poem within a matrix of poetic devices that alludes to secrecy, a running motif throughout the poem. The “closed” sign and goblet protected by cedar and spell reinforce the motif. The form, which is one long stanza of fairly consistent blank verse, provides a subtle reminder to look closer at what may not seem special upon first glimpse. There is no rhyme in this poem, so when looking at it, the lines seem to be free verse. However, reading it aloud certainly reveals the steady meter of each line. “Directive” makes use of personification in describing land formations (“monolithic knees,” “Glacier/That braced its feet against the Arctic Pole,” “the woods’ excitement,” and “valley streams that when aroused/Will leave their tatters hung on barb and thorn.”), drawing parallels between people and their environment to potentially acknowledge natural mortality. At first this personification may seem a confirmation of the naïve theory that nature can, in fact, die, but delving into the heart of the poem proves otherwise. The poem is, indeed, strewn with paradoxical statements that take time and energy to decode, as if serving up a challenge to death’s finality. The most intriguing is the guide who aspires to getting “you” lost; another particularly cryptic phrase plays with the very concept of lost and found, challenging us to complete the line: “if you’re lost enough to find yourself . . .”

“You” are ready to understand. But what is it that we must understand? What is the secret message? The answer, much like the goblet, is under a spell, and, according to the speaker, it takes just enough energy, time, and submersion in nature to retrieve it. This poem certainly acknowledges the decaying process described in “October” – his opening lines nostalgically memorialize the (rather ambiguous) “detail, burned, dissolved, and broken off . . .” – but the discrepancies between the two poems lie with who or what falls victim to it. The items that wear away throughout “Directive” are the “graveyard marble sculptures,” “the shattered dishes,” and the “broken drinking goblet.” Moreover, the house, farm, and town no longer exist. All are man-made. Land formations, on the other hand, outlive humanity, and the speaker rubs it in with lines eleven and twelve:

Great monolithic knees the former town
Long since gave up pretense of keeping covered.

Not only does the rock far outweigh the people of the town in longevity, but also in stamina. The town simply gave up trying to turn the said “quarry” into a road. Nature, after watching the town fall to ruin, takes on the role of Protector, the Gatekeeper to what is left of humanity. It protects the drinking goblet from further deterioration, just as it contains a record of history (“Someone’s road home from work this once was . . .”). Thus nature preserves history; it doesn’t stay trapped within it. In addition to its role in protecting humanity, it also nurtures and sustains it. The speaker diverts the reader’s attention from the absence of civilization to the brook, a modest element of nature that has survived long enough to be the primary water source for the house that did not. The brook then binds the past to the present, yielding knowledge that the reader could never have found excavating ruins. The drinking goblet becomes an incredibly important
artifact – it facilitates the interaction between man and nature. It is appropriate then that the final line of the poem reads, “Drink and be whole again beyond confusion,” because the reader finally finds clarity in the simplicity of nature’s eternal nourishment. The distress expressed in “October” thus is obsolete, mostly because it has now been established that nature cannot live in terms of humanity. Nature is its parent/guardian and assumes all authority over humanity.

Although the above realizations alleviate anxieties expressed in “October,” questions still remain regarding why the speaker in “Directive” felt obligated to encrypt something so universal, so ingrained in our human existence. The response is two-fold. One interpretation is that its obscurity and secrecy allow it to be enjoyed only by a select elite, conjuring images of nature’s true identity as a sort of sacred garden, a hortus conclusus. Frost ventures towards a description of the creation of natural features as a fine art. It becomes the “chisel work of an enormous Glacier,” and the brook enjoys a “lofty and original reputation.” Distancing itself from the common people, nature becomes even more desirable in its mystery, and only those devoted to finding nature’s true role in the world will decode its hidden secrets.

A second justification involves a transformation within the reader. Making the poem’s description of nature difficult to decipher empowers and glorifies the journey towards understanding. The brook, an ever-flowing and ever-lasting source of water, metaphorically reiterates the importance of an ongoing process where the meandering journey is, in many cases, as fulfilling as the destination itself. Using the Holy Grail as metaphor for the drinking goblet could not be more fitting. It is a mythic object, not even proven to exist, but made legendary by the adventures of its pursuers. On a different note, encrypted codes inevitably elicit periods of confusion, times when someone is unavoidably lost. It is expected and embraced. This expectation of loss and uncertain self-discovery echoes the paradoxes in lines nine and thirty-seven of “Directive.” The guide would hope to disorient the client so as to initiate him into a quest for truth. Likewise, when lost you acknowledge that there is more to learn, coercing you to challenge your boundaries in pursuit of that hidden knowledge. Welcoming that moment of confusion gives credibility and validation to the emotional instability of the speaker in “October.” Therefore, the ideas expressed in that poem were not necessarily wrong. Rather, the anxiety was simply a part of the process, part of the journey.

In “October” and “Directive,” Frost attests both to nature’s wonder and its impenetrable complexity. Striking a sophisticated harmony between protecting the past, nurturing the present and securing the future, environment far surpasses human power in many ways. Yet it is difficult not to keep filtering our perceptions of the world through human attributes. Robert Frost embarks on a journey with the readers of “Directive,” writing a plot to mirror the path towards understanding nature’s power. However, as readers, we come to realize that in this process of observation, the experiences of panic, confusion, understanding, and epiphany reflect much more on our own character than we could possibly have imagined. Emotions like those from “October” become substantiated, and suddenly losing ourselves within nature releases us to discover that nature never works against humanity – its resources keep us alive, its formations keep us mesmerized, and its secrets always provide a Grail to chase.
Bibliography


Autumn 2005 Winner

Patrick Leahy

Instructor’s Foreward

Patrick Leahy’s paper, “The Three Furies of Dublin,” emerged as a gem from the fall quarter IHUM course “Journeys.” The paper develops a perceptive reading of James Joyce’s novella “The Dead,” which Joyce had completed in 1907 as part of the collection of short stories Dubliners (1914), written when Joyce was only 25 and only published years later. Patrick Leahy was a quiet and thoughtful student in my section; the reader will see that he has literary insights to share through his considerable writing talent. Using remarkably concise and efficient prose in the paper, Leahy initially identifies Joyce’s female characters in “The Dead” as clustering into sets of three, in keeping with the symbolism of triplicate figures from antiquity: the Graces along with their antithetical counterparts the Furies. Leahy demonstrates a sophisticated and subtle understanding of the interactions between the arrogant protagonist Gabriel, ill-at-ease with himself, and the women characters around him who constitute the eponymous “Furies of Dublin”: Lily the servant girl, Miss Ivors, and Gabriel’s wife Gretta. Tracing the disintegration of Gabriel’s identity and his world, Leahy recognizes the remote potential for the protagonist’s ambiguous Joycean redemption. Leahy reveals the progressive focusing of the narrative perspective in “The Dead” to the point of Gabriel’s contemplation of his own mortality as well as that of his Irish clan, to which he admits to belong in the end. Gabriel’s chagrin following the encounters with the three Furies, who seemed at first to be ordinary Irish women in his life, leads the protagonist to question his alienation, and thus the prospect of a more intense, meaningful existence with what Leahy calls the “faint possibility of rebirth.”

Alison Baird Lovell
The Three Furies of Dublin:
The Role of Women in Joyce’s The Dead

Patrick Leahy

The female characters in James Joyce’s The Dead fall naturally into groups of three. Three women – Gabriel’s wife and aunts – move upstairs together while he is in the cloakroom; three young ladies flirt with Mr. Browne; Aunt Kate requests three ladies for a quadrille. Then there are the three hostesses themselves, the Misses Morkan, to whom Gabriel flatteringly alludes in his speech as “the Three Graces of the Dublin musical world” (205). Their warmth and hospitality set a festive tone for the affair, yet for Gabriel the evening is soured by the behavior of another trio, that of the servant girl Lily, Miss Ivors, and his wife Gretta. Although they are never together in the story, these characters are linked by the fact that each causes Gabriel considerable humiliation, as if in punishment for the conceits of his male ego. Each woman represents a different challenge to his mindset: Lily challenges his conception of his social standing, Miss Ivors his conception of his country, and Gretta his conception of his marriage. This three-pronged assault on Gabriel’s self-delusions naturally causes a shift in his understanding of himself. His self-confidence is eroded; in his own eyes he is reduced from a dignitary at his aunts’ party to a persona non grata. The “shameful consciousness of his own person” (221) that Gabriel’s encounters with the three women awaken in him eventually triggers the dissolution of his identity – and possibly its reformation as well.

Gabriel’s behavior indicates that he arrives at the party with a sense of great self-importance. As a well-educated, cultured, and financially independent male, he occupies perhaps the highest spot in the social milieu present at the Morkan house. His presence is indispensable, not only so that he can perform such ritualistic functions as carving the goose and giving a speech after dinner, but also so that he can provide support for his wife and aunts. When he meets Lily in the pantry, Gabriel thus has every advantage over her – age, sex, upbringing, importance – and he expects the girl, as his inferior, to act accordingly. His behavior toward her reeks of condescension. Gabriel “smiled at the three syllables she had given his surname and glanced at her” (177), noticing how she has filled out since she was a child. Yet his question as to whether there is a young man in her life, a question that is slightly sexually aggressive in its forwardness, does not receive the subservient response that he expects. Lily bitterly retorts in the same lower-class vernacular that had amused him a moment before: “The men that is now is all palaver and what they can get out of you” (178). Her remark is a surprisingly accurate characterization of Gabriel himself, whose actions fall far short of his words and whose libido is running on overdrive throughout the evening. Naturally, Gabriel is embarrassed by his social gaffe and blames himself for the tartness of her reply. He feebly attempts to amend his mistake, as well as to reassert his superiority, by forcing a coin upon her. But there can be no recovery: Gabriel has been “discomposed by the girl’s bitter and sudden retort. It had cast a gloom over him” (178). This incident
marks the first challenge to the self-assurance that characterizes him when he arrives. Its humbling effect can be seen in the doubts it raises in his mind:

He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry. He had taken up a wrong tone. His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure (179).

Gabriel’s bungling of this most insignificant of social exchanges bodes poorly for the rest of the evening. Perhaps he does not command the respect he thought he did. The failure of one of his assumptions about himself casts the rest into uncertainty.

Gabriel does not fare any better with Miss Ivors, his teaching colleague at the University and partner for one of the quadrilles. Whereas Lily may not intend to cause him discomfort, Miss Ivors seems to have just that in mind. Her impertinent demeanor undermines his masculine sense of authority. Unlike some of the other ladies, she “did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device” (187), a choice of dress that suggests she wishes to be regarded as Irish first and female second. Certainly it is her Irishness that gives her cause to quarrel with Gabriel. She reproaches him for his lack of interest in his own country, for publishing in a Protestant paper and for vacationing on the continent rather than exploring his native land. Her steely “cross-examination” (189-90) is conducted under the guise of coy teasing, so that Gabriel cannot easily rebuke her without appearing ill-humored. He is forced into an emasculating position where he must wrestle with the possibility that, as Miss Ivors suggests, he is a “West Briton” (190) – i.e. someone allied more closely with England than with Ireland. Although Gabriel tries to shrug off her criticisms, the episode reveals some shame on his part regarding his feelings toward his country. He signs his literary column in the conservative Daily Express with only his initials, and he is visibly shaken when taken to task for his Anglophilic views: he fumes that “she had no right to call him a West Briton before people, even in joke. She had tried to make him ridiculous” (191). By bringing those views to the surface of his mind, Miss Ivors reminds him – as he surely does not wish to be reminded – that he represents an unpopular minority both among the partygoers and within Ireland as a whole. Her censorious remarks do nothing to help strengthen his sense of kinship with the assembled company, which only diminishes as the evening progresses.

The final and most agonizing of Gabriel’s humiliations is unknowingly brought upon him by his wife, as though in retribution for his misinterpretation of her feelings. Although Gabriel loves Gretta, he relates to her mostly on a physical level, as is clear in the scene where he spies her on the staircase. Significantly, Gabriel can see only her lower half; her face is hidden from him, just as her thoughts are hidden from him. Objectifying her, he imagines how nicely her pose would suit a painting: “Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. Distant Music he would call the picture” (211). Gabriel connects the moment on the staircase with memories of their past together, later comparing the words of a love letter he had written his wife to “distant music” (215). For Gretta, however, the music arouses memories of a different lover. The divergence of their thoughts becomes clear in the hotel room when Gabriel’s sexual advances fall flat. Gabriel, “trembling with delight” and believing that “the yielding mood had come upon her” (219), is on the verge
of consummating his desire when Gretta breaks loose from him and begins to cry. At this point she confesses her preoccupation with the dead Michael Furey. For Gabriel this is the worst form of emasculation: whereas “he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another” (221). His embarrassment is severe – and sobering. The thought that he has never really known his wife, that there was another man in her life who may have meant more to her, fundamentally alters the way he perceives his marriage: “It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together” (223). Although Gabriel comes to a shaky peace with these ideas, the loosening of his grasp on what he holds dearest leaves him nowhere to turn but inward.

Gabriel’s dreamlike episode of self-reflection comprises the final pages of The Dead, where a narrative that opens with an omniscient perspective now closes upon its narrowest point. What follows borders upon interior monologue as Gabriel begins to visualize himself being borne rapidly towards death. His experiences with the three women have, in effect, dislodged him from the social structures that comprise his contemporary life and lifted him to a level of detachment from which he can observe past and future all at once. “One by one,” he realizes, “they were all becoming shades” – himself and his aunts and everyone – and it is better for them to “pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than [to] fade and wither dismally with age” (224). Michael Furey has achieved a kind of otherworldly permanence by forging a connection with Gretta so strong that his spiritual life with her has far exceeded their corporeal relationship; Gabriel, whose love has never been as strong, has forged no such connection. His identity takes its shape from his wife, his country, his friends, yet his alienation from these mainstays of his existence leaves only a fragile and naked being that he regards “as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror” (221). This scathing self-indictment provides the clearest indication of how Gabriel’s self-satisfaction has metamorphosed into bitter discontentment over the course of the evening. His former idea of himself has been shattered. Now under the march of time he sees himself, devoid of spiritual definition, inevitably drifting “out into a grey impalpable world” (225) occupied by the nameless hosts of the dead.

If there is a possibility of spiritual reformation for Gabriel, the final paragraph would seem to suggest that it lies in his Irish identity. Like Joyce himself, who at one time forswore Ireland only to embrace it from exile as the basis of his fiction, Gabriel may be finding that his nationality means more to him than he thought. Even if it is impossible to salvage his relationship with Gretta, Ireland may be willing to forgive his transgressions: Miss Ivors, by inviting him on a trip to the Aran Islands in the far west of the country, is also offering him a chance at redemption. Gabriel’s final vision of the snow blanketing every corner of Ireland signals a sudden, affirmative awareness on his part of the shared history and consciousness of his people, living and dead. The failure of his human relationships has left a void that the spirit of his race can fill, thereby making his soul whole again. Out of an experience clouded by mortality thus shines a faint possibility of rebirth.

Works Cited
Autumn 2005 Honorable Mention

Nathan Pflueger

Instructor’s Foreword

In “Literature of Crisis” this fall, we examined Hamlet in conjunction with Sophocles’s Oedipus the King. Oedipal readings of Hamlet often focus on Hamlet’s apparent obsession with his mother, but Nathan’s essay takes a different approach, analyzing the play in terms of Hamlet’s troubled relationship to his dead father. Nathan argues compellingly that Hamlet “protests too much” when he claims to love his father, whom Hamlet associates primarily with military and political obligations that he would rather not inherit. In this reading, Hamlet’s guilt derives from an absence of the filial emotions he feels he ought to have, rather than from an inability to act on his emotions, as Hamlet and most readers of the play have assumed. Nathan’s argument suggests that no matter how intelligent or introspective we are, we can still radically misinterpret our own feelings and motivations in our desire to avoid unpleasant truths.

Joel Slotkin
Hamlet's Imagined Filial Love

Nathan Pflueger

Oedipal or not, Hamlet’s relationship to his parents is anything but ideal. Hamlet’s thoughts on royal matters reveal his distaste for the exact characteristics that his father represents. He dwells without end upon the remarriage of his mother, yet hesitates continually to enact his revenge for the murder of his own father. It is not that Hamlet lacks initiative – he slays Polonius without a second thought – but that he lacks motivation. A careful analysis of Hamlet’s language reveals that it is not the “foul and unnatural murder” of his father that most rouses his vengeful spirit, but the remarriage of his mother to his uncle. He hesitates to revenge his father because he does not possess the same furious anger at his murder – in fact, it appears as if Hamlet had little love for his father at all. What tortures Hamlet throughout the play is his struggle to understand why he does not feel the grief and anger that would be fitting to one who must avenge a father or a king, let alone both. He loathes everything his father represented, but refuses to admit that he did not love his father. Hamlet is burdened by his perceived duty to exhibit the same love for his father as for the other significant people in his life. Thus Hamlet’s relationship to his dead father is hollow – he wishes to fulfill the proper role of a dutiful son, yet his father’s kingship has made him distant, inaccessible, and essentially loathsome to Hamlet. Because of the absolute power of Hamlet’s father, the duties of state, and the secondary identity the dead king held for the Danes, the relationship between father and son was totally dysfunctional. His death leaves the younger Hamlet to brood and struggle to understand who he is and why he cannot seem to play the part birth and duty has assigned him.

Hamlet’s words reveal that he loathes the majestic life that he cannot escape. Directly before meeting the ghost; when Horatio inquires about the practice of cannons being fired off upon Claudius drinking his cup of wine in one draught, Hamlet refers to the practice as a custom “more honored in the breach than the observance” (1.4.16). He is ostensibly criticizing Claudius at this time, yet Hamlet also remarks he is “to the manner born” (1.4.15); this manner did not begin with Claudius, but with his own father. Although Hamlet makes it appear as if he loathes Claudius’ behavior, it in fact originated with his own father. Furthermore, he emphasizes having been born into the custom, drawing attention to his lineage, hinting at his displeasure at this birth. Indeed, he explicitly brings this theme up only a couple of lines later, saying that “nature cannot choose his origin” (1.4.26). The custom itself further reveals a particular aspect of the Denmark kingship: its emphasis upon matters of arms and military. The artillery pieces, implements of war, are the symbols of this majestic frivolity. In Hamlet’s loathing of the royal life to which he is assigned, this military symbolism is front and center.

Hamlet is uninterested in the militaristic affairs of state; he expresses his desire to not have to bear the burden of his birth. Ophelia describes Hamlet as “the courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue, sword, th’expectancy and rose of the fair state” (3.1.154-5). Thus Hamlet, as the king’s son, is born with all these obligations upon his head. Yet it is not for himself, but for the state that he is compelled to them – his part to play, rather than
his desire. When Hamlet undertakes to forge a new commission for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he remarks sarcastically that “I did once hold it, as our statists do, a baseness to write fair.” (5.2.33-4). Here, by fair he means clear; his suggestion that statesmen make no effort to write is a clear jab at the politics he loathes. He also happens to have his father’s signet to make the commission official (5.2.33-4). The fact that it was his father’s seal brings attention to how this power has been forced upon him by his birth. Though it does him service at this time, he would rather be without such effects. Indeed, they only become of use to him once he decides that his thoughts shall be “bloody, or be nothing worth” (4.4.66). This marks a transition when Hamlet essentially gives into the warlike, kingly nature he has tried to reject. His willingness to call upon these talents at this time is, therefore, merely another aspect of this resignation. Nonetheless, Hamlet makes it clear that he would rather not be burdened with such concern; he has distaste for the political life brought upon him. This distaste in turn inhibits Hamlet’s love and allegiance to his father, who is so much associated with the political and militaristic nature Hamlet dislikes.

The identity of Hamlet’s father is wrapped up in warfare, as well as affairs of state in general, to the point that any other aspects of his personality, as well as the traditional paternal role, are lost. Descriptions of his father dwell on warlike, impersonal traits. When Horatio first beholds the ghost, he describes it as having “that fair and warlike form, in which the majesty of buried Denmark did sometimes march” (1.1.47-9). To his subjects, the elder Hamlet’s most recognizable form is when he is covered in armor, which is the time when the man himself is most concealed. In fact, the dead King’s identity is not even “Hamlet” but “Denmark;” by being a king he is no longer a man. Yet beyond the ghost’s coming so covered, the viewers markedly ignore the one place the old king is revealed: his exposed face. When Hamlet hears their descriptions, he immediately concludes “then you saw not his face” (1.2.228). They completely neglect mention of it to such an extent that Hamlet assumes it was not visible. Yet their responses are telling, for while they recall details of his complexion, eyes, and beard, Hamlet must draw them out by direct inquiry (1.2.230-242). Thus it was not that the ghost did not display personal features, nor that Horatio did not observe them: he saw and remembered them, yet considered them so insignificant as to omit them until directly requested. The ghost’s role as father to Hamlet is secondary to its role as King to Denmark: when Horatio identifies the ghost, he says it is “the King your father” (1.2.191) – his kingship is mentioned first, his fatherhood simply tacked on. The world’s image of Hamlet’s father was impersonal, completely preoccupied with warfare. The father’s kingliness deprives him of personality; Hamlet, as a king’s son, must deal with a father whose identity is lost.

Hamlet is not affectionate towards his father’s memory: his actions of revenge are motivated not by love and conviction, but because he tries to convince himself that, as a son, he should feel these emotions. His disposition does not truly change upon hearing of his father’s murder, for his depression was just as intense before. His first soliloquy (2.2.579-580), just before Horatio informs him about the ghost, suggests that he was just as suicidal then as at any later time in his life. So learning the truth about his father did not inspire this malaise, but rather what he knew already inspired it: the remarriage of his mother. Learning of his father’s murder does not create any new grief for Hamlet, but simply a new duty. He promised the departed ghost that “thy commandment all alone shall live within the book and volume of my brain” (1.4.102-3 [emphasis added]), though his fathers parting words were “Remember me” (1.4.91 [emphasis added]). At the end of his
reply he does cite these words and swear them, but the whole of his speech is focused not
on remembrance of his father, but rather remembrance of a duty. Combined with the fact
that his depression does not increase following the revelation, it seems that Hamlet’s sense
of duty, but not his emotions, are moved upon learning of his father’s murder.

Hamlet himself is aware of the failure of the ghost to stir his emotions, and sees
this as a failure of his own filial duty. Lamenting how the actor could become so much
more impassioned over fiction, he says that he is “unpregnant of my cause . . . No, not
for a king” (2.2.579-80). He recognizes that he seems unable to love and grieve for his
father. Indeed, he even uses the word “king” rather than “father” as if this should inspire
stronger duty for emotion. Ironically, when the King is his father, his emotion cannot be
as strong. It is as if Hamlet believes he has a part that his birth dictates he should play,
but he cannot perform it. The theme of plays and theatricality are ubiquitous throughout
the play, continuing to bring up the tension between real emotions and forced, prescribed
roles. In his first appearance, Hamlet calls his dark clothing and mourning the “actions
that a man might play . . . but the trappings and the suits of woe,” insisting that his true
distress, though present, goes beyond his wearing the effects thereof (1.2.84-6). Yet it
is almost as if he is trying to reassure himself, worrying that all he can do is play a part.
Seeing the passion of others all around him for much lesser reasons continues to remind
Hamlet that, though he should feel great emotion, in truth his birth has assigned him a
role for which he does not possess true motivation.

Hamlet’s enigmatic hesitation is fully explained by a lack of filial love; his most impassioned
and rash actions stem from love towards others, while he hesitates from the actions motivated
by love towards his father. Hamlet’s killings of both Polonius and Claudius are spurred by
emotion regarding his mother, not his father. When Hamlet discovers that someone is hiding
behind that curtain while he speaks to Gertrude, he attacks without hesitation (3.4.19-25).
It was his mother’s remarriage that Hamlet lamented from the very beginning, and it
is this further betrayal involving his mother that spurs his first slaughter. Later, when
Hamlet kills Claudius himself, he barely mentions his father’s murder to the dying king;
his words are, instead: “Here, thou incestuous, murd’rous, damned Dane . . . Is thy union
here? Follow my mother” (5.2.326-9). The murder is mentioned only in a single word,
practically filler, and the rest concerns Gertrude exclusively. Hamlet’s attack on Claudius
also occurs right after the death of his mother, so it appears at if this is his more immediate
provocation for action. Even if the Queen’s death simply heralded to Hamlet that he
was about to die and he must complete his task soon, his words reveal that it was indeed
Gertrude, and not his father, that motivated the violence in his mind at the moment.
That his true purpose – to revenge his father – is not present in his mind is also reinforced
by the ghost itself, for upon Hamlet’s killing Polonius, the ghost soon arrives, saying he
comes to “whet thy almost blunted purpose” (3.4.112). Hamlet believes he is killing the
King, thus he carries out his purpose quite directly – yet the ghost seems to contradict this
in calling his purpose blunted. The solution to this contradiction is that Hamlet was acting
not out of purpose or duty, but out of passion; it was love for his mother, not duty for his
father, that led him to kill the man that might have been Claudius; without the immediate
motivation regarding his mother, he never would have taken action – that is why the ghost
reprimands him for having a blunted purpose.

Hamlet also displays an impulsive nature with regard to Ophelia, due to his love for
her. When he spots the King and others coming toward the grave of Ophelia, he remarks,
“but soft, but soft awhile! Here comes the King” (5.1.219) – his initial focus is upon
the King, and on his duty. However, upon learning of Ophelia’s death, he immediately breaks his cover to come forth, and grapples with Laertes (5.1.257-60). Subsequently, his entire focus is not on his task, his reason for returning, but rather on his love for Ophelia. Indeed, having remarked in his last appearance that his thoughts would thenceforth only be bloody (4.4.66), Hamlet impulsively forgets this duty for Ophelia. He is explicit regarding his motivation: “I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love make up my sum” (5.1.271-3). It may be difficult to reconcile his earlier repudiation of Ophelia with this supposed intense passion, but it is plausible that his earlier acts were part of the charade he put on for the purpose of his duty; now confronted with the final result he cannot control his passion. His hasty actions upon hearing of Ophelia’s death, in opposition to his supposedly greater purpose of avenging his father, indicate further that he acts swiftly in response to love; where he is bound only by a hollow duty, he is not so hasty. Combined with the times he is spurred to hasty action on the part of his mother, it becomes clear that Hamlet’s decisive actions are all motivated by immediate passion for someone other than his father. He feels strong emotions for Ophelia and for his mother, but not for his father, regardless of his belief that he should feel the same emotions for his dead father.

Hamlet does not admit to himself that he does not hold love for his father; he believes that a son should love his father, and thus he believes that he must, yet he does not connect the fact that his motivations and actions reveal otherwise. When Hamlet laments that the actor can show so much stronger emotion than he can, and for imaginary characters, he does not lament that the actor feels more emotion, but that he gains less action from more emotion. He says that the actor can “force his soul to his own conceit” (2.2.563) and yet he himself “can say nothing” (2.5.580). The actor is forcing himself to action, whereas Hamlet claims that he, having real motivation, need not force himself. Yet Hamlet reprimands himself for being unable to act on emotion. Hamlet’s actions regarding Gertrude and Ophelia demonstrate that this is not his problem – his error is not an inability to act on filial love, but a lack of that love. Hamlet’s confusion stems from the fact that he is blind to this; he continues to believe that he loves his father, even as he points out the evidence to the contrary.

What makes Hamlet’s dilemma so peculiar is that he does not understand which emotions are his own and which he simply believes he should have. Hamlet would not have chosen to be born into royalty, and indeed he seems to loathe the characteristics of his royal life. Hamlet resents the many things his father represents, yet he refuses to acknowledge a lack of love for his father, believing himself to be bowing to filial duty. His passion for Ophelia and emotions towards his own mother are garbled by real and false emotions brought about by his confusion. Though Hamlet may claim he cannot be played as easily as a pipe, the uncertain compass of his own dutiful sense plays him with great skill. The royalty of Hamlet’s father, and all the preoccupations thereof, deprive Hamlet of a true, loving father-son relationship, and his confusion reveals the psychological consequences of this dysfunction.

Works Cited

Winter 2006 Winner

Sarah Johnson

Instructor’s Foreword

In “Breaking the Watch...,” Sarah Johnson takes a fairly straight-ahead essay prompt regarding the dynamic between continuity and change in Judaism and turns it into a vehicle for arguing that the early rabbis complicated the linearity of biblical chronology in order to establish the irrelevance of time in the face of God’s everlasting truth – great consolation, indeed, for Jews living in the despair and confusion of a post-Temple world. Beyond having the basic characteristics that make IHUM TFs happy – clear organization and tight writing that smoothly integrates analysis and text – this essay is artful. Sarah portrays rabbinic scholars picking loose the knots that have marked time for the Chosen People for centuries in order to let time’s (and God’s) energies flow freely, a philosophical and literary massage of sorts that offers Jews a power boost strong enough to carry them safely through millennia of pain and persecution. This is not, of course, the first time an IHUM paper’s concluding paragraph has moved me to the verge of tears. But, rather than being the tears of despair or frustration that cause teachers to consider mid-life career changes, I was moved this time by the perfect marriage of text, analysis and writing style (not to mention the possibility of perpetual springtime) that Sarah’s prose offers the reader. I may never look at spring blossoms in quite the same way again.

Keila Diehl
In the beginning, according to the Bible, God created the heavens and the earth. Before this monumental act, in the lonely void inhabited only by darkness and God, one other thing existed: in the beginning, there was a schedule. God’s plan for the creation of the world was carefully segmented into a timetable, a six-day strategy with a seventh day for reflection. Thus, with days and nights, organization and structure, and linear movement from nothing to everything, was the world created and the Torah opened, setting the biblical narrative against the backdrop of ever-flowing time. Yet, while the awing story of creation heightens the sense of God’s power with its austere delineation of time, time also allows the strength of God’s authority to ebb and flow from low points such as Adam and Eve’s disobedience in Eden to high points such as the reception of the covenant at Sinai. To counteract this fluctuation, the Mekilta de Rabbi-Ishmael, a text from the third century C.E., presents a rabbinic interpretation of selected biblical passages that emphasizes the irrelevance of time in the face of God’s everlasting truth. The Mekilta reconceives time by complicating the linearity of biblical chronology through accentuation of biblical repetition, time conflation, and anachronism. While preserving the eternality of God, this conception of time allows Judaism to maintain its strength in the era of change following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by establishing a reality that cannot be measured by humankind’s calendar.

The Mekilta’s discussion of the creation narrative, particularly regarding God’s rest on the seventh day, employs the first of the three aforementioned aspects of time magnified in the text’s rabbinic thought: repetition. Certainly, the Bible, too, employs repetition as a rhetorical tool; the phrase “and there was evening and there was morning” is repeated five times in the first chapter of Genesis. Following this repeated phrase, however, is the day of the week. Thus, although repetition is used from the beginning of biblical religion, it does not stray from the demarcated passage of time. Use of repetition is less apparent in the description of the seventh day, which states, “On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy” (Genesis 2.2-3). Instead, these verses could be interpreted as focusing on the linearity of time. The seventh day marks the end of the days of creation and the beginning of the world as we recognize it, a distinct point of time in infinity.

Yet, the Mekilta takes this passage as the establishment of a repetitive Sabbath: “if He, for whom there is no weariness, allowed it to be written that He created His world in six days and rested on the seventh, how much more should man . . . rest on the seventh day” (256). While in the biblical narrative as it is redacted there is no demand from God for a weekly Sabbath until the Ten Commandments, the Mekilta’s early establishment of the Sabbath emphasizes not development but what will forever be the same: celebration of God on the Sabbath. This connects all Sabbaths forever, suspending time. Every Sabbath is
like the one that preceded it, all the way back to the beginning of time, making the flow of
time circular (always coming back to the Sabbath) instead of linear. From this conception
of time, one is never further from the Sabbath than six days, so the distance between us
and the moment of creation grows shorter with each passing day of the week.

Another complicating aspect of time incorporated in the rabbinic *Mekilta* is God’s
power to conflate time. In the Bible, the Ten Commandments are introduced by the
phrase “God spoke all these words, saying . . .” (Exodus 20.1). This passage does not
explicitly indicate that God spoke all these words at once, and much of the remaining
chapter focuses on the detailed list of commandments. Indeed, the list of commandments
highlights a central biblical theme of order and separation, particularly in the path to
holiness. Yet instead of pointing out the theme of order, the *Mekilta* extracts this small
phrase and interprets it as follows: “Scripture hereby teaches that God spoke the Ten
Commandments with one utterance – something impossible for creatures of flesh and
blood . . . he, after having said all the Ten Commandments at one utterance, repeated
them, saying each commandment separately” (228). Although the implication of “all”
in the scriptural passage is unclear, the *Mekilta* claims it as proof that God conflated
the commandments into one utterance at one moment in time, and then subsequently
repeated them individually. This claim links the nature of time in the Torah and the
nature of time in God’s presence: like the Torah, everything is there, existing at once, but
people operate within a system of time that forces them to view things chronologically,
starting with the first commandment and ending with the last. As shown in His ability
to conflate, God is not restrained by this system of time and can say everything in one
instant, and by extension make that instant last for eternity. Similarly, God’s word, once
inscribed on the pages of the Bible, exists all at once but cannot be read by human beings
all at once, again underscoring that while the truth can be outside the borders of time,
humans cannot perceive it as so. By finding temporal conflation in the line of Scripture
“God spoke all these words,” the *Mekilta*’s authors bind God and the Torah’s authority
together with their similar timelessness and again deemphasize the chronology of the
Bible.

The final knot in time pulled out of the Torah and intensified in the *Mekilta* is
historical anachronism stressing God’s simultaneous existence not simply in all places,
but in all time. In the Bible, a hint of this anachronism can be found in God’s speech
comparing Himself with Babylonian gods who do not support their followers. God
implores, “Listen to Me, O House of Jacob, all that are left of the House of Israel, who
have been carried since birth, supported since leaving the womb: till you grow old, I will
still be the same; when you turn gray, it is I who will carry; I was the Maker, and I will be
the Bearer; and I will carry and rescue you” (Isaiah 46.3-4). Through removing Himself
from the stream of time, God can jump around the human chain of existence, agelessly
playing the part of first the birthing mother and later the supportive child.

Reflection on the Ten Commandments in the *Mekilta* broadens the reach of
anachronism. The *Mekilta* explains why the commandments occur so late in the biblical
text by comparing God to a king who must gain favor with the people through the
eyarly events of the Torah before they will accept him as ruler. According to the *Mekilta*,
this acceptance “proclaims the excellence of Israel” because “when they all stood before
mount Sinai to receive the Torah they all made up their mind alike to accept the reign
of God joyfully” (230). Such logic anachronistically confuses readers of the Bible with
the Israelites; the question asked pertains to the impact of the Covenant’s position in the
Bible on the reader’s acceptance of God’s authority, while the answer given pertains to why the Israelites delayed their acceptance of God. This places Bible readers in the shoes of the Israelites present at Sinai when accepting the reign of God, again accentuating not merely timelessness but a sense of one instant in time that has lasted forever: the moment at Sinai when the people accepted God as ruler, a moment stretched over all of history before and since through the timeless Torah. If, as the Mekilta states, the revelation of the Covenant at Mount Sinai is the moment of excellence for Israel, subjecting it to the ebb and flow of time could only lessen this perfection. Thus, while the previously cited passage from Isaiah establishes God as an ageless and omnipresent protector, this rabbinic interpretation establishes not only God but also the Jews as timeless and enduring in order to ensure that God’s authority at Sinai lasts forever. Another rabbinic text, Lamentations Rabbah, states, “the Holy One lamented as He said: Woe to the king who prospered in his youth but did not prosper in his old age” (Book of Legends 146). Within this context, the power of discarding time becomes immediately apparent: God is ever-prosperous in a world without time, but in the mortal world where age is a concept taken for granted, God cannot thrive, for He too must grow old. If man can overcome the trap of time, God can be restored to His glory.

The complication of time in the Mekilta adds more than mere rhetorical complexity. By underscoring repetition and the cyclical nature of time through the Sabbath, this rabbinic interpretation draws the Jewish people closer to God, a crucial effect for the era of transition to rabbinic Judaism as the days of Moses grew ever more distant. By adopting temporal conflation, rabbinic interpretation allows the Torah and God’s word to be paralleled and equated. This equation may have been crucial in the wake of the Second Temple’s destruction, for if the Torah conflates all of God’s truth into one text, a physical space in which God himself can abide is less important. Lastly, by anachronistically depicting the Jewish people as being present at Mount Sinai, rabbinic interpretation in the Mekilta twists time enough to abolish it completely. In the sorrowful period following the destruction of the Second Temple, the concept that real time is but an illusion and that the time of the Covenant at Mount Sinai lasts forever could have soothed the suffering; the emphasis on what is permanent and rejection as false of what is transient allows God’s greatness to stand undiminished.

To further examine the implications of these effects, consider this passage from the Song of Songs: “Let us go early to the vineyards; Let us see if the vine has flowered, If its blossoms have opened, If the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give my love to you” (Song of Songs 7.13). Although the erotic love depicted in the Song of Songs is often taken as a metaphor for the relationship between man and God, application of this metaphor in conjunction with the frequent reference to season evidenced in the passage might lead to the unhappy notion that God’s love is ephemeral. However, once time is forgotten, the metaphor can instead indicate that when one loves God, one lives in a world of perpetual springtime, a world where the Temple stands, where Moses is forever atop Mount Sinai, where thousands of years of pain and persecution can almost be put into perspective by the eternal truth.
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Winter 2006 Honorable Mention

Jason Dunford

Instructor’s Foreward

The students in the winter quarter of Encounters and Identities were presented with a particular writing challenge. The class was a history and anthropology course on South Africa built around a range of different texts, including novels, ethnographies, histories and autobiographies. Their challenge was to approach the texts and the themes of the course in the spirit of IHUM, paying close attention to textual analysis while at the same time addressing some of the broader social and political questions raised by the course. Jason’s examination of the role played by language in the anti-apartheid struggle succeeds on both fronts. He paints a vivid picture of how Steve Biko and Mark Mathabane used language to resist the oppressive forces of the apartheid system. He also situates their stories within a number of other texts’ treatment of how language was used as an actual tool of oppression by the South African government. Many students in this class responded strongly to the writings of both Biko and Mathabane, as these young men were writing when they were not much older than the students. Most were particularly sympathetic to Mathabane’s journey from extreme poverty to a college in the US, and while the students saw this as a move towards liberation, they did not relate it to the revolutionary doctrine that Biko represents. Jason’s paper is exceptional because it offers a surprising perspective on the texts but also on the sometimes unexpected forms that resistance can take. He makes a strong case for the possibility that Mathabane’s engagement with language and the apartheid state was not just successful at defying apartheid’s oppression, but that it fulfilled Biko’s ideals of resistance. It was a pleasure to be surprised by a persuasive and evocative reading of two very different stories about being black in South Africa during the apartheid era.

Kathryn Mathers
Empowering The Oppressed: The Role Of Language In The Struggle Against Apartheid In South Africa

Jason Dunford

The Soweto uprisings of 1976 were sparked by the apartheid government’s declaration that Afrikaans would replace English as the language of instruction in black schools. The uprisings highlight the importance of language in a multilingual country such as South Africa and its potential role in oppressing the black population. In 1948, at the instigation of the apartheid regime, Afrikaans and English became the two official languages of the nation and thus excluded a large majority of the black population from effective participation in political and economic discourse. The Bantu Education Act of 1953, passed under the presidency of Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd, forced black children to attend so-called “tribal schools,” where they were taught “to acquire a solid foundation in tribal life” (Mathabane 193). This was an attempt to prevent them from becoming well-versed in English or Afrikaans. In Verwoerd’s words, “If the native . . . is being taught to expect that he will live his adult life under a policy of equal rights then he is making a big mistake” (Thompson 196). For Verwoerd, the goal of Bantu education was to “prevent the preparation of the Bantu child for greener pastures which he will never be allowed to graze in” (Ramphele 6). The ideology of “Bantu education” was a form of oppression put in place to complement the violent machinery and absurd bureaucracy that enabled the apartheid state to survive for as long as it did. Having a black population inarticulate in its official languages was an element that not only supported the apartheid state, but also hindered the black population’s ability to mobilize any sort of effective resistance.

Conversely, however, language was also able to empower the oppressed by providing the subjugated peoples a device for resistance. Steve Biko was a revolutionary who explicitly argued for the mobilization of language for this purpose. Mark Mathabane had no such motives; he simply had a love of learning languages and increasing his literacy. This led him to overcome, and help others overcome the absurd and highly repressive obstacles to a normal life, put in place by the apartheid system. I will argue that language was a powerful tool against the apartheid regime even when it was not explicitly mobilized for resistance. The apartheid state’s suppression of articulate black minds through its language policies was for a time successful in stemming any real resistance to the regime. Yet this very subjugation and exploitation by the regime led to a continued disillusionment within the black population. This disillusionment enabled resistance by fostering a unity that arose out of individual experiences and use of language. Therefore, despite the attempts of Bantu Education to prevent their intellectual advancement, the tenacity of students such a Mathabane and Biko enabled them to master both the indigenous languages and the two languages of the oppressors. Biko, a martyr to the anti-apartheid cause, used English in his revolutionary rhetoric to rouse his black South Africans out of apathy and into action against the regime. By contrast, Mathabane, a young South African man who achieved his dream of studying and playing tennis in the USA, uses his love of language to inspire and assist his fellow black South Africans and thereby unwittingly contributes to the anti-apartheid movement. Mathabane also uses his grasp
of both English and Afrikaans to help him overcome the system through escape, a more subtle form of resistance. Biko and Mathabane’s examples of language mastery, though very different, provided a platform for the black population to unite across the ethnic divides that the apartheid state attempted to enhance. This platform then led to a contagious black empowerment that was required for the upheaval in the system.

The idea of an ethnic consciousness in South Africa is not primordial and was non-existent prior to the arrival of European settlers to the Cape in the seventeenth century. The indigenous people spoke several dialects in the various regions now contained within the Republic of South Africa. Though different in many ways, these dialects were similar enough so people from what now would be classed as different ethnic groups were able to understand one another. The settlers’ introduction of the written word to these native peoples led to the documentation of the different dialects. The consequent emergence of the distinct features of each dialect provided the definition of each as a separate language (Ferguson, 01/25/06). Indeed Biko relates, “Our culture, our history and indeed all aspects of the black man’s life have been battered nearly out of shape in the great collision between the indigenous values and the Anglo-Boer culture” (92). In such a way, indigenous people began to be defined and to define themselves along ethnic lines. These ethnic distinctions, based upon differences in language, would prove useful to the apartheid regime in establishing the “tribal homelands,” or “Bantustans.” The homeland policy served to break up families through the migrant labour system and made daily survival the main priority for a large majority of society.

Mathabane first encountered the empowerment of language and the resistance it can provide through his decision not to speak Venda, his father’s tribal language, but to instead speak “Zulu, Sotho and Tsonga, the languages of my friends” (34). Mathabane deliberately attempts to spite his father, whose insistence that he participate in tribal rituals “sometimes led to the most appalling scenes [and] made [him] the laughingstock of all [his] friends” (34). His father is adamant that Mathabane speak Venda in order to maintain the family’s tribal identity and upon getting wind of Mathabane speaking the languages of his friends, threatens to cut out his son’s tongue. He then forces Mathabane to participate in an increased number of rituals in order to further humiliate him. “I hated him more for it,” defiantly states Mathabane (34). This instance illustrates the way that ethnicity in South Africa was closely tied to the apartheid regime’s ideology about language. Moreover, it shows how at a young age, Mathabane cultivated resistance against those who attempted to force their ways upon him.

Ironically, it is the existence of the accursed migrant labour system that allows Mathabane to exercise his knowledge of language in the interests of an anti-apartheid movement, as he assisted his fellow black South Africans in their constant struggle to survive in Alexandra, far removed from their families. Mathabane explains how “one group of illiterate migrant workers began asking me to read and write letters to and from their wives and children in the tribal reserves.” He adds, “Many of the letters from the tribal reserves were about the day-to-day struggles of living there . . . the list of miseries was endless” (180). Mathabane uses the example of the illiterate migrant workers to illustrate the desperate state of many black South African men who had been, “stripped of their manhood [and] hated the white man with every fibre of their being” (181). These are men so disillusioned by their role in society that their hope of ever offering resistance to the apartheid state is minimal. “Something inside them was slowly dying . . . a death far worse than physical death, the death of mind and soul” (181). Mamphela Ramphele
also comments, “poor self-concept and lack of a sense of self-worth inhibit the capacity for transformative action. They limit the possibility of those involved to challenge the status quo” (8). Her words essentially detail the utter despondency such migrant workers experience and their inability to offer any valuable resistance. The hated “status quo” would have remained in place until somebody, like Mathabane, took action to instil a sense of pride back into the hearts of these men.

Mathabane, by assisting the men in the reading and writing of letters, unknowingly empowers them in their resistance by counteracting the “death of mind and soul.” Mathabane’s actions at times could be viewed as supporting the structures of the regime; for example his decision to play the token black player in the South African Breweries Open despite pressure from the Black Tennis Federation to withdraw. However, on this occasion he inspires the migrant men to continue their daily struggles, because he offers hope for change by epitomizing a challenge to the “status quo.” He not only serves them in the practical sense of providing the necessary means of communication, but also embodies an ideal entertained by Biko, as he was “re-awakening . . . the sleeping masses” (Biko 32). Mathabane’s assistance to the men provides them with vital self-realisation of their plight and just may spark their greater participation in resistance.

Biko’s founding of the Black Consciousness Movement, and his carefully-crafted rhetoric, explicitly did what a man like Mathabane did unknowingly. Biko explains his idea of “Black Consciousness as an attitude of mind and a way of life [and] the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time” (91). I suggest that Mathabane, though by no means a revolutionary, exemplifies this attitude in his desire to use his grasp of language to conspire with his fellow black South Africans. Perhaps the most obvious instance comes when Mathabane accompanies Ndlamini, a migrant worker from one of the neighbourhood hostels, to the superintendent’s office, where he has been summoned to appear for violation of the Influx Control Law. Ndlamini had brought his family to Alexandra because they were suffering enormously in the Bantustan. Initially the superintendent is harsh towards Ndlamini, but upon Mathabane’s Afrikaans intervention, he softens to the issue and excuses Ndlamini for the infraction. Mathabane explains how he “simply told the bastard what he wanted to hear” but Ndlamini views him as a “miracle worker” (252). Mathabane’s fluency in Afrikaans, gained through hard graft at school in an alien and poorly-taught language, enables him to earn a pardon for Ndlamini. This provides Ndlamini with a renewed sense of hope and courage to face the future. Such courage will allow “the black man to explore his surroundings and test his possibilities – in other words to make his freedom real by whatever means he deems fit” (Biko 92). Ndlamini, though still greatly bound by the shackles of apartheid, will regain a sense of his manhood and be freer to express it because he is now able to live with his family. Though this is only a minor victory, it is a small step to making “his freedom real,” and came about as a result of Mathabane’s experience with language.

Biko explicitly details the importance of language in the struggle against apartheid during the SASO/BPC1 Trial of May 1976. He explains how South African society’s recognition of two main languages, English and Afrikaans, contributed to “the black man’s sense of inferiority and self-hatred” (106). He relates how he himself experienced difficulty, particularly when grappling with the nuances and idiosyncrasies of English, but his determination to gain liberation for his people forced him to come to terms with the

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1 South African Students’ Organisation (SASO) and Black People’s Convention (BPC).
language so as not to feel that “the [white] guy is better equipped mentally” (107). He then proceeds to justify his reasons for making English the official language of SASO because “we [SASO] have something like ten languages . . . [and] have got to choose a common language” (108). Biko feels that black South Africans must master English in order to rid them of the inferiority complex stemming from being inarticulate in one of the languages of the oppressors. Ramphele sums up well Biko’s sentiments with regard to language: “Language, both verbal and non-verbal, is an important symbol in South African social relations. . . . For those with limited educational opportunities the language problem is particularly relevant” (5). This “language problem” was an area that Biko successfully addressed through a combination of stirring articles and speeches. In his writing he was primarily concerned with mobilizing the black intellectuals of South Africa but his skills as an orator enabled the spread of the word of the Black Consciousness Movement to all levels within black society.

For Biko, his mastery of English was necessary because of the realities of the apartheid state and for him to be effective in promoting his Black Consciousness Movement. It is here where he differs from Mathabane, who initially “saw command of the English language as the crucial key with which to unlock the wonderful world of books” revealed to him by Treasure Island (193). His interest in such novels is representative of his desire to escape his “black world” which he ultimately does. English enables Mathabane to form relationships with white liberals and to articulate the hardships of township life to them. As a result, they help him land a scholarship in America, which he accepts at the expense of abandoning the struggle for liberation. However it was his experience of language that provided him with the means to inspire those who would remain in South Africa to continue to fight for equality. Ramphele writes, “Empowerment, while supportive of the efforts of the poor people’s struggles for survival, nevertheless focuses their attention on the power they have . . . towards transforming their social milieu” (125). Mathabane’s experience of language provided him with the power to transform his personal position, and also enabled other people to “focus their attention” on changing theirs. To Biko, on the other hand, English is merely a necessary tool in the struggle, and, as Aelred Stubbs affirms, “Steve died to give an unbreakable substance to the hope he had already implanted in our breasts . . . he was a living embodiment of the hope he proclaimed by word and deed” (Biko 215). Thus the hope that Steve Biko “proclaimed by word” was all the more tangible because of his passionate will for the liberation of his people.

Biko and Mathabane had very different ways of mobilising language against the apartheid regime. Biko was an influential revolutionary whose life ambition was to bring down the system that oppressed his people. He mobilised language to assist his cause and effectively initiated the resistive momentum that would bring down the system two decades later. Mathabane was simply an educated man with dreams of a better life away from apartheid and never had revolutionary intentions. Nevertheless, he unwittingly used his experience of language in ways that propagated defiance. The lives of these to men make clear the emancipating nature of language. Their ability to effectively articulate their sentiments in various languages, most importantly in the foreign languages of their oppressors, brought personal and communal benefits to those touched by them through a contagious empowerment. Both of these men were successful in mobilising language against the apartheid regime, providing a valuable lesson to other oppressed peoples elsewhere in the world.
Works cited


