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Spring 2006
Emily Gasner
James Hohmann
Dayoung Lee
Gavin Melly
Theodoros Milonopoulos
Osamugue Michelle
Odemwingie
Sylvia Tomiyama
Kristina Yang

Autumn 2006
Ben Bautz
Kara Bennett
Lillian Jasmine Dobbs–Marsh
Yvette Flores
Kate Johnson
Jessie Knight
Teddy Lee
Dana Lindsay
Lauren Norwood
Caitlin Roake
Stephanie Vezich
Trent Walker
Eric Whitney
Chris Young

Winter 2007
Alex Ackerman–Greenberg
Jeremy Baker Voss
Lauren Bishop
Andrew Bollman
Miranda Gregory
Stephen Hess
Kristyn Kelley
Amy Kwon
Chris Meill
Chris Nguyen
Katie Noble
Kate Powell
Phil Shiu
Emily Skehan
Ben Spielberg
Matthew Sprague
Pelu Tran
Rafael Wabl

IHUM Nominees & Finalists

Finalists
Ben Bautz
Joyce Dela Pena
Courtney Khademi
Jessica Lee
Cooper Lloyd
Griffin Matthew
Kate Elizabeth Niehaus
Caitlin Roake
Andrew Rominger
David Sangokoya
Brian Scoles
Amita Seshadri
Anne Stake
Trent Walker
Beth Wei
Peter Witt
Serena Yeung

Nominees
Jillian Barber
Leila Beach
Amy Berliner
Joseph Brendel
Cara Brook
Elaine Chang
Jimmy Chion
Christine Chung
Michael Ding
Kyle Duff
Chris Fedor
Carlos Fonseca
Elissa Freedman
Libby Greismann
Caitlin He
Sara Heaps
David James
Kate Johnson
Sophie Lambert
Jason Law
Alec Levy

Heimunn Li
Janine May
Kate McGrath
Aaron Meisner
Josh Michael Wong
Naikhoba Munabi
Blair Nathan
Sara Normington
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Justin Reed
Allison Rhines
Caitlin Roake
Emilie Russler
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Christine Tran
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Casey Zoellner
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 2006 and winter 2007 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 2007.

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 research–based argument with the careful and consistent guidance of an experienced writing instructor.

The Writing and Rhetoric requirement at Stanford consists of two courses. While the second–level PWR 2 course emphasizes oral and multimedia presentations of research, PWR 1, the first–year course from which Boothe Prize nominations are drawn, focuses on 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.

The PWR curriculum aims to lead students toward strong performance in all elements of writing, including understanding a writer’s stance, developing a supportable argumentative thesis drawing on primary and secondary sources, deploying cogent proofs, and writing for a range of audiences. Each of these essays demonstrates the ways 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 newest members of the University community 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
**Instructor’s Foreword**

While it is a remarkable coincidence that Leslie, who covered the Boothe Prize ceremony last spring for the *Stanford Daily*, is now on the receiving end of the Boothe Prize essay, it is not remarkable that she would receive it—the Boothe Prize essay couldn’t be awarded to a more well-deserved writer. When Leslie took my course called “Rhetorics of Advertising” last Spring 2006, she was seriously interested in both the field of advertising and international relations. For her research paper, she hoped to find a means of connecting these two areas and initially researched how international companies catered to or distanced themselves from the brand images cultivated in their home nation. During this process, however, she encountered articles on the emergent field of nation branding and then focused on exploring and assessing the United States’s own branding strategies abroad after 9–11. In particular, she focused on the U.S.’s unpopular image in the Muslim world and wondered about the U.S.’s efforts to project a better national image, the grounds of its current image failure, and a possible solution. Leslie’s paper argues that the U.S.’s failed public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East would benefit significantly from branding strategies and theories used by marketers to target audiences. Although marketing strategies are often seen as applicable only to the business world, Leslie asserts that the rhetorical strategies and successful communication principles applied in corporate branding can lead to more focused and persuasive “international image making” and nation branding of the United States. No less remarkable is how she gathers so many secondary sources (ranging from Congressional reports, books, and journal articles) that effectively support her original argument without overwhelming her paper. In sum, Leslie’s paper is characterized by sophisticated arguments, an extensive range of sources, and fluid writing, which are the hallmarks of excellence in research–based writing in PWR. By persuasively navigating the reader through the complex web of nation branding, Leslie has demonstrated her own art in persuasive writing.

*Sohui Lee*
Brand America™:
Exploring the Appropriate Role of Marketing Strategies in Public Diplomacy

Leslie Georgatos

"Brand America"
We’re selling a product, and the product we’re selling is democracy.
– Former Secretary of State Colin Powell

America has been called one of the world’s most elegant brands facing the most complicated positioning problem of all time (MacKinnon 1). But its branding ineptitude has earned it recognition as the ultimate big business—the world’s last remaining superpower—that foolishly neglected its PR department (Trout 1). Because America’s image affects the success of its international diplomacy, federal resources have been directed toward shaping foreign public opinion of the U.S. since World War I (Nye 1). But for the first time in American history, advertising professionals have contributed extensively to ongoing discussions of the appropriate methods of disseminating information about U.S. culture and policies to foreign citizens, as well as about the appropriate actors to create and deliver such messages. When post–September 11th opinion polls showed rising world disapproval of America, the United States government turned to advertising executives in the private sector for advice on selling “Brand America” to foreign audiences. The U.S. is not alone in exploring the use of private sector tactics to change its international image; the EU, Spain, England, France, Germany, South Korea, Australia, China, and many others have taken steps toward using branding techniques to promote their images abroad. Globally, the idea of managing “nation brands” is on the rise with The New York
Times listing “nation branding”—creating a concept for a nation and selling it to the world to improve its image—as one of its top hot concepts for 2005 (Potter 1).

Yet on the grounds that branding is too shallow, too simplistic, too one sided, and too unbelievable to change foreign public opinion, many skeptical U.S. officials and domestic media commentators have rejected the new approach to national images. For the present, traditional government wariness about using marketing terms in foreign policy and public perception of the shallowness of commercial branding have crippled efforts to incorporate these techniques into the management of the U.S.’s image. But while there are limitations on the wisdom of applying private sector concepts to the U.S.’s nation brand, several key principles underlying corporate branding strategies could direct U.S. public diplomacy in more productive directions. Standard corporate brand management is altogether more systematic, more research oriented, more responsive, and more controlled than that of the U.S.’s current national brand. And private strategies that emphasize thorough understanding of the tools of communication, the targeted audiences, and the intended message could lead the U.S. into a more interactive, dialogue–based approach to making and perpetuating a positive, democratic image that complements and reinforces its overarching policy objectives.

“Public Diplomacy” vs. “Nation Branding”

A variety of names have been used to characterize the shaping of national images abroad, including “strategic diplomacy,” “public diplomacy,” “strategic communications,” “propaganda,” “public affairs,” and “international public relations.” Currently, the dominant name for the concept is “public diplomacy,” popularly defined by Hans Tuch in Communicating with the World as: “a government’s process of communicating with foreign publics in an attempt to bring about understanding for its nation’s ideas and ideals, its institutions and culture, as well as its national goals and current policies” (3). In public diplomacy, one nation’s government is attempting to affect the people of another nation or other nations (Manheim 4). And unlike propaganda, public diplomacy is supposed to denote explanation of policies and ideas instead of advocacy of “superior” American ideals (Risen 1).

Although the term “public diplomacy” is relatively new, the current public diplomacy “toolbox” of methods has been developing for decades. Non–technological tools include cultural exchanges, the creation of national libraries abroad, student exchanges, direct contact through foreign affairs officers, and official publications. Yet the information revolution appears to have led to the development of public diplomacy as an integral part of a country’s foreign relations because it enabled widespread public access to many forms of media. Current initiatives have gone beyond traditional radio programs and incorporated television commercials, TV news stations, and ads in the form of flyers and brochures. Online virtual spaces are also being considered as new means to project an American image abroad, enabling widespread access to U.S. information in a way that is secure against physical attack in violently anti–American countries.

Yet the global shift toward “nation branding” represents more than a move to harness technological progress to mold national images. The new nation branding is distinguished from “public diplomacy” in its appropriation of private sector techniques like formulating a message, setting up measures for describing success, conducting opinion research, and actually creating ad campaigns and logos; its open use of marketing terms and expressions to refer to national images; and its categorization of public diplomacy problems as issues
of image rather than policy. Nation branding’s goals may also differ from those of public diplomacy. While public diplomacy seeks to inform foreign publics about a nation’s goals or ideals largely in order to gain support for its foreign policy or to direct other nations’ foreign policy, nation branding can also be applied in the context of economic competition for homegrown brand recognition, international tourism, and foreign direct investment (Olins 178). But as in public diplomacy, nation branding efforts sometimes move beyond superficial ads to incorporate policy changes. Spain, often cited as a successful nation brand, accompanied its new sun logo with institutional and tourist advertising, creation of successful international business schools, growth of Spanish companies, reconstruction of major cities, filming of critically acclaimed movies, and the hosting of the Olympics to improve its international image after Franco (Olins 176).

The Controversy

Although it has just begun, the debate over the applicability of marketing concepts, strategies, and techniques to the building of national images has raged fiercely in the United States in recent years. Nation branding is increasingly justified in terms of necessity. Proponents claim that in an international atmosphere charged with emerging national brands, a country that does not deliberately seek to control its image abroad faces obscurity, distrust, or misunderstanding (van Ham 1). Nation branding is also touted as necessary because it establishes a basis for goodwill that lasts through divergences on policy decisions (Wang 19). Thus a country that establishes a respectable international image in the long term may get the benefit of the doubt on questionable policies. Finally, proponents of nation branding claim it is little more than a new term for a framework that has existed throughout history. According to this concept of ancient nation branding, the new expansion of the concept merely constitutes greater acknowledgement of the existence and effects of national images, and in some cases, greater commitment to engaging with foreign opinions (Council on Foreign Relations 2).

Criticism of nation branding has focused its ridicule on the shallowness of conceptualizing countries as brands—condemning the practice as falsely equating “Uncle Sam” with “Uncle Ben’s Rice” (“From Uncle Ben’s to Uncle Sam” 1). Some journalists take a darker tone, attacking the marketing of national images as “sheer propaganda… anathema to the free and civil society central to our ‘brand promise’” (Grimm 1). On a still more serious level, the greatest criticism of public diplomacy based on nation branding is its emphasis on image, not policy, as the source of problems and the focal point for constructing solutions. Its apparent preoccupation with labels and perceptions instead of with realities has some commentators concerned that nation branding reveals a cavalier attitude toward the concrete effects of a nation’s foreign policies. Some purists continue to insist that only policy changes affect the way a nation is perceived abroad; others merely assert that a campaign to change a nation’s image will only work if accompanied by corresponding policy changes, however meager.

Much of the debate on both sides, however, has focused unproductively on the idea of applying branding terminology to public diplomacy instead of on the merits of using marketing strategies and principles in changing nations’ images. Careful study of basic marketing principles suggests that if they were applied to U.S. efforts at image building in the Muslim world, they might improve the campaigns’ effectiveness by making them more responsive to local concerns.
Current U.S. Problems, Tools, and Objectives

After the September 11th attacks, the U.S. government and public became aware of a burgeoning global image problem that worsened during the Iraq War. The Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project found that disapproval for the U.S. had increased between 2000 and 2002 in 19 of 27 surveyed countries, and explained that the current U.S. image problem is deeper and broader across nations and across issues than any previous slump (“Trends 2005” 109). Even popular American brands have become less popular abroad because of the stigma of association (Kitchen 202). Beyond simply regarding U.S. motives in Iraq with suspicion, foreign publics perceived the U.S. as “too quick to act unilaterally,” finding that such action “doesn’t do a good job of addressing the world’s problems and widens the global gulf between rich and poor” (“Trends 2005” 106). In branding terms, the United States had an “image problem” not exclusively tied to its current president or policies (“Trends 2005” 109).

In response to this alarming information about foreign perceptions of the U.S., the federal government directed resources toward improving the U.S.’s image in the Arab Muslim world (GAO 2). Led by Undersecretary of Public Diplomacy Charlotte Beers, formerly a successful advertising executive, the State Department’s Bureaus of Educational and Cultural Affairs and of Public Affairs worked with the Office of International Information Programs to launch “Shared Values,” a program focusing on similarities between Arab and American societies (GAO 2).

The initiatives developed under Beers included the following:

1) “Muslim Life in America,” a brochure campaign and website showing Muslim individuals and families enjoying their lives in the United States. The site and brochures include photo galleries depicting the mosques, schools, and everyday lives of Muslims in the U.S (Cincotta 152). The sites promote awareness of acceptance of Muslims in the U.S., and of shared values of family and faith (Kendrick ).

2) A “Shared Values” TV commercial series of five “short–form minidocumentaries” showing a Muslim public school teacher, a baker, a journalism student, a paramedic, and a health professional reporting that the “United States is an open society, and that Americans and Muslims share certain values and beliefs” (GAO ). These commercials reached approximately 288 million people in Indonesia, Pakistan, Kuwait, and Malaysia; Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon refused to air them on the grounds that they were U.S. government propaganda (GAO 12, Cincotta 152).

3) Radio Sawa, a radio station playing a combination of popular Western and Arabic music with brief news bytes in between. Intended to showcase American “cultural diversity,” the station has absorbed the funding that previously supported the now-defunct Arabic Voice of America news station (Cincotta 152).

4) TV al–Hurrah, a TV station that features programs on news, health, technology, and entertainment and is intended to project a “message of personal empowerment” (Pattiz 79).

A Place for Branding in Public Diplomacy?

Hostile reactions from Arab governments, foreign and domestic media, and traditionalists in the State Department to the Beers campaigns have discredited branding as an approach to international public relations in America (Fulton 24). But as used by those who discount marketing techniques as an approach to public diplomacy, the word
“branding” is often superficially identified with conventional advertising approaches to selling a national image abroad. These include the flyers, pamphlets, and TV commercials connected with recent efforts at improving Muslim perceptions of the U.S. The broader, more fundamental principles of branding have not been adequately judged for their applicability to public diplomacy.

In examining recent public diplomacy initiatives produced under former Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Charlotte Beers—“Shared Values,” “Muslim Life in America,” Radio Sawa, and TV al–Hurrah—I investigated whether or not these campaigns conformed to simple branding principles drawn from the papers of marketers and proponents of nation branding. When I discovered that these recent programs deviated in some respects from basic marketing principles, I studied whether or not better application of these principles might have made these programs more effective. In completing my research, I found that four elements of a marketing–based approach might help the U.S. move from one–sided, message–based campaigns to more productive, interactive exchanges of ideas. While I focused on recent campaigns, these principles can be applied productively to U.S. public diplomacy efforts as a whole.

The basic marketing principles I relied on were:
1) Define and coordinate a single message;
2) Identify and understand target audiences;
3) Fit the message to the product;
4) Measure success and reevaluate approaches based on results.

What follows is a summary of my findings.

Branding America in the Muslim World

1) Define and Coordinate a Single Message

You only have a certain number of chances to register in people’s minds, and unless each time you register, it appears to be making the same point, you don’t have much of a chance.

– Simon Anholt (Risen 1)

While private sector branding emphasizes coordinating a single message in order to more firmly impress that message into public memory, U.S. public diplomacy could benefit from formulating a single message because of the internal, organizational advantages derived from clear goals. With the exception of Radio Sawa and TV al–Hurrah, which were focused on establishing a U.S. media presence in targeted nations, each of Beers’ individual campaigns in the Muslim world had a clearly articulated message both at its inception and—according to available research—during its reception. “Muslim Life in America” was conceived to convey the religious freedom of Muslims in America, as well as to reassure audiences that U.S. military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan were not a result of U.S. anti–Islam prejudice. “Shared Values” attempted to show that American and Muslim societies shared values of family and faith. A Southern Methodist University study of responses among international students at Regents College in London even showed that the program successfully achieved high recall of its other principal message—Muslims are treated well in America (Kendrick 14).

Yet crafting the specific purposes of individual campaigns is not sufficient to make U.S. intentions, ideals, and institutions understood. Current U.S. nation–branding efforts in the Middle East and elsewhere are weakened by a lack of institutional coordination into
one overarching U.S. message or target image. A Government Accounting Office (GAO) review of State Department public diplomacy conducted in 2003 found that greater collaboration on articulating a single U.S. message would help agencies achieve “mutually reinforcing benefits”—amplification of the persuasive power of their messages through repetition (13). Chinese propaganda offices have coordinated their efforts behind the concept of “China’s Peaceful Rise,” and some scholars conclude that they have successfully sold the image of China as a peaceful, developing, anti–hegemonic power to other Asian countries through organized cultural initiatives (D’Hooge 90, Wang 48). A coordinated single message also frees public diplomacy practitioners familiar with their assigned territories to innovate within established parameters. The U.S. State Department has been reticent in communicating its public diplomacy goals to practitioners of U.S. public diplomacy around the world, and the limited communication has resulted in bureaucratic confusion. As recently as 2004, the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy reported that without a core message to refer to, U.S. ambassadors were forced to be cautious in their public statements to avoid clashing with State Department policy (Advisory Commission 8). In one outrageous case, a former public affairs officer in Morocco was forced to use newspaper articles to guess at U.S. public diplomacy plans and formulate his own (GAO 14). Government reviews have found that the U.S.’s uncoordinated strategy for public diplomacy risks resulting in “conflicting messages” that compromise the U.S. credibility absolutely critical to successful public diplomacy (Advisory Commission 16). Finally, a unified and coordinated message would facilitate the measurement of the success of public diplomacy initiatives. Without selected goals or target images for the U.S., public diplomacy officials have a difficult time assessing the success of their programs, and as a result, may waste resources on ineffective enterprises (GAO 13). Yet a well–defined message, clearly understood both internally and externally, will not resonate effectively unless it appeals to target audiences on their terms.

2) Identify and Understand Target Audiences

It’s not what you say, but what they hear that’s important.

– Charlotte Beers (Cincotta 154)

Current U.S. public diplomacy in the Muslim world suffers from an inadequate understanding of its target audiences. Although the listed Beers–run campaigns identified key target audiences—Radio Sawa targeted the 15–30 age bracket, al–Hurrah was directed toward news watchers of all ages, and “Muslim Life in America” and “Shared Values” were supposed to reach broad Arab publics with specific appeal to women and mothers—they failed to resonate with those audiences because of misconceptions about how the ads and their messages would be understood (Pattiz 75, Kendrick 10). Attempts to determine the causes of the campaigns’ failure—or indeed, to describe their purported failure—are severely handicapped by the dearth of hard information about Arab responses, but some anecdotal evidence has helped in judging how these ads were received.

That the Beers campaigns did not adequately respond to target audiences is evident in two ways: the campaigns both addressed subjects their audiences found irrelevant and employed methods and messengers their audiences did not find credible. Newly published survey data from several sources shows that Muslim audiences’ most deeply felt concerns about the U.S. in recent years surround its foreign policy, and demonstrates that the same people who despise the U.S. for its wars admire some of the values it espouses. Pew Research Center data from 2003 shows that chief Muslim concerns about America then
were worry about becoming military targets, belief that the U.S. seeks to control Middle Eastern oil and dominate the world, and antagonism toward the U.S. stance on Israel and its invasion of Iraq (“Trends 2005” 109, 110). Yet according to Zogby International, Muslim audiences who disapproved of U.S. policy approved of its culture, technology, and education (GAO 8). The Pew Global Attitudes Survey also emphasized that even as faith in American intentions, government, and respectability were falling, people in Muslim countries continued to place a high value on democracy (“Trends 2005” 109).

Given the serious alarm with which Arab audiences then confronted U.S. foreign policy, Beers’ ad campaigns, which focused on abstract values, were seen by influential Arabs as glossing too lightly over substantive controversial issues. Responses to specific programs have not been adequately measured, but anecdotal evidence shows that some programs were out of touch with Arab realities. For instance, many of TV al–Hurrah’s programs are called “uninteresting” or “bizarrely out of tune with Arab concerns and interests” (Lynch 102). These and other responses in the Arab media demonstrate that the Beers campaigns failed to address key Muslim concerns, and came off as insensitive or arrogant in the process—an unintended message that resulted from ignorance of crucial audience views.

The Beers campaigns’ failure to incorporate credible messengers was also symptomatic of a weak understanding of and response to their target audiences. Aside from the skepticism that unavoidably greeted ads produced by the U.S. government, certain aspects of the ways the programs were designed damaged their credibility in Arab countries. The TV station al–Hurrah, run by the U.S. government, was viewed as highly biased because of the resemblance of its over–friendly coverage of America to the self–praising coverage put out by distrusted local government–run stations (Lynch 105). Its credibility was also undermined by the fact that its intended audiences tend to find face–to–face dialogue a more appropriate means to communicate on serious issues (Johnson 1). Successful public diplomacy campaigns must pay careful attention to their target nations’ ideas of credible messengers. When Australia tried to market itself as a destination for business travel in China, it employed “leading Asian business personalities” to speak in its commercials (Business Asia 1). In the current situation, in which the consensus among public diplomacy experts is that the U.S. government is not a “credible messenger” to Muslim audiences, non–governmental agents may be employed to carry the U.S. message (Allison 1). Successfully coordinated NGOs, businesses, charities, cultural icons, and universities can serve as more believable envoys of U.S. public diplomacy and, depending on their help, would demonstrate closer adherence to branding principles as well as greater interest in participating in dialogue with target audiences.

Considering Beers’ continual emphasis on communicating effectively with target audiences in her speeches, it may seem confusing that the campaigns she designed seem unresponsive to Muslim audiences’ concerns. Yet she and her team frequently complained that they were not getting access to needed information about foreign public opinion (Tiedeman 51). Indeed, the failure of the Beers campaigns to understand their target audiences is symptomatic of how U.S. public diplomacy is hurt by its lack of emphasis on audience research. In 2003, the Department of State’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research spent about $3.5 million on overseas opinion research, an amount that finances about two surveys per country per year (GAO 22). By contrast, private companies within the United States spend approximately $6 billion on marketing research each year to understand the target audiences for their own branding messages (Peterson 1). In addition
Program in Writing and Rhetoric

to underfunding research on foreign public opinion, the State Department often fails to ensure that the data that is calculated is received by the foreign affairs officers who need it (GAO 23). Drastically increased funding for research on foreign public opinion is necessary if the U.S. is to mount successful public diplomacy because the government must understand how messages will be understood in the cultural contexts of audiences. Yet messages must also align with the product they intend to sell—with the image the United States wishes to project.

3) Fit the Message to the Product

Of course, even the best advertising cannot sell an unpopular product; a communications strategy will not work if it cuts against the grain of policy.

– Joseph Nye (1)

Given widespread assumptions about the supposed move from policy to image inherent in nation branding, it is ironic that nation-branding proponents are among those most vocally supportive of aligning messages with policies (Risen 1). Nation-branding experts stress that any new campaign must “respond to stereotypes already in circulation” (Risen 1). Then, once a new image has begun to be created, “Madison Avenue advises delivering ‘this message consistently in word and deed’” (MacKinnon 1). This concept of fitting the message to the product has two principal applications to U.S. public diplomacy: first, the U.S. Middle Eastern nation-branding efforts would benefit from matching public diplomacy techniques to their intended messages; and second, well-publicized policy changes should sometimes accompany U.S. image-changing efforts.

Marrying method to message, a favorite axiom of marketers, can be productively applied to the creation of a new U.S. image in the Muslim world by employing programs that demonstrate, rather than merely articulate, U.S. commitment to democracy and engagement. America has a historical example in the early Arabic Voice of America radio station. In aiming to be “a balanced and comprehensive projection of American thought and institutions,” the program invited speakers with some well-known anti-U.S. leanings to debate ideas and included question-and-answer sessions about the United States in its regular programming (Heil 52). These decisions embodied U.S. values of democracy and engagement, respectively, in contrast to current programming that shuns engagement in favor of broadcasting U.S. viewpoints. In the case of the Beers-initiated TV al-Hurrah, Marc Lynch of the non-government Public Diplomacy Council argues that to demonstrate democracy and engagement, the station should “broadcast hard-hitting programming about the missing Iraqi WMDs, about Bush’s domestic political problems, and about American foreign policy” (108). Such a shift would resonate with audiences who find the current programming imitates “the official media of a totalitarian state” (Lynch 106). But the union of message and product goes beyond making messengers embody the target image, and demands real coincidence between U.S. messages and U.S. policies. “Shared Values” campaigns showing Muslims enjoying their lives in America clashed with media reports of anti-Muslim violence following September 11th. In other words, “talking about freedom and democracy won’t get us very far if those efforts are competing with Abu Ghraib and the Patriot Act” (Risen 1).

In a broader sense, however, like the other marketing principles discussed, fitting the message to the product could be applied to U.S. public diplomacy outside of the Beers initiatives in order to make U.S. nation branding more credible. If the U.S.
to communicate that it is interested in cultural dialogue, it could improve its numbers of foreign language speakers in government. At present, 21 percent of the officers posted overseas in positions that require language ability have not attained the needed proficiency (GAO 9). Such statistics communicate the U.S.’s level of interest in other cultures, suggesting arrogant assurance that interlocutors will speak English or unwillingness to learn local languages. If the U.S. wishes to promote itself as “a nation of personal freedom, risk–taking, and cultural tolerance,” it could market that brand image by “expanding market–friendly foreign aid programs” (Risen 1). Chinese public diplomacy met with success in Asia partly through its successful marriage of message and policy, at times supporting radical regimes with no other motive than to make its communications more credible (Wang 28). If the U.S. is to meet with similar approval in Muslim nations and worldwide, its policies must mirror its intended image.

4) Measure Success and Reevaluate Approaches Based on Results

Like branded products, branded states depend on trust and customer satisfaction.

– Peter van Ham (“War, Lies” 1)

Precious little research actually documented the effects of the Beers initiatives on their target audiences. Although Beers compiled a short summary of media responses to “Shared Values,” most of the audience research that was conducted was undertaken by private entities outside immediate government control. Keith Reinhard, an advertising executive and head of Business for Diplomatic Action, a group that prepares U.S. businessmen to behave properly abroad, surveyed people on the streets of Egypt and Jordan regarding the State Department’s Arabic Hi magazine (Reinhard 10). The interviews gave him quotations as evidence that the magazine was resented as propaganda (Reinhard 10). But the surveys gave no idea of numbers, or of the responses of different age and gender demographic groups. Two SMU professors systematically studied the effects of the “Shared Values” spots on Regents College international students, but only six of those studied students were among the targeted Muslim audience (Kendrick 10). The only widely publicized and organized studies of the results of a Beers initiative were conducted by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which receives government funding, but, tellingly, not government direction. BBG surveys estimated the size of the audiences of ongoing programs Radio Sawa and TV al–Hurrah. Yet while these studies demonstrate that the radio and TV stations are successfully achieving a share of the market for their target audiences, the surveys have not moved beyond questions about the “reliability” of the stations’ news to those of, for instance, how targeted audiences interpret the programs (Pattiz 87, 88). Some Arabic sources have reported that listeners tune in to Radio Sawa’s music, but tune out the station’s news, a serious blow to a program that claims to attract youth to American news through pop music (Riordan 84). Yet more troubling than the superficiality of “consumer attitudes” toward ongoing programs is the mere fact that only ongoing programs have been studied. Unsuccessful or terminated public diplomacy efforts may afford key insights into how U.S. public diplomacy must be conducted in the future, and in–depth assessments of audience responses to “Shared Values” and “Muslim Life in America” must be conducted in order to aid in formulating new approaches.

Recent initiatives have not been uniquely underanalyzed, but rather are emblematic of a government structure that de–emphasizes assessment of success. Current State Department measures for the overall effectiveness of its public diplomacy are limited to counting hits on its local and national web sites, counting the number of times the
U.S. is mentioned in countries’ media, and surveying participants in foreign exchange programs about their experiences (GAO 3). As the GAO review found, these measures are fundamentally flawed because they provide little quantifiable information about the character of target audiences’ responses to U.S. public diplomacy. Counting web site hits does not even involve using cookies to measure the demographics of the site’s users, as some advocate (Riordan 183). Tracking mentions of the U.S. in foreign media is not an adequate measure for the success of U.S. public diplomacy, as it leaves aside assessing the tone of the article and the way the publication is viewed in its home country. Similarly, as the GAO has acknowledged, information about how exchange students viewed their experiences “does not demonstrate progress toward the more fundamental objective of achieving changes in understanding and attitudes about the United States” (GAO 4). This audience is not only highly selective, but also is not the target of public diplomacy efforts, which are directed at entire foreign publics in their home nations. If real understanding of the results of U.S. public diplomacy is to be achieved, more comprehensive measures of success must be introduced in the State Department.

The Need for Uncle Sam in Nation Branding

Some scholars and media critics cite recent U.S. and British failures in the realm of public diplomacy as emblems of the impossibility of conducting effective branding at the national level, arguing that large, influential countries are incapable of presenting the kind of single coherent message required for successful public diplomacy (Risen 1). It is true that some relatively smaller nations like the Maldives, Kuwait, and Singapore can more easily and precisely articulate their images because of the sheer paucity of available information on their characters. And even countries in the middle tier of economic and military power, like Norway and Canada, have an advantage over countries of greater size and prominence in that they can focus their resources on promoting one or two key appealing areas of their policy or culture to the world—conducting what is known as “niche” diplomacy (Henrikson 67). But successful efforts by China and Australia at altering international perceptions of their “nation brands” contradict the assumption that size precludes effectiveness (Business Asia 1).

Other scholars have disputed the U.S. government’s ability to articulate a national image on the grounds that its structure impedes its success. Arguing that bureaucracy can stifle innovation and impede rapid progress, while a prominent government role in information programs invites foreign skepticism, they find that private organizations ought to take the lead in nation branding (GAO 26). But research has shown that some corporations have achieved greater market shares by distancing themselves from an unfavorably viewed home nation (Kitchen 202). Some turn to localization as a means to appeal to targeted groups abroad. An article in the influential marketing publication Brandweek urged businesses to adopt the example of CNN, which has deliberately dissociated its local branches from America through native-language programming and associations (Colberg 22). Others may even play to unfavorable foreign perceptions of their home audiences. Budweiser has met with great success in England with ads depicting American men as “crass and stupid” (Selling the Flag 1). Still other associations of private companies do not have sufficient funding for wide-ranging image-changing activity (Luley 8). While collaboration with NGOs is an inevitable and indispensable part of nation branding, the federal government is one of few agents that possess both the means and the motive to construct U.S. messages and direct their propagation.
While acknowledging the necessity of government’s role in public diplomacy, still other scholars question the effectiveness of nation branding. Without policy changes, they argue, public diplomacy efforts will make no significant difference in how America is perceived abroad. It is true that an entirely aggressive policy may never be justified in foreign eyes through public diplomacy. But it is also true that, in this specific instance, United States policy has not been uniformly anti–Muslim, as is popularly believed in the Arab world. Public diplomacy works to amplify awareness of those policies that do favor targeted populations in ways that policy alone might never accomplish. Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. assistance in the world, but in 2003, U.S. embassy officers in Egypt and Morocco found that only a small percentage of the native populations were aware of extensive U.S. aid to their countries (GAO 26). The case of Egypt reveals that without coordinated publicity, aid–related U.S. policies, like other policies favorable to nations targeted by American public diplomacy, may not receive foreign attention. Relying purely on policy to communicate U.S. goals would thus mean neglecting to ensure audience awareness of favorable policies as well as audience understanding of the goals of unfavorable ones.

Dialogue, Nation Branding, and the New Public Diplomacy

Though their relation to national marketing is new, these four ideal principles of international image making (creating a single message, understanding target audiences, fitting the message to the product, and measuring success) reflect attitudes that have been growing with the development of U.S. public diplomacy. The trend from the birth of U.S. public diplomacy in the First World War to its peak toward the end of the Cold War has been increased dependence on two–way channels of communication, moving away from the dissemination of wartime propaganda to focus on cultural exchanges and interactive communications (Critchlow 83). Nearly every modern–day commentator, no matter what his or her position on the Beers campaigns in the Muslim world, has emphasized the urgent need for a public diplomacy based on dialogue. To foreign public relations professionals, including the newly non–government–affiliated Charlotte Beers, this means reactivating the old libraries, information centers, and English–learning opportunities that were hallmarks of U.S. public diplomacy in the past (O’Regan 1). To others, this means increased collaboration with local foreign media and NGOs to build working relationships that allow the U.S. to reach foreign audiences through trusted channels. In one such promising initiative, the State Department joined with Egyptian TV and government to air stories about local USAID projects in 2003 (GAO 12). To advertising exec Keith Reinhard, a focus on increased engagement means that nation branding must position the U.S. in investment “as the facilitator, not the patron”; in charity, “as the partner and not the philanthropist”; and in business, “as the courier of progress, not the preacher of Westernization” (Reinhard 1). While further study will need to determine the efficacy of public diplomacy through statistical analysis of audience responses, it remains clear that if public diplomacy is a national priority, depth and breadth of message must be achieved through many kinds of collaboration in many areas of the world. And a collaborative, democratic image can be enhanced by appropriate application of the principles, rather than the language, of nation branding, which encourage understanding of foreign audiences and effective, truly persuasive communicative interaction with them.
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Works Consulted


Program in Writing and Rhetoric

SPRING 2006 HONORABLE MENTION

Christine M. Chung

Instructor’s Foreword

Christine Chung’s essay ‘‘Hello Kitty Noodles’ and Ramen Culture in the 21st Century” combines heartfelt musings with an amazing array of research material on ramen culture. She entered my PWR 1 “Politics of Food: A Transnational Tasting Menu” with some trepidation because she feared that writing in PWR might squelch her creative juices. However, Christine persevered with her writing assignments in PWR and found ways to push past her discomfort with the “idea of research writing,” and she discovered new writing tools that made her style both vivid and compelling. I was so excited by her work because the strength of her writing voice grew with each draft of her essay. When we met for our conferences, Christine came in with a draft, several questions and a suspicious look, but every time she left with renewed enthusiasm about her writing project. During our discussions she pushed her thinking as well as her writing and research strategies in several ways. The topic of “ramen” was so new to the area of food studies that she had to invent a methodology to approach her topic. Early on we discussed looking at it from both a Western and Eastern perspective, and while this offered a challenge and made more work for her, she realized that doing so would not only strengthen her argument but would control the focus of her paper. Her argument dispels the myth that Americans invented “fast food.” She claims that ramen took hold in Japanese culture for several economic as well as political reasons. Christine writes, “This major success can only be fully appreciated upon an exploration into Japanese and American fast food culture, where it is discovered that fast food in Japan, to the shock of many, began long before a pair of golden arches found its way over to Asia.”

Yet, it was when she began to weave in her personal narrative with the larger historical and cultural claims that the essay came to life. “Hello Kitty Noodles’ and Ramen Culture in the 21st Century” captures the vivid history of ramen and makes a strong claim about its resonance on both sides of the Pacific as well as its established place in today’s global food market. Christine draws in her reader with compelling material, and she has developed a style that might best be described as “creative non-fiction” because of the biographical elements in her essay. Because her topic is unconventional, she is able to approach it with a fresh perspective. This “noodle narrative” explains how despite Western influence and trends it was not the “spontaneous creation of one single food item [that] was guilty for the modernization of Asian cuisine, Japan endured its own unique circumstances independent of any modern acts of Western culinary colonization.” Christine’s essay displays well-researched claims, but most importantly it also captures the joy she has for her topic, a feeling that comes through for the reader in every line.

Cheryl Greene
“Hello Kitty Noodles” and Ramen Culture in the 21st Century

Christine M. Chung

Ramen entered my life under the nickname “Hello Kitty noodles,” an alias formed not only from my mother’s own secret inside joke but from convenience as well, since “ramen” is pronounced *lah–myun* in Korean, the phonetics of which are difficult for younger tongues to pronounce. She would often carve out time to make the journey from our home to a small restaurant in downtown Los Angeles, where, hidden beneath the shadows of skyscrapers and tucked away behind an avenue of warehouses, Hana–Ichimonme lay waiting to satiate our craving for ramen. I would wait in anticipation for weeks until that one day, with tired eyes and a forced smile, my mother would propose a daytrip to Little Tokyo. I was a model child until then, believing that any misdeed on my part would prevent my opportunity to eat Hello Kitty noodles in some weird karmic fate. This pattern quickly led me to deify each ramen experience, and as I did so, every ribbon of noodle and every slurp of soup became morsels of some fabulous heaven. As an ending applause to each lunch, my mother and I would always pay a quick visit to the Sanrio store for Hello Kitty toys and stationery.

It was only later in my life that I learned that ramen offered my mother the same relief as it offered me. She was just barely holding on to her crumbling marriage at the time, so every journey to Little Tokyo was not only an escape to gustatory heaven, but an escape from the spousal abuse she experienced almost daily. It was only after her divorce when we were able to revisit our familiar friend again, but this time under much different circumstances. Since our new living situation made the voyage to Little Tokyo nearly impossible, my mother would rely upon boxed Sapporo Ichiban ramen noodles to recreate a miniature Hana–Ichimonme within our tiny apartment where, much to my mother’s delight, I overlooked the difference and slurped away as voraciously as before. The consistency of my love for ramen was special indeed—so special that even today, it is through ramen that I, my mother, and now my brother all exchange our silent “I love yous” with a brief, knowing glance over the steam that spirals upward from our bowls of pure delight.

Now that I am in college, my ramen experience has changed yet again. It is now my partner in academic crime (procrastination)—I often spend my nights warming my hands against a Styrofoam cup of instant ramen, looking deeply into the broth to find, much to my sleep–deprived surprise, pieces of noodles, carrots, and cabbage floating to form the words “*MUST WRITE IHUM PAPER*.” And now, instead of the customary post–lunch trip to the Hello Kitty store, I end each of my ramen experiences by probing deeply into the meaning it has held within my own life. What about ramen has allowed it to tag along with me (and the millions of other ramen enthusiasts) through thick and thin? My personal conjecture, as I will explain, is that ramen’s culinary flexibility allowed it a greater
degree of cultural elasticity, and this ability to satisfy the palates of any country’s people has expectedly granted the industry a large amount of political clout in the growing arena of food politics.

My upbringing left me at the cusp of both the Korean and American cultures, and my varying socioeconomic statuses allowed me to indulge in both authentic ramen and the partially hydrogenated–oiled joys of instant noodles. It is with these tools that I now explore the power of ramen culture with both an Asian sensitivity for tradition and an analytical Western edge.

Ramen, the Early Years

Ramen has established itself as the ubiquitous symbol of the on-the-go, urban meal, which is a feat made more notable when considering it has become a dominant food product in both Asia and the United States. In the endeavor to discover what has made this cultural phenomenon possible, an analysis of ramen’s rich South Asian roots and an exploration into fast food culture is necessary. A combination of these two analyses will confirm how ramen’s accessibility and ease of preparation has allowed it to embody the uncomplicated togetherness of American cuisine. All this will underscore the fact that, despite the Food and Drug Administration’s recent efforts to reduce the production of foods with high sodium levels, and even amidst the public’s fear of MSG and other instant food additives, ramen culture has found a comfortable niche in American culinary culture and will stick around for quite some time.

Most American ramen lovers can confidently point to Japan as the home country of authentic ramen, but when asked to recount the history between the time of its creation and its cultural inception into the United States, only mumbled conjectures can be made. This is not necessarily a bad thing—in many ways it is this ambiguity about the history of ramen that has allowed it to establish a new footing in the Western world independent of its Eastern history.

In its earliest form, ramen was originally a Chinese dish which migrated to Japan when the two respective countries opened ports for trade in 1872. However, ramen held its proverbial coming–out party after China’s defeat in the Sino–Japanese War (1894–1895), when a wave of postwar crisis washed thousands of impoverished Chinese students onto Japan’s shores. Chinese noodle shops and other various outdoor stalls blossomed quickly in order to cater to the needs of Japan’s new (albeit unwanted) immigrants. And it is truly a miracle (or merely a fated repercussion of war) that an originally Chinese dish integrated relatively seamlessly into the Japanese lineup of foods, especially when considering the elitist nature of Japanese cuisine.

The thoughtful presentation and immaculate preparation that goes into each dish has inspired author after author to deliver multi–edition cookbooks and cultural case studies about what makes Japanese cuisine tick. The devotion behind these endeavors is fueled by a field of “believers”—individuals who are devoted to Japanese culinary culture passionately enough to argue for its superiority over American meals:

Whoever said Japanese cuisine was all presentation and no food was, of course, quite wrong, but one can at the same time understand how such a statement came to be made, particularly if one comes from a country where it is simply enough that food looks decent and tastes all right. (Richie 10)
In a somewhat anti-Western manner, Richie argues that the simplicity and detailed preparation of each Japanese sushi roll, noodle, and soup dish are a sort of argument for its gustatory success, claiming that “the presentational ethos is so much a part of the Japanese cuisine [that it] continues right into the mouth” (Richie 10). Japanese dishes, in short, find pride in being both pleasing to the eye and pleasing to the mouth, and it is this apparent culinary elitism that makes ramen’s success in Japan even more notable. Ramen is characteristically oily and, depending on the region of Japan, it is also served with a potpourri of messy add-ins (Appendix A). It is a wonder that such a bourgeois food item could have woven itself so seamlessly into such a sterile food culture.

One of the many explanations for this unlikely transition is provided in Alice Yen Ho’s *At the Southeast Asian Table*. Ho discusses the idea that while international food trade has allowed dozens of different Asian food items to melt into a gigantic amalgam of similar tastes, different cultures continue to share similarities that exist outside of geographical closeness—the use of rice, the ability to cultivate ingredients in home gardens, and local open-air markets, to name a few. Multiple intersections existed between China and Japan both before and during the Sino-Japanese War, so it seems that the bonding force of WWII acted as the final bridge to allow ramen to travel quickly from one country to another.

Japan’s deafening defeat in WWII led to a food shortage that forced many citizens to eat anything and everything, and this change in circumstance gave birth to an underground culture of black market food stalls which sold Chinese-style soup noodles for cheap. This underground movement, like the George Foreman grill phenomenon today, pulsed loudly enough and for a long enough period of time to earn a recognized niche in the dominant culture. The need for food after the war allowed the aroma of authentic, street vendor ramen to overstep virtually all boundaries of economic class (as ramen at that time was associated with the poorer and middle class regions of Japan). And after thinning the original Chinese *lo mein* noodles and adding more soy flavor to the broth, ramen eventually found its seat in the lineup of traditional Japanese cuisine which both the working and upper classes enjoyed indiscriminately. Ramen culture has continued to grow and burgeon since, and the phenomenon has grown large enough to have its participants follow an unspoken rule of tips and tricks (a modern example would be In-N-Out’s “secret menu,” where customers can order veggie burgers, grilled cheese sandwiches, and well-done fries). According to Ed Jacob’s “Ramen Nation,” general rules regarding “the perfect ramen shop” are to avoid:

1. Large ramen shops, as small ones serve smaller, more carefully prepared quantities;
2. Ramen shops with young cooks, as quality ramen *oyaji* (ramen shop proprietors) apprentice for years and are more likely to be old men; and
3. Fun, sociable ramen *oyaji*, as standoffish *oyaji* are probably more concentrated on the quality of their dish rather than generating a tip-inducing relationship with their customers.

But as popular as ramen may have been, its success was merely like that of a B movie compared to the level of stardom it gained when the instant noodle market made its debut into the growing instant food market.
Ramen, the Poster Boy of Asian Fast Food Culture

The man now known as “the father of instant ramen,” Momofuku Ando, created an equation truly deserving of the characteristic light bulb over his head if he and the later International Ramen Manufacturer’s Association were ever parodied by a cartoon series:

- America’s postwar wheat flour surplus
- Japan’s growing average income level
- + Japan’s nostalgia for black market Chinese noodles

Chikin Ramen, the first brand of instant noodles… ever. The noodles were an inevitable hit from the economist’s perspective, since Ando released his product in 1958 when Japan’s average income was comfy enough to pay for “the convenience and small luxury of not having to cook [every] meal from scratch” (Ayao 73). This major success can only be fully appreciated upon an exploration into Japanese and American fast food culture, where it is discovered that fast food in Japan, to the shock of many, began long before a pair of golden arches found its way over to Asia.

The Pacific War (1941–1945) forced Japan to eat just enough to survive. Afterwards, however, the country experienced a postwar economic boost which came with a surplus of food at its tail, a change that caused the average Japanese citizen’s consumption of food to increase gram–by–gram until the early 1960s. The government foresaw potential health risks with Japan’s sudden dietary change and encouraged consumers to decrease their consumption of animal fats. Japan slowly returned to its original low–fat, high–vegetable diet, but the thousands of fast food restaurants that were created to cater to Japan’s brief overeating fetish stayed around, a consequence that perpetuated the effect fast food would have on Japan years after older generations returned to their original vegetable–centered diets. And these fast food vendors were not strictly of the corporate franchise kind, either. In “Eating is a Solitary Pastime,” Murakami Motoko argues that neither instant ramen noodles nor McDonald’s migration from the U.S. to Asia has successfully individualized the once intensely family–oriented meal in Japan. A unique combination of Japan’s surplus of food, an increased average income, and the creation of instant ramen converged to establish a unique environment more conducive to the creation of “other processed foods, such as instant coffee and granulated fish bouillon (dashi no moto), [which] began to invade kitchens across the country” (Motoko 207). Motoko also goes on to argue that this drift away from traditional eating habits actually began in the early 1900s as well, before instant ramen even came into the picture. Though many would like to believe that the spontaneous creation of one single food item was guilty for the modernization of Asian cuisine, Japan endured its own unique circumstances independent of any modern acts of Western culinary colonization.

Unlike most studies which pin McDonald’s as the devil of Westernization in Asia, John Traphagan, like Motoko, explains that fast food culture was indeed long embedded into Japan’s history, and that McDonald’s later success in Japan was not because of the company’s push to exploit the Asian market, but because of Japan’s already fast food–oriented society. Japanese fast food began not with McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken, but with street vendors selling “steamed sweet potatoes, slices of chicken served on a skewer, roasted sweet corn on the cob, […] the boxed lunches bought at train stations or from vendors walking through the aisles of the trains,” and Yoshinoya, which has actually existed since 1899. This provides valuable insight into why the culture and lifestyle of Japan was so conducive to ramen and instant noodles in the first place.
Transnational food sharing is not the product of one country taking over another and imposing its culinary imperialism onto its victim nation, but a mutual exchange that comes from the similarities that exist between the East and West. In short, America was not a devil nation that planted the seed of fast food into the Asian continent. Both East and West experienced the birth of fast food culture for reasons beyond the magical creation of one restaurant or one food trend. Ramen is a sort of joint custody child of both Asia and the U.S., and each parent had to work considerably to ensure the success of ramen within its respective food market.

Ramen, the Chameleon

The metamorphosis from Momofuku Ando’s Chikin Ramen to Nissin Food’s Cup Noodle is an amazing one to explore. Instant ramen was originally created to mimic the soybean–flavored Japanese original, but when ramen traipsed into the States in the early 1960s (after Ando’s introduction of Chikin Ramen to Japan in 1958), America originally had a lukewarm reception to the import. Like the comparable mystique surrounding fusion foods today, “ethnic foods,” be it a simple visit to a local Chinese restaurant or a quick visit to a sushi bar, were a relatively risqué experience in the early 1960s, and because of each dish’s unfamiliar spices and textures, Asian foods in particular were considered especially exotic. When placing this into consideration, it is no wonder why the induction of instant ramen into the U.S. seemed to confuse American consumers at first. The idea that an “ethnic dish” could be made into fast food form was a hybrid apparently too futuristic for its time—“ethnic foods” in the early 1960s belonged strictly in an era where adventurous diners had to search to seek it, and the fact that these foods were now available at the neighborhood supermarket was just too strange. Compare this to the attitude the U.S. possesses now. Thanks mostly to the inception of Chinese fast food restaurants with the familiar one–, two– or three–item combination meal, the ethnic dining experience is not nearly as adventurous and rare as it was in years past. This quick desensitization of the ethnic eating experience is also the result of the efforts of various Asian food companies to create tastes that Americans were familiar with already. This explains why instant ramen was only successful once the dust had settled and, alas, when Nissin Foods began introducing flavors that catered to American palates.

The highest grossing instant noodle brand in America is Nissin Food’s Cup Noodle, which is now available in fifteen different flavors including Cheddar, Creamy Chicken, Shrimp Picante, and Spicy Chile Chicken (“Cup Noodles Variety”). In the 1960s, when Nissin Foods first detected America’s somewhat ambivalent reception of Cup Noodles, the company decided to create beef– and chicken–flavored versions of their original soy bean broth found in Japan. This move brought instant ramen into a more familiar, Americanized light that brought a sense of comfort to the then–conservative American tongue. Beef– and chicken–flavored instant ramen are a compromise between American tastes and an originally Asian concept, and though this move may appear overly fawning and obsequious on Nissin Food’s part to Asian food purists, tailoring a food product to match a certain culture is a process very familiar to ramen history.

A Case Study in Cultural Adaptation—Nongshim

In an article presented in the International Studies of Management & Organization, Suck-Chul Yoon provides a comprehensive case study into the marketing strategies that Nongshim, a Korean food brand, used to overcome the difficulties it faced when it first
introduced its cup noodle version to South Korea. The gargantuan success of Momofuku Ando’s Chikin Ramen in Japan not only inducted ramen into an unofficial culinary hall of fame, but also left neighboring Asian countries hopeful to procure the same measure of success. With this goal in mind, Nongshim released its own Chikin Ramen spin–off with the expectation of immediate applause. However, South Koreans paid a very unwelcome greeting to the new product, one that dealt an enormous financial blow to the budding brand. The failure almost completely toppled the Korean franchise, but in a move very much in line with the old “seven down, eight up” maxim Koreans have adopted since the country’s violent separation from Japan, Nongshim decided to try again after analyzing their product’s unsuccessful reception from a cultural perspective.

To South Koreans, the packaging itself was not quite right. The cup was “too Japanese”—it was much too narrow and handheld for a culture whose traditional sabal bowl is much larger and wider. Koreans eat with their bowls strictly on the table, while both Chinese and Japanese table manners allow bowls to be handheld. With this in mind, Nongshim decided to change the Styrofoam cup from the narrower Japanese version to a wider, more sabal–esque shape. Nongshim also realized that the majority of its small profits actually came during the snowy winter months, when Korean consumers were more likely to stay at home to cook rather than eat out. This made cup noodles a “cuddly” food—a meal made most delicious when Koreans could stay inside, warm their hands on the Styrofoam, and stick their faces in the steam (recall that Ando’s Chikin Ramen was also a “cuddly” food, as it allowed Japan to comfortably reminisce about the black market Chinese lo mein noodles of yesteryear). Nongshim understood that this would only work against the product’s success, so the company decided to change the brand’s advertisements to foster an “outdoorsy,” on–the–go personality to instant ramen, an idea that was so new and effective that South Koreans began to consider the product as separate from the Japanese cognate. Nongshim’s sensitivity to the cultural underpinnings of ramen eventually allowed cup noodles to find a unique place in Korean culture, and ramen in general has been an extremely successful food item ever since.

Another Case Study in Cultural Adaptation—Nissin Foods

Since ramen seems to have waltzed rather fluidly into Japanese culture, and since the story involving the Korean Nongshim brand seems like a fairy tale success in retrospect, it is easy to believe that little was needed to be done on America’s part to carve out a place for ramen in the U.S. However, a number of similarities exist between Japan’s and Korea’s efforts and Nissin Foods’ Cup Noodle brand in America. The newest flavors of Cup Noodle, Shrimp Picante and Spicy Chile Chicken are obviously non–Asian flavors as the words “Picante” and “Chile” are more evocative of Hispanic foods. The largest consumers of instant ramen within America continue to be the lower and middle classes, and because of the large influx of immigrants from Mexico and Latin America, a growing percentage of this socioeconomic class is comprised of people who assimilate themselves to “Chile Chicken” and anything “picante.” In this sense, Nissin Foods took their cultural adaptation one step further to cater to a very specific ethnic group within their American consumers. No matter how obvious these efforts at assimilation may have been, it was Nissin Food’s responsibility to present its market base with a product they were comfortable with having within their food pantries. And these efforts must have been effective in keeping and retaining their customers, since Nissin Foods continues to be the highest grossing instant ramen company in America.
In this sense, both Nissin Foods and Nongshim were pioneers in cultural adaptation. Many may argue that the “Americanization” of ramen detracts from its original cultural uniqueness, but when taking into account the fact that authentic ramen street vendors have still managed to hold their posts and retain a significant loyal consumer base even after the introduction of McDonald’s and other American fast food restaurants in Japan, not much really could have been done to blemish the authenticity of Asian cuisine. The only roadblock that has not been examined is the obvious health risk associated with a high–sodium, high–instant food diet. And it will be revealed that even hesitations by the American health community were quickly overcome and did not deter ramen’s continued assimilation into American culture.

Ramen, the Pariah

In February 2005, a lawsuit was filed against the Food and Drug Administration for not following through on a twenty–year–old promise to decrease the average adult’s daily consumption of salt. Sodium consumption has increased steadily over the past three decades, and medical resources have continually pointed the accusatory finger at this unhealthy increase as a partial explanation for the growth of heart–related diseases and incidences of hypertension in recent American history. The 2005 dietary guidelines recommend a maximum of 2300 mg of salt a day (equivalent to one teaspoon), but the Center for Science in the Public Interest (a watchdog group in support of the lawsuit against the FDA) asserts that the average American consumes almost two times as much. And ramen is infamous for its high levels of sodium since an average bowl, broth and all, contains about half the level of sodium an average American adult needs daily.

When analyzed within the context of America’s recent infatuation with lower–cholesterol and low–carbohydrate foods, this lawsuit should in theory have made ramen into a sort of culinary pariah. Instead, ramen’s popularity continued to flourish as vigorously as it did before. Though it is obvious that its place as an American staple food was not ensured by its acceptance into the world of health, the personal connection American consumers have with instant ramen simply came long before health criticisms arose. And by then America’s attachment to ramen was so established that regardless of the health issues raised against it, ramen was able to withstand the opposition and continue to grow in popularity. The existence of this budding emotional relationship Americans have with ramen is best demonstrated by the underground growth of ramen–inspired art and literature.

Ramen, the Muse

Andrew Mira, a seventeen–year–old student at the California College of the Arts (CCA), created a project that was a collaboration of different student submissions which used dried ramen with different artistic media. Mira’s ultimate desire was to illustrate ramen as a sort of indiscriminating cultural magnet for people of different ethnicities. While using Mira’s project as an argument for the emotional background of ramen culture, the article’s anonymous author discusses the idea that even though ramen is often seen as a symbol of poverty or a “punishment food” (as many in lesser circumstances cannot afford anything else), ramen is also a source of comfort as well. There are many people (including yours truly) who will consciously choose instant ramen over any other restaurant opportunity and cup noodles “over that can of Wolfgang Puck Basil and Tomato Soup.” Unlike many articles which are mostly critical of ramen’s association with the nation’s
poorer, less classy crowd, the anonymous author takes a minority view and explores the nostalgia and sentimentality behind ramen and how it extends beyond the boundaries of socioeconomic class. Because, after all, as the fourth–leading world consumer of instant ramen (“Outline of the International Ramen Manufacturers Association”), America could not have possibly been able to consume more instant ramen than many other leading Asian countries if ramen’s convenience were the only reason for its popularity.

Another example of ramen culture’s influence in art is the Japanese film *Tampopo*. The film takes place in Tokyo and follows the life of a young widowed noodle restaurant owner and a hedonistic truck driver who, together, attempt to create the ideal bowl of ramen while exploring the intricate joys of cuisine. The film also serves as an umbrella for a number of anecdotal “stories about the importance of food, ranging from a gangster who mixes hot sex with food to an old lady terrorizing a shopkeeper by the compulsive squeezing of his wares” (*Tampopo*). Since the film’s production was led by a Japanese director as a response to the importance of ramen within his own country, the movie provides an Eastern standpoint without the über–contrite refrain of “ramen = bad dietary choice” ever so prevalent in Western literature today. Ramen has created such a strong connection with its Japanese consumers that it has inspired the creation of a leader in a now–prominent food film genre. Food films like *Chocolat* and *Supersize Me* are not movies simply about a certain food culture itself, but are also intuitive, careful visions of the connections between people and what they eat. This underscores the fact that food is not only a powerful movement in the development of the arts, but that ramen is continuing to hold a meaningful niche in modern culture through its various artistic media—a surefire indicator of its ability to exist in a manner beyond the mere purchase–and–consumption relationship.

Ramen’s pervasiveness in both American and Japanese culture is also reinforced by the fact that a large fraction of ramen–related literature consists of articles that discuss the sentimental underpinnings of the food product. The writer Sandra Mizumoto Posey claims that, “ramen isn’t just a bowl of soup, it’s a place. In the end it doesn’t matter whether the noodles were fresh or reconstituted. The result is the same; food is part of how we define ourselves and our sense of home” (Posey). As evidenced by ramen’s rich history in Japan and its growing popularity in the States, the meaning behind ramen culture will not be limited to one or two socioeconomic archetypes for long. In the States, we often gauge a food product’s power by how much political pull it has (think Yoplait’s use of pink, feminine packaging to benefit the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation). With this in mind, it is especially interesting to consider the International Ramen Manufacturers Association’s efforts towards natural disaster relief.

**Ramen, the Good Samaritan**

About 200,000 pieces of instant ramen were donated to tsunami relief efforts in the Indian Ocean, 50,000 were donated to Hurricane Katrina relief funds, and 100,000 were donated to earthquake victims in Pakistan. The International Ramen Manufacturer’s (IRMA) disaster relief efforts reveal how powerful a relatively newborn food product can be on the global political landscape. The fact that IRMA has enough monetary and political pull to help in world disaster relief illustrates how gigantic of an industry ramen has become, and how powerful food politics can be when multiple nations and cultures collaborate to benefit the same cause. Not only is ramen a product with multifaceted meanings for multiple socioeconomic groups, but as long as umbrella organizations like
the IRMA continue to consolidate the growing instant ramen industry, ramen culture will be one of the largest players in the food politics game in both Asia and America. The fact that it is about eighty cents a meal or less and that both rich and poor, disaster–stricken and quiet suburban areas of the U.S. all consume ramen and will continue to do so, will only increase ramen’s political pull exponentially in the years to come.

Now that times are better for my family, we pay homage to Hana–Ichimonme whenever we get the chance. The familiar wave of nostalgia never really overpowers us until it is accompanied with the harmonious aroma of fresh ramen and the split–second moment where, right before we pick up our chopsticks, we exchange our traditional unspoken glances across the table. The experience means the world to me now that I have journeyed from the heights of one socioeconomic class to the depths of another and have found ramen culture, in some way, shape or form, waiting for me at the other end. Though my brother was not born at the time when my mother and I first began eating “Hello Kitty noodles,” we are happy to include him into our old tradition. Because after all, ramen culture, like our tiny family unit, is big enough to accommodate any change and remain as wholesome and precious as it ever was.
Appendix A

REGIONAL RAMEN

Part of what makes ramen so special is the infinite varieties that it comes in. Every locality has its own unique flavor, and if you have a ramen shop and a desire to experiment, there’s always a chance that the new type of broth or topping that you invent will start a craze that sweeps the nation. Here are some of the most famous varieties:

**Hokkaido:**
- Asahikawa—Soy–flavored broth made with a seafood stock. Noodles have a low moisture content making them soft and easy to chew.
- Sapporo—The birthplace of *miso ramen*. Noodles have high moisture content, making them chewy, and are of medium thickness.
- Hakodate Ramen—Famous for its salt–flavored broth.

**Tohoku:**
- Sanno (Akita)—*Sanno ramen* is made with water from the famous *Izuruharabentenchi*, a famous pond, which is said to make their broth especially delicious. Soy broth and fairly thick, curly noodles.
- Yonezawa (Yamagata)—*Yonezawa ramen* takes a long time to make. The noodles are left to mature for about two or three days before they are boiled so they become very curly. Very soft, medium–size noodles.
- Kitakata (Fukushima)—Known for its extremely fat, curly noodles. Extremely strong, thick–tasting soy broth.

**Kanto:**
- Yokohama—Yokohama was the birthplace of ramen and there are dozens of shops around Chinatown. The noodles are extremely thick, and usually served in a *tonkotsu–soy* broth.
- Tokyo—Curly, medium sized noodles in a clear, soy broth.

**Chubu:**
- Hida–Takayama (Gifu)—Curly, thin noodles that are extremely soft because of their low moisture content. Soy broth made with tuna stock.

**Kansai:**
- Kyoto—Known for its soft, straight, medium–sized noodles.

**Shikoku:**
- Tokushima—Dark, thick–tasting yet sweet broth. Instead of *chashu*, they use *butabara* (stewed pork) and add a raw egg.

**Kyushu:**
- Hakata—Extremely thin, straight noodles. Because they don’t put many noodles in your bowl, it’s okay to ask for a refill. The noodles have the lowest moisture content in Japan, making them extremely soft. *Tonkotsu* flavored broth.
- Kumamoto—One of Japan’s most famous ramen areas. Noodles have low water content and are not as thin as in Hakata. Famous for its *tonkotsu* broth.
- Kagoshima—Noodles here have their roots in both Okinawa and Taiwan, so there are two varieties. The Okinawan style noodles are very thick, while the Taiwanese variety is very thin. *Tonkotsu* broth (Jacob, Ed. “Ramen Nation”).
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AUTUMN 2006 WINNER

Jessica Galant

Instructor’s Foreword

As readers, we often perceive what we read to be inevitable, effortless, and complete. As writers we have a very different sort of relationship to what we write, a relationship that is usually full of difficult choices and hard work. As a teacher, one has the pleasure of being a reader, while also having a window onto the process of writing and research, a process that is otherwise largely invisible. From this vantage point, I’d like to offer three observations about the process of research and writing that culminated in the essay you are about to read.

Jessica began with a topic that she had a personal connection to and that interested her deeply. This personal connection galvanized her research and even helped her secure some sources, but in no way did it close her mind to what she would find and ultimately argue.

At first, Jessica searched only for sources on her narrow topic—tableaux vivants. Later, she began to understand her topic more broadly, as a particular way to think through larger concerns, such as practices of realism, illusionism, absorption, and spectacle. This enabled Jessica to draw connections to P.T. Barnum’s hoaxes and The Matrix (1999).

Finally, from reading this essay, it will be clear that Jessica approached her research with energy and persistence. What may not be clear is that much of the strength of this essay is due to that which has been left out. Jessica produced a very thorough and long rough draft in which her own arguments were not particularly clear or prominent. I encouraged her to foreground her own argument and to think about what ideas, sentences, and even paragraphs she might be able to cut loose, despite the initial reluctance we all have as writers to cast aside our own prose. Jessica saw this process through admirably, and the result is a stronger, leaner essay that reads not as a chronicle of research findings, but as a sustained and focused exploration of her topic.

Mark Feldman
Keeping Tableaux Vivants Alive

Jessica Galant

The lights come up and the famous marble masterpiece of Italian sculptor Nicolò Salvi, Fontana di Trevi (the Trevi Fountain), comes to “life” on stage. With statues representing Abundance and Salubrity at his sides and tritons guiding his chariot below him, Neptune, the Greek god of the sea, tames the waters in a stunning recreation that looks almost indistinguishable from the real statue in Rome. The seemingly flawless reconstruction of the magnificence and intricacy of Salvi’s architecture is just one part of an even more tantalizing and captivating display; the nude sculptures are actually real, living people, painted and posed, frozen in their positions. Many audience members lean forward, engaged and mesmerized by the illusion, others shift uncomfortably in their seats wondering about the hidden mechanics that enable the living to appear dead and lifeless, and still others imagine themselves in Italy, throwing a penny into or drinking water from the fountain, which, according to myth, will guarantee them a safe return to Rome. The Trevi Fountain is one example of a tableau vivant, literally a “living picture,” in which live, motionless people recreate paintings, sculptures, and scenes from history and literature.

Since late medieval and early Renaissance Europe, tableaux vivants have served a number of different purposes and have catered to a variety of audiences, from honoring kings in royal pageantry to teaching biblical stories to the illiterate. Although tableaux vivants have evolved in form and function, they have fascinated audiences by paradoxically making them interact with and feel connected to the living and breathing art, but simultaneously evoking feelings of uneasiness. This uneasiness, caused by an illusion that makes living people appear dead and motionless, is turned into wonder and amazement when the secret behind the “magic trick” is revealed, a change that leads to a greater appreciation for and understanding of the artwork and the display itself.

Although the appeal of tableaux vivants has declined since the 1920s in the wake of more contemporary forms of entertainment such as theater and motion pictures, one tableau vivants showcase remains. The world–renowned Pageant of the Masters in Laguna Beach, California is an annual, nightly summer show in which about forty tableaux vivants are displayed in succession. The tableaux include art from many different time periods, cultures, and styles from the masterpieces of Rodin and Da Vinci to ancient...
sculptures of Indian and Greek deities to “pop art” from Warhol to magazine covers. Each year, 155,000 patrons spend up to seventy-five dollars to witness what has been described as breathtaking and magical. The detailed sets, painted and assembled by the Pageant’s own crew and 300-member, all-volunteer cast, elaborate costumes and make-up that incorporate the shadows and colors of the art, and carefully placed lighting, cause the cast members to look exactly as if they are carved in bronze, etched in glass, or painted in oils, and the artwork to appear indistinguishable from its original when viewed from a distance. The Pageant is shown in an outdoor theater called the Irvine Bowl, which, as its name suggests, is a round theater with eight viewing platforms so that the audience is literally surrounded by art. The models, ordinary Southern Californians and often small children who represent adults in the tableaux, are helped into their positions by a team of artistic directors. Music starts, the lights go up, and for ninety seconds the audience gazes at and experiences a particular piece of art until the lights go down and another piece of art is displayed. One wonders why, even after the mechanics behind the trompe l’oeil (fooling of the eye) have been explained, the patrons come back year after year and why the Pageant of the Masters has been so successful in keeping tableaux vivants alive?

The Pageant of the Masters has modernized the display of tableaux vivants and, in doing so, has created a multisensory experience that makes the seemingly dead and motionless art “come to life.” The Pageant audience, composed of people of all ages and backgrounds, not only marvels at the technical brilliance that makes the visual illusion possible, but also embarks on a sensory and emotional journey that “transgresses the lines separating art from reality” (Stafford 1). Changes such as the addition of live narration, musical accompaniment, and a unifying theme, as well as the incorporation of movement to provide a sense of relief to contrast the stillness of the display, transport the spectator into the world of the art, making it as real to him as if he were actually immersed in the scene. In addition, the Pageant provides an outlet for people to escape the fast-paced technological society and a means to study, appreciate, and simply enjoy the arts.

**The Rise and Fall of Tableaux Vivants**

Tableaux vivants have evolved in form and function over time, but retain their essential conceptual appeal. The art form has changed from an aristocratic form of entertainment to displays that are open to and intended for the masses; it has its roots in the royal pageantry of late medieval and early Renaissance Europe; it evolved into parlor tableaux in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America; and it exists today in rare art shows for the general public. Also, the intent of tableaux vivants has changed from telling stories or conveying messages, having no connection to a particular painting or sculpture, to reproducing specific works of art.

Tableaux vivants began as ceremonial spectacles to welcome and honor royalty, providing interactive experiences that would come to characterize the art form. Bamber Gascoigne describes tableaux vivants in early-fourteenth-century France that “became familiar feature[s] of a king’s entry into a city” and were often “political hints to the ruler” (90). For example, in 1582, the city of Antwerp presented a series of tableaux vivants to Francis, the future king and brother of the king of France, to celebrate Antwerp’s independence from Spain and new allegiance to France. Francis is represented in the tableaux by a live model of the biblical character David, who is depicted in scenes, such as his slaying of Goliath, that anticipate Francis’ upcoming ascension to the throne and highlight his future responsibilities as king. At the end of the procession, Francis is
directed on a stage to represent himself in a tableau depicting criminals with outstretched arms, begging for mercy. Here, tableaux vivants enabled history to come alive in a real and relatable situation. Thus, from its origins, the use of live models in display has created an interactive experience that has enabled spectators to project themselves into and therefore more fully understand and appreciate presented artwork.

At the same time that the viewing of tableaux vivants began to open up to more of the population, the focus of the tableaux changed from communicating political messages to preaching morals, values, and ideal realities. When church fathers used biblical and historical tableaux to educate the illiterate, wealthy citizens of mid–eighteenth–century Naples built elaborate Neapolitan cribs, which became the feature attraction of Christmas celebrations. These cribs reproduced episodes from daily life and scenes from the Gospels with as much realism as possible to “convey the message of the Gospel in modern terms, to make the spectators participate in the events portrayed” (Holmstrom 213). Spectators walked along the stage, viewing chronologically the procession of the Wise Men followed by the birth of Jesus as well as live, recreated events from everyday life such as scenes in shops and homes. The viewers experienced the tableaux from a physical, but not emotional distance; the interspersing of relatable common occurrences with biblical presentations facilitated the application of the Gospels to the spectator’s everyday lives. Despite this, Kirsten Gram Holmstrom argues that it was “by no means a true picture of reality” (214) because the cribs represented the ideal instead of the real, as they depicted society in its preferred and imagined form. Nevertheless, they still captivated spectators by allowing them to project themselves into the images, and thereby connect with the tableaux. In addition, the live people in the display intensified the idea that this reality was attainable, inviting spectators to imagine themselves in similar scenes at some time in the future.

By the late–eighteenth century, tableaux vivants had evolved to represent particular pieces of art, and improved artistic technology enabled the living bodies in the displays to appear even more dead and lifeless. This evolution was accompanied by a change in the art form’s effect on spectators; simultaneous feelings of wonder and uneasiness were evoked by displays in which living models appeared almost inhuman in their immobility. The idea of using tableaux vivants for the purpose of simulating well–known artworks is generally attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his novel, *Elective Affinities* (Holmstrom 216). The main character Luciana performs in tableaux vivants of famous paintings in order to satisfy her desire for attention, thus indicating her shallow personality. When describing Luciana’s first performance, which occurs in a tableau of Van Dyck’s *Belsarius*, Goethe comments on the combined sense of wonder and anxiety that the display evokes: “the figures were so perfect, the colors so successfully distributed, the lighting so ingenious, all that seemed transported into another world, except that realism instead of illusion produced a kind of uneasiness” (186). It can be argued that the illusion created by making a nonliving entity seem alive (i.e. wax museum statues) is nonthreatening because the spectator understands that the display cannot move, he cannot interact with it, and there cannot be any surprises. On the other hand, the illusion created by making a living person seem dead makes the spectator much more uncomfortable because realism, the possibility of movement by the live model, is a source of anxiety for the viewer of a still display. The common spectator will search for movement such as breathing, twitching, or blinking, to eliminate the prospect of surprise and quell his anxiety, reassuring himself that the models are actually living. It is this uneasiness that makes the viewing of tableaux vivants such a captivating and exciting experience. Holmstrom argues similarly to Goethe
that “there lies an unconscious, piquantly disturbing feeling of uncertainty in the face of this play with illusion and reality” (216). Thus, Holmstrom seems to suggest that the spectator feels an uncontrollable and innate apprehension when looking at live people who appear dead, who are out of their natural state of being, which is active and mobile. Despite the uneasiness that Holmstrom and Goethe describe, lighting and costuming make the recreations appear so intensely real and alive, that the spectator experiences the art as if he were actually in the scene. The realization of this technical masterpiece is what turns uneasiness into wonder and amazement.

The simultaneous excitement and anxiety of the displays enabled tableaux vivants to develop into addictive popular amusements. Tableaux vivants arrived in the United States in the mid–1800s and instantly became a popular form of entertainment, particularly in New York City. McCullough notes that tableaux vivants “found their way into the most respected theatres as well as the lowliest concert saloons and music halls, and were even presented as ‘society fundraisers’” (143). In 1858, George Arnold published America’s first tableau vivant manual: The Sociable. Deviating from Goethe’s influence, rather than particular paintings or pieces of art, Arnold describes tableaux that are static representations of real life experiences and for each he describes the lighting and costuming necessary to evoke the most profound effect. For example, in Arnold’s highly specific direction for the parlor tableau entitled Love and Jealousy, he describes that “to the right centre of stage, a cavalier, dressed in a slashed doublet and jacket, trunk hose, low shoes, with large pink rosettes, and a velvet cap and feather. At his side hangs a rapier. A guitar, upon which he is playing, is suspended from his neck with a blue ribbon” (168). The precise detail limits a director’s creativity, but ensures that the final, intended look is achieved. This, combined with the universality of the theme, enables the spectator to form a deep, emotional connection with the models on the stage and the art as a whole.

I would suggest that the experience of an intense connection with art is what separates tableaux vivants from art displays in galleries. When one approaches a piece of art in a gallery, the art is physically and emotionally distant and untouchable. Instead of imagining himself in the display or experiencing the emotions of the characters in the painting, the spectator stands in awe of the artist’s individual brushstrokes and carvings, labors that culminated to produce the final masterpiece. The viewer is amazed at the magnificence of the work and its historical significance, but does not directly relate on a personal level as he would when viewing tableaux vivants. While the success of the illusion in tableaux vivants also depends on distance, the live models help create an emotional and engaging experience, causing the spectator to be connected to the art, rather than detached from it. Also, while there may be illusions within the paintings or sculptures displayed in art galleries, the artworks themselves are not illusions. There is no sense of uneasiness because the art is unquestionably unchanging and constant; the combined excitement and anxiety of viewing live models is nonexistent. In addition, although the figures in paintings are static and motionless like the models in tableaux vivants, the awareness of the realism of the live models is enough to awaken the senses and elevate the excitement of the experience.

Despite the wonder of tableaux vivants, their appeal significantly declined in the twentieth century. Several critics have provided convincing arguments as to the reason for this decline. McCullough, with whom I agree, argues that the art form was “taken over

1 McCullough discusses the political and moral debate that arose in 1870s New York due to the display of naked women in tableaux vivants in his book, Living Pictures on the New York Stage.
by the budding motion picture industry, by the leg show, and the striptease burlesque, and by the theatrical spectacle of musical revue and operetta” (143). In the increasingly fast–paced society of the mid–1900s that was using new technology to create new modes of entertainment, people had little patience to sit and stare at art that lacked an element of motion, no matter how beautiful or grand. Chapman takes a different perspective, arguing that tableaux vivants mainly served to objectify women. She argues that tableaux vivants became an “erotic spectacle of the silent woman,” and that tableaux vivants of famous female figures from history and literature such as Ophelia and Niobe “exemplify the virtues of the cult of true womanhood: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (5). While Chapman never explicitly discusses the effect of this offensive display on society, as she traces the use of women in tableaux in literature specifically, she seems to imply that the immorality of displaying nude women on stage helped catalyze the nineteenth– and twentieth–century feminist movement. As a result, the art form declined in popularity because the number of women willing to perform in them decreased. On the other hand, Holmstrom argues “the genre in itself, as a form, had nothing to give” because “the essence of all theatre is movement; the ‘living’ pictures were not living, but petrified, immobile” (217). In other words, she means that uneasiness overcomes any possible feelings of wonder. The tableau may seem to “come to life,” but she argues that motionless models in the display do nothing more than increase the sense of lifelessness and death, making the spectator more uncomfortable and causing him to seek out other forms of flashy and glamorous entertainment.

**The Magic of the Pageant**

As the popularity of tableaux vivants declined, it became increasingly difficult to simultaneously preserve the magic of the art form and cater to the tastes of the public. The Pageant of the Masters is one of the world’s lasting tableaux vivants showcases because it has modernized the display of the art form by including periods of theatrical performance in between the still tableaux, providing a sense of relief for the spectator. Ironically, this reflects the techniques employed in the first recorded theatrical tableaux, a 1751 display of a replica of Jean Baptiste Greuze’s painting, *L’Accordee de Village* (The Village Bride) which had been a popular favorite at the Louvre, in a show of the Comedie Italiene’s production of *Les Noces d’Arlequin* (The Marriages of the Harlequin) in Paris. Holmstrom notes that the protagonist in the play took his position replacing one of the characters in the painting, but broke the illusion by wearing his own costume (218). This hint of realism is a sense of relief for the spectator who would otherwise be overwhelmed by and uncomfortable with the seamlessness of the illusion. However, this also ironically punctures the realism of the illusion, a sacrifice that became increasingly necessary to ensure that crowds could sit through and enjoy many successive tableaux. Like the Harlequin, reality provides a sense of relief; in the Pageant, it breaks the uneasiness and prepares the spectator to be both shocked and engaged by each subsequent
tableau. In doing so, the Pageant has preserved the art form by catering to an audience that has a desire for movement.

For the past eleven years, Pageant director Diane Challis Davy has introduced these “contemporary touches” to cater to the tastes of the modern public and make the show more fun and enjoyable. For example, during some of the scene changes the lights are dimmed rather than completely turned off. The cast members in the paintings are allowed to move and shift their positions, their performance being complete, while another background is brought upstage and more cast members get ready to pose. This introduction of movement serves to convince the audience of the illusion it is witnessing, showing it that the people are real and alive, despite the stillness they adopt during the tableau. Whether it is the bending of a model taking his position in the tableau or the inertial nodding of the head of another model who is attached to a moving set piece, the motion provides a sense of relief for the uneasy audience member because it reassures him that the live models are actually living. In addition, Davy has added moving theatrical displays such as “marching carnivals, falling snow, and live ice skaters” to make the Pageant grander and more theater–like (Chang 1). For example, the 2005 show, entitled “On the Road,” featured a live vocal performance of the song “Route 66” in which the performer drove through the bowl in an antique car. In 2006, which had an entire section devoted to different posters of wine, a green, devilish creature that personified the addictiveness of alcohol danced on stage and a giant wine bottle released bubbles all over the audience to signal intermission. These displays counter the motionless people in the tableaux and provide spectacles that make the audience have fun and appreciate the art at the same time. However, during the more famous pieces of art, this tactic is not employed. The less realism the audience sees, the more he is overcome with uneasiness and is shocked and awed by the tableau.

The need to contrast illusion with reality to alleviate feelings of uneasiness can be understood more clearly when the Pageant is discussed in terms of what it is in its essence: a series of grand magic tricks. In Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum, Neil Harris discusses the appeal of Barnum’s hoaxes in terms of a phenomenon called the “operational aesthetic”: the combination of the delight in observing a hoax or illusion, while seeking the truth. In the case of the Pageant of the Masters, patrons enjoy both observing the magnificent and beautiful artistry of the tableaux and trying to discover the hidden mechanisms behind the display. Harris argues that “perfection and absolute conviction in exhibits made them less valuable. Spectators require some hint of a problem, some suggestion of difficulty” (82). This idea is reflected in the ways in which the patrons try to search for the truth, the secret behind the magic trick. They look for any subtle movements of the posed cast members including breathing, blinking, and twitching. The tableau is made valuable because the audience perceives a difficulty in a person remaining still and lifeless. Recognizing the human instinctive pleasure in the uncovering process, Davy selects a painting in the first few tableaux and takes the audience “backstage.” From positioning the foreground to securing the cast members in their proper places, the narrator describes the steps that the cast and crew take during each tableau to complete the final recreation, uncovering the secret for the audience. However, even after the mechanics of the display are detailed, the audience is still amazed and awed by the final product. Harris explains that “delight in learning explains why the experience of deceit was enjoyable even after the hoax had been penetrated, or at least during the period of doubt and suspicion” (77). Armed with knowledge about the process, the audience can fight off the feelings of uneasiness and enjoy the illusions.
Another modernization of the display of tableaux vivants in the Pageant of the Masters involves Davy’s reintroduction of a theme to the show, a unifying concept that connects the seemingly disjointed artworks from a variety of cultures and time periods. This enables the Pageant’s artistic directors to refine their search for artworks and it ensures that the audience sees a different show each year. For example, the 2006 show, entitled “Passions of Art,” depicted love-themed art, such as The Stolen Kiss by Fragonard and Porcelain Lovers by J. Kaendler and P. Reinicke. The upcoming 2007 show, “Young at Heart,” will feature art depicting elements of youth from “the carefree games and richly illustrated fantasies of childhood, to the wistful nostalgia of middle age and the imaginative reinventions of our ‘golden years’” (http://www.foapom.com/site/overview_pom.asp:1). The universality of such themes engages people of all ages and backgrounds, thus departing from the aristocratic, European, and biblical focuses of the art form’s origins. The theme increases the ability of the patron to relate to and experience the art in a uniquely personal way. It addition, it enables historical artistic masterpieces to have a connection to and a value in today’s world, joining the past and the present. Also, in a world where cultural divisions and tensions have led to misunderstandings, generalizations, and the formation of stereotypes, a thematic connection invites spectators to realize the common emotional threads that bind all of humanity together.

Live narration is the means through which the thematic connections between the tableaux are explained. Pageant scriptwriter Dan Duling describes the effect of Davy’s addition of an overall theme: “Narratively, it’s been a blessing. Discovering linkages between vastly different artworks from different cultures and time periods encourages a sense of connection. And connection is something I’m always thinking about: how art connects us; how it has something to offer, no matter how different our ages or backgrounds; how art can inform our humanity and help us believe in community as well as individuality” (http://www.foapom.com/news/viewarticle.asp?ID=120:1). Duling’s script communicates the value that art can have for finding connections between individuals and cultures, breaking fears and misconceptions, and uniting diverse people under common emotional experiences. In addition to perpetuating the general link between the diverse art, the narration serves a practical and educational purpose; it provides the transition between each scene as well as presenting information about the artist, the work, and its cultural significance. This enables the audience to more
fully appreciate the display, increases its meaning by putting it in a historical and cultural context, and allows the audience to personally connect with the message or meaning of the art. For example, in the display of the *The World of the Geisha* in the 2006 show, the following narration provides a glimpse of ancient Japanese culture:

Inside the geisha houses of 18th century Japan, ritual and art inspired the pursuit of transitory pleasures. Three pairs of woodblock prints by *ukiyo-e* master Torii Kiyonaga idealize a time when courtesans and geisha reigned as mistresses of desire. On the left, a patron’s every whim is indulged in a private chamber overlooking Edo Bay. In the center, preparations for an evening’s entertainment take place in a moonlit restaurant. And on the right, privacy screens are required following a musical prelude. In Edo, as Tokyo was then known, life’s impermanence took on special meaning for patrons who found fantasy for sale within “the floating world.” (Duling 14)

Because of the narration, the viewer can understand the art’s significance on a deeper cultural and historical level.

In addition to serving as a means for cultural education, the narration enables the audience to feel connected to the art by linking it to modern society. For instance, after the presentation of *Marriage of Convenience* by Scottish Victorian painter William Orchardson, which depicts a man and a woman who did not marry for love, having difficulties just seven months into their marriage, narrator Skip Conover comments, “I wonder if Match–dot–com or Dr. Phil could have saved that marriage… I can’t help imagining the butler leaning over and whispering to the lord of the manor, ‘Sir… she’s just not that into you…” (Duling 8). While this obviously provides an element of humor, it connects ideas of modern society and everyday life to the paintings, making them more easily understandable and relatable.

Duling also states that the harmony of music and narration can “enhance a ‘living picture’ with a full range of emotional values” (http://www.foapom.com/news/viewarticle.asp?ID=120:1). Composed and conducted by Richard Henn and performed by a live orchestra each night, musical accompaniment transports the spectator into the different worlds of the art and evokes emotions that add another piece of liveliness to the static art. For instance, Latin music with hand-clapping and tantalizing guitar engages the audience during the display of John Singer Sargent’s *El Jaleo (The Bolt)*, in which a gypsy dancer attracts the attention of male visitors in a Spanish café. Although the model posing as the gypsy dancer is not actually moving, the music causes the audience to imagine that the dancer is actually twirling and stomping to the beat. To produce a different effect, the beauty and emotion of Massenet’s famous “Meditations” from the opera *Thais*, an enchanting violin solo with orchestral accompaniment, captures the mysticism and sacredness of the Pageant’s traditional finale: Leonardo Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*.

Barbara Stafford presents a different reason for people’s continued fascination with the Pageant of the Masters. She argues
that the Pageant transports the spectator into the world of the art, an imaginary world that is unique to the mind of each viewer. She states that, “viewers become participants in the art, viscerally transfixed, and spiritually transported” (Stafford 4). Viewers “participate” by transcending the Irvine Bowl and using the tableaux vivant as an entry point into the world their imagination generates. The viewers envision the world of the artwork and position themselves inside of it. Stafford also argues that the audience is, in some sense, able to emotionally communicate with the dead, with the seemingly lifeless people in the display and the artwork itself. She comments that, “a new type of necromancy unfurls a cascade of unified visions, even as the ominous and floating realm that is conjured up remains elusive and unverifiable by touch” (Stafford 6). Again, Stafford reinforces the idea that the spectator enters an intangible world, one that he can ironically see himself interacting with through the displayed artwork.

Stafford also argues that the Pageant of the Masters acts as an escape from the modern, fast-paced technological society and the preoccupations of life in general: “viewers become buoyant, anesthetized to life’s usual anxieties” (Stafford 6). Because the spectator is transported into a different world by the living pictures, he forgets about midterms, business meetings, politics, and the stressful and depressing news that floods modern society. In addition, it has been argued that the Pageant is a “welcome palliative to the freneticism of modern day entertainment” (Chang 2). Although the special effects of science fiction blockbusters and the inanity of “reality” television shows cause the public to crave the meaningful and educational to excite them and satisfy their thirst for knowledge, the appeal of modern forms of entertainment is not so different from that of the Pageant of the Masters and tableaux vivants in general. For example, The Matrix (1999) is captivating and thought-provoking because it creates a similar feeling of uneasiness as it highlights the conflict between the real and unreal.

The Pageant display enables masterpieces to break through the display cases and picture frames that made them distant and untouchable; the spectator can connect to them through his emotions and imagination. From my own experiences as an usher, it is not only hard to describe the look of amazement and astonishment on the audience’s faces, but also the mesmerizing and captivating effect that the show has on me. Each time I see the show, I catch a new subtlety in a painting or sculpture or listen more closely to the narration. It is fascinating that the magnificence and grandeur of the professional artistry combined with emotional music often has the power to bring members of the audience to tears. I have come to appreciate the Pageant so much more because I have seen the dedication, passion, and hard work that the make-up artists, orchestra, lighting crew, cast, and directors put into each and every production. The Pageant offers a forum for people of all ages and backgrounds to come together to view and appreciate art. By modernizing tableaux vivants, the Pageant has successfully kept the art form alive and will continue to do so in the future. Although no words can adequately describe the experience one has at the Pageant of the Masters, the narration can offer a clearer idea of what the show is all about: “There are things the mind can never truly grasp, that art can only suggest, and that even the heart cannot know for certain… [art] inspires us to look into our own hearts for the courage and faith needed to believe in a better, more perfect world, if not here, then perhaps hereafter…” (Duling 17). By harnessing the illusionism of tableaux vivants to interesting patrons in art, the Pageant of the Masters has built an emotional community that has an increased understanding of and appreciation for art of the past, present, and future.
Works Cited


Autumn 2006 Honorable Mention

Anne Datesh

Instructor’s Foreword

There are topics that lend themselves, almost always, to dualist rhetoric. In the case of the United States’ actions in Hiroshima, for example, it is not unusual to read an account that unequivocally argues for it, or, against it. But the truth is that historical moments such as these, even in hindsight, cannot be reduced to such facile discourses of “good” or “bad.” Anne Datesh, no doubt, understands the nature of complex arguments and the dangers of dualist thinking.

In her essay, “The Decision to Drop the Bomb: Where Hindsight is Not 20/20,” Anne takes a difficult position: she acknowledges that Hiroshima marked the end of the war, and thus the decision to drop the bomb stopped the killing. But she also argues that the end, to stop the war, does not necessarily justify the means—the damage that detonating the atomic bomb did both to the people of Japan and to the collective human psyche. “Hindsight,” Anne argues, “is not 20/20.” Is it better to have dropped the bomb? Is it better to have let the war, and the killings, continue?

When we read this essay, we cannot miss the obvious fact that in order to build such a complex argument, Anne had to carry out extensive research, weaving together personal accounts, historical and government documents, as well as the opinion of other historians and researchers. Anne’s astute reading of primary sources and her tireless investigation of government and historical documents is exemplary; her powerful narrative style, moreover, leads us through this historical moment with much excitement, almost as much as the author displayed when carrying out her research and writing for this essay. Reading this essay is akin to mental gymnastics: one moves through the rhythmic narrative of historical facts fluidly, yet this fluidity is but a mask for the complexity of each argument presented, arguments that leave us with a great deal to think about.

Corinne Arraez
The Decision to Drop the Bomb: Where Hindsight is Not 20/20

Anne Datesh

On August 6, 1945, the world witnessed the greatest form of destruction then known to man when the U.S. dropped the first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Never before in history had a weapon of such mass and sweeping destruction been unleashed. This bomb was the product of the accumulation of centuries of scientific experimentation that was accelerated in August of 1942 by scientists and physicists working in the military’s Manhattan Engineer District, which cost thousands of man hours and over two billion dollars (Timeline 1940). The central and top-secret mission of this group, the development of an atomic weapon, was codenamed the Manhattan Project. Scientists and engineers worked secretly and diligently all across the United States to create a nuclear fission, chain reaction bomb that would tap atomic power for the capacity to destroy entire cities (Bracchini). On July 16, 1945, at the Trinity test, they succeeded. The tester, a plutonium bomb called Gadget, was detonated at 5:30 a.m. near Alamogordo, New Mexico, and those scientists present were the first witnesses to the incredible scope of destruction caused by an atomic bomb (Bracchini). The two other bombs built by the Project, Little Boy and Fat Man, were later dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, amidst great controversy among leaders in the Project, the military, and the nation. By completing its goal, the Project had borne a weapon into a time when complicated military and political strategy prompted a questionable action that would mark a clear change in the course of history. In fact, the decision to drop the bombs resulted from a confluence of many contemporaneous factors, including pressure put on the Project by World War II, speculation over the development of nuclear weapons in other nations such as Germany and Russia, and the uncertainty of the Japanese surrender needed to end the war without the use of the bombs. The historic action went on to spawn the subsequent arms race that launched the Cold War and the general sense of fear associated with that time period, and developments in nuclear weaponry continue to affect international policy today. It is through this multifaceted analysis of the history of the weapons and the drop’s effect on history itself that one can gain a better understanding of the use of the bombs, viewing it not simply as a cutthroat military tactic or a political power play, but as a complex and radical turning point in history.

The Manhattan Project, the largest secret project ever undertaken by the U.S. government, was established to build a weapon of unimaginable power with virtually no one in the public, military, or government being aware. The group in charge of the Project took painstaking care in keeping information classified, even from the engineers, scientists, and private companies working in the lower levels of the Project. This elite group of men included the military leader of the Project, General Leslie Groves, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, and scientists Robert J. Oppenheimer, Neils Bohr, Enrico Fermi, and Leo Szilard. With the exception of Gen. Groves and Stimson, these men were leading scientists in the development of nuclear technology and two had actually been exiled from Germany (Rhodes). Prior to the conception of the Project, discoveries in nuclear physics
Program in Writing and Rhetoric

began to mount, from the conceived possibility of a nuclear chain reaction, to the discovery of fissionable elements such as uranium–235 and plutonium–239, to the first controlled chain reaction being achieved by Fermi at the University of Chicago in December of 1942 (Herken). A fission reaction occurs when a neutron is captured by the nucleus of a radioactive element, which then becomes unstable and splits into two lighter atoms, emitting two or three neutrons in the process. What creates the nuclear reaction used in an atomic bomb is when these emitted neutrons are then captured by other nuclei in the reactor, creating a chain reaction that propagates into the huge explosion associated with atomic bombs (Freudenrich). This science was a vital basis for the strenuous work and intense thought that encompassed the Manhattan Project.

The Project began as a weapons race with Germany. However, developments in international intelligence and correspondence from trusted officials catapulted it to one of the most important projects in the nation. The first warning came from Albert Einstein, who, at Leo Szilard’s proposal, signed an urgent letter to President Roosevelt discussing Germany’s likely ability to create a weapon of incredible power, and its capacity to do so long before the U.S. could hope to complete such a weapon. Szilard was alarmed at the lack of action on the part of the U.S. government to begin developing nuclear power, and after finding no official support within the government, he looked outside to Einstein, his trusted friend. Einstein gladly complied with Szilard’s request, but would later regret his support of the weapon. The letter, received on August 2, 1939, was the first direct warning by a well-respected scientific mind of the need for “watchfulness and if necessary, quick action on the part of the Administration” (Einstein). Einstein explained to Roosevelt the facts behind the vast expanse of nuclear experiments. He knew that uranium and other radioactive elements could, in the very near future, be harnessed to create a new type of energy, specifically new types of bombs, and he warned the president of the U.S.’s utter lack of material and knowledge on the subject of that energy. Einstein stressed the need to speed up and widen the experimental nuclear work going on in the United States and the telling fact that Germany had ceased the sale of uranium from its mines (Einstein). This was significant proof that Germany had begun and was likely far along in the building of atomic weapons. This letter and its contents confirmed and elevated fears that the Germans were getting very close to creating the bomb. Roosevelt responded with thanks and immediately “convened a Board consisting of the head of the Bureau of Standards and a chosen representative of the army and navy to thoroughly investigate the possibilities... regarding the element of uranium” (Roosevelt). As the United States continued to learn about German efforts, the need to top those efforts became clear, and the Manhattan Project was begun.

The Project resulted in more than merely a military effort to create superior weapons, but a scientific breakthrough that would revolutionize science, warfare, and, without exaggeration, change the future of mankind. These were times when the military aggression and fevered expansionism of Nazi Germany necessitated forms of self-defense that were unprecedented and dramatically potent. The atomic bomb was born out of the pressure of the ongoing war between Axis and Allied powers (Rhodes 93). Many nations had secret programs for building up and improving their arsenals of weapons, but it was prominently Germany and the United States that had the resources, both financial and intellectual, to tackle the complex and dangerous study and development of nuclear weaponry. The U.S. had been informed of Germany’s capability in nuclear physics and manufacturing and realized it must go to any lengths to develop the weapons first. Because of the high stakes associated with the world domination sought by the Axis powers, leaks
in the Project had to be prevented at all costs, kept from both Germany and the general public. Any such leak could provide Germany with what it needed to achieve the weapon first, a devastating blow not only to the United States, but the world.

Leaders of the Project, most of whom were doing research at Los Alamos or working at headquarters in the Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Hanford, Washington pilot plants, determined what would be done at each of the many smaller plants across the country, and what their directors would know (Timeline 1940). The leader of the Project’s security program, Colonel James C. Marshall, created the Protective Security Section to control personnel, plant, and national security. If the Project or its progress leaked out to the American public, it would promptly leak to Germany, who would subsequently quicken the pace of its program. The security and vast amount of counterintelligence needed to avoid this problem became very intricate and complex due to the large number of plants in use across America. All in all, there were more men working on the Manhattan Project than in the booming automobile industry, although most with no knowledge of the Project itself (Manchester). The system abruptly grew so complex that the Intelligence and Security Division and its six separate branches were established to keep the security system running. Members of the Security Division, serving on the Clinton Engineer Works (“CEW”), Safeguard of Military Information (“SMI”), Security, and Administration branches, focused on keeping information inside the specific plant to which they were assigned and away from the outside world (“Safeguarding Mil Info Regulations”). The information that was shared was based on a system of rigid compartmentalization; each plant or laboratory would be working toward a smaller goal of the Project (e.g. testing effects of radiation or creating a stable chain reactor), which, when it was accomplished, would be taken to another group of the SMI branch to begin subsequent work toward the ultimate goal of a nuclear bomb (Herken 85). Before information was transferred, no lab knew of any other lab or the work being done within. Problems arose on account of this strictly compartmentalized security, impeding scientists from sharing information amongst themselves. Leo Szilard maintained that the intense “compartmentalization of information was the cause for failure to realize that light uranium, U235, might be produced in quantities sufficient to make atomic bombs...we could have had it eighteen months earlier. We did not put two and two together because the two twos were in a different compartment....” (Nichols). Fortunately, this kind of issue did not create a big problem for the Project, and work went on industriously toward the completion of the bomb.

Danger came not only in the leaking of information but from working on the project itself, since much of the Project was devoted to the study of radioactive elements. CEW officials went to great lengths to cover up cases of death, disfigurement, and toxic hazard caused by radiation that could leak out to the communities surrounding the research centers and blow the Project’s cover. The need for knowledge of safe levels of radiation became crucial. Scientists in the hospitals at the Universities of Rochester, Chicago, and California tested the effects of radiation by injecting plutonium and uranium into patients to ascertain the necessary safety requirements for workers. However, the government abandoned this program, likely on an ethical basis (Cantwell). Questions began to be raised regarding the safety of the workers, but the provision of wartime secrecy prevented these questions from spreading to the public or even to those afflicted, many of whom were kept unaware of the details of their conditions, let alone that radiation was probably the cause. All scientists working on the Project knew that it was top secret, they just did not know why, or what the goal was. Those raising problematic questions were immediately “taken care of” by undercover officers of the Administration Security branch stationed in the plants, and
usually completely removed from the Project by the next day (Kirkpatrick). The last thing the Project wanted to do was to allow anyone to make waves or draw attention to it. Nevertheless, Congress began to become suspicious of the huge amounts of funding going to the Manhattan Engineer District and created a panel to investigate—the Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program—ironically including future President Harry S. Truman, the very man who would later give the order to drop the bomb. However, the investigation into the Project was never accomplished. Truman noted that Henry Stimson, the well-respected secretary of war, warned him to call off the investigation into the unaccounted millions of dollars, and he did so, on Stimson’s word alone (Rhodes 617).

Later, Truman himself needed to be briefed on the bomb, being informed of its existence by Stimson within twenty-four hours of Franklin Roosevelt’s death on April 12 and fully briefed on its magnitude by April 25. Due to the lack of knowledge about the bomb in the government, Stimson and Gen. Groves, two of the only men with full knowledge of the proceedings, informed Truman that within “four months we shall in all probability have completed the most terrible weapon ever known in human history, one bomb of which could destroy a whole city” (Rhodes 624). These three men alone could not handle the decisions associated with the bombs and needed to utilize a broader scope of knowledge when creating the plans for the bomb. Therefore, the Interim Committee was created to compensate for the thus-far ignorant members of the cabinet and to avoid undermining Congress if they planned to create a postwar commission. This civilian committee first met on May 9, 1945, in the wake of momentous change, only one day after V-E Day (Rhodes 629). Chaired by Stimson, the committee included men such as MIT President Karl Compton, Assistant Secretary of State William Clayton, Undersecretary of the Navy Ralph A. Bard, and Jimmy Byrnes, Roosevelt’s right hand man and later Truman’s secretary of state. These men had to be briefed by a scientific panel set up adjunct, including Oppenheimer, Fermi, Compton, and Lawrence, the top scientists at Los Alamos (Rhodes 628–630). The Committee was entirely secret, and its discussions classified. Not even those in the highest ranks of government knew of the Project, and the men in charge wanted it to stay that way.

More important than keeping information from the public and our own government, the distinct risk for espionage and sabotage from Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union was a subject of grave concern. With the vast number of people from all backgrounds and all across the country being hired onto the Project, the potential for saboteurs and spies was unnervingly high. Security checks could only go so far, and Security District branches of the Counterintelligence Corps (“CIC”) were put in charge of extensive preemptive security checks to avert any breaches of security, but compromises had to be made because of a lack of scientifically qualified personnel in the interests of speed of completion (Groves 141). One shocking example of this was Oppenheimer himself, who was given a moderate security clearance despite past connections with German communist organizations, and was appointed as the director of the Los Alamos plant and was the de facto leader of the scientific elements of the Manhattan Project. Oddly enough, it was not from Germany but from our wartime ally, Russia, that the Security District’s CIC Detachment discovered multiple incidents of espionage. The most famous case is that of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a couple who passed atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. After a very public trial, the two were executed for treason in Sing Sing prison in 1953. In most other cases it was the large amount of Soviet diplomats and officials in the United States that made it easy for Russian spies to begin obtaining information on
radiation research under pretenses of expediting an Allied victory, and transmitting it to Russian leaders (Herken 106). When the participants in this sort of espionage were identified, they were drafted into the army and placed in low-level positions where they could be monitored. This was common practice in incidents of espionage and security violations associated with the Project, because, for obvious reasons, the suspects could not be publicly prosecuted (Groves, “Summary”). The tight security measures surrounding the Project worked amazingly well, and no cases of espionage or sabotage were truly detrimental to the construction of the bomb or to the secrecy of the Project.

Once the grueling process of completing the weapon was concluded, discussions on the bomb turned from how to build it to how to use it, whether to use it, and if it was necessary in order to secure a surrender from Japan. This fostered heated moral, political, and diplomatic debates among the small group leading the Project (Alperovitz 163). The pressures on the decision stretch as far back as the beginning of the war, but most importantly, they began just after the death of President Roosevelt on April 12, 1945. His successor, President Truman, came to office during an incredibly important month in the war. There was a power shift in the Japanese government, as the Koiso government was replaced by the Suzuki government, and U.S. troops landed on Okinawa on April 1, gaining a strategic foothold in the war with Japan. Only four days later, news broke that Russia was not renewing the Russo-Japanese Neutrality Pact, which left the door open for Russian aid to America’s Pacific war effort and intensified the threat to Japan. At the end of the month, on April 30, Hitler committed suicide, which shocked the world and led to the immediate surrender of the collapsing German forces on May 8. Now the eyes of the world turned to Japan, and the war in the Pacific (Alperovitz 98–109). Japan was against a wall politically and economically; it had no allies, and the U.S. had blockaded its ports and access to food. Truman stood firm on his terms of unconditional surrender of the military, telling Congress on April 18 that: “We will not traffic with the breakers of the peace on the terms of peace” (Alperovitz 39). Japan’s terms insisted on protecting its emperor and its way of life, imagining the U.S.’s intent was to kill the emperor and enslave the people. However, the U.S. simply could not allow Japan’s government to remain in power without risking later corruption or even another attack on America. This left negotiations seeming only capable of delaying the war that Japan had made it clear it would fight to the last man (Archive 77). As the need for a war became clear, the United States faced new problems, as questions over the cost of lives lost in the war brought about political debates in the U.S. as well as diplomatic issues with Russia.

After the disintegration of the Russo-Japanese Neutrality Pact, Russia was ready and willing to help the U.S. in the war with Japan, which, along with support from Britain, would leave the Japanese almost helpless against the united strengths of the three Allied powers, but for the United States to be in debt to Russia was a topic of serious concern. After the Yalta Conference in February of 1945, where the Soviets were overstepping their bounds in the division of Europe, relations with Russia—both personal and political—deteriorated. Albert Einstein noted a “desire to end the war by any means... before Russian participation” (Alperovitz 127). This created a paradox for U.S. officials. Enlisting Soviet help would mean the U.S. would be indebted to arrogant and untrustworthy Russia. However, fighting the war without Russia could mean a prolonged and bloody war for America, while Russia spent the time surpassing the U.S. in science, technology and other fields. These power politics led the U.S. to be anxious to end the war on its own, as soon as possible. The solution, it seemed, was only too obvious—the atomic bomb. It was certain that the Japanese would commit wholeheartedly to the war, and that they would never submit to unconditional surrender.
without a realization of the inevitability of defeat, a purpose which the bombs would serve perfectly (Alperovitz 614). So, the debate over dropping the bomb began, hesitantly, and, as scientist was pitted against scientist, politician against politician, the debates were heated and well supported.

The two sides of these debates are best shown by the opposing views of Jimmy Byrnes, Truman’s new secretary of state, and Henry Stimson, the secretary of war, but to best understand the two different sides, one must first understand conditions within Japan itself. Japanese economic and political situations were dismal, caused by the U.S. blockade and the German surrender leaving Japan with no outside support. Despite their dire straits, the values of honor and respect instilled in the Japanese as a people and the self-sufficiency born from their isolationism kept them from surrendering their country, and their emperor. Surrender, they mistakenly thought, would see their emperor, their deity, killed as a war criminal, and their people subject to the will of the nation threatening to invade their shorelines, the United States (Alperovitz 37). Their nation’s spirituality and pride would be risked, and that was something with which the Japanese could not cope. Politically, Japan did have a hope in the disunity of the Allies, namely Russia and America. Therefore, up to and throughout April, Japan’s plan was a massive battle for their homeland, with no surrender in sight (Feis).

These conditions actually provided support for both opinions. Japan was already in shambles, and bombing them would not serve any honorable purpose; on the other hand, the fact that Japan was still willing to commit national suicide by fighting alone against the Allied powers was enough to prove the need for a drastic measure such as the bombs (Alperovitz 376). Jimmy Byrnes viewed the bomb as a useful tool that would allow the U.S. to control terms at the end of the war (Rhodes 619). It would allow the U.S. economy to normalize by ending the war, and using it was the only way to justify the vast expense of the Manhattan Project. Byrnes advocated keeping the bomb a secret because it was power in politics just as money is power to a bank, and he criticized Stimson when he shared the information with the British without a quid pro quo. Byrnes also believed that Japan would not surrender without accepting its defeat as imminent, creating more casualties than would the dropping of the bomb. The political and military standpoint from which Byrnes considered the bomb stressed its demonstration of our might to Russia, and the leverage it would create in diplomacy (Rhodes 634). Stimson on the other hand looked at the bomb from a more theoretical and philosophical point of view. Aside from being immoral, he believed that dropping the bomb would shape the future in ways that needed to be considered. Once others had the weapons, namely Russia, America would no longer have its edge in superior arms technology. Stimson also foresaw the resulting dangerous international relations with Russia, who had not yet been informed of the bomb’s existence. Stimson further warned of the lasting effects of the bomb, both physical and psychological, and that it was a ruthless tactic that should not be used for military expediency (Rhodes 622). Truman’s decision was influenced by many of these and other, less noble factors, including the slim–to–none chance of his reelection if the public learned he had wasted money and the lives of American soldiers by shelving a weapon that could have ended the war, the fact that the Japanese attacked first at Pearl Harbor, and the impending congressional inquiry into the misappropriation of upwards of two billion dollars if they did not see the effects of the bomb. Still, the number one articulated goal for the dropping of the bomb was to save lives, both American and Japanese, by preventing a drawn out land invasion of Japan.
Eventually, the decision was made to drop the bomb, and the Interim Committee met to determine the best locations and discuss the aftermath of the drops on a national and worldwide scale (Rhodes 630). The scientific advisory panel was joined by military and weather advisors, along with Japanese history experts in order to ensure the drop would be successful in terms of military and psychological results. First, the plane was chosen: a B–29, which had a range of only 1,500 miles. This created a need for good weather on the drop dates, but despite January being the best weather month, August was settled upon for expediency. Scientists suggested submarines be deployed near the target areas to radio back weather, radiation, and other effects of the bombs. The chosen targets preferably needed to be military bases whose destruction would be detrimental to the Japanese will (Truman). In order to see the scope of destruction of the bomb, the cities also needed to be relatively untouched by the air raids of the 20th Air Force that had been “systematically bombing out the following cities with the prime purpose in mind of not leaving one stone lying on another: Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, Yavata....” (Archives 42, 46). This left targets scarce because most of the cities large enough to confine the bomb were already destroyed. The Air Force reserved five targets as sites for the bomb: Kyoto, the former capital and intellectual center of Japan to which many refugees were being moved; Hiroshima, a huge army depot that was surrounded by hills which could focus the blast inward; Yokohama and Kokura, which were both military arsenals; and Niigata, which was actually originally chosen as the second city before Nagasaki. The scientific advisors stressed the need for appropriate detonation heights and consideration of radiological effects, while the military stressed psychological factors and the need to drop the bomb soon or there would be no cities in Japan left to bomb. Finally the two targets, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were chosen. The test date at Los Alamos was set for July 16, and those against the dropping of the bombs made one last effort to prevent any action being taken.

Petitions were sent to the President by scientists, some advocating and others opposing the use of the bomb, and although the effects of the petitions in opposition may have been more dramatic if proposed earlier in the process, their influence this far down the line was minimal, despite their noble intentions. The first petition was in actuality merely a memo, and was received in June of 1945. It was drafted by the some of the head scientists at Los Alamos, including Oppenheimer, Compton, Lawrence, and Fermi. These men were also the scientists who were advising the Interim Committee, and their opinions on the subject held great weight for those in the committee and for President Truman himself. Their recommendation advocated the immediate use of nuclear weapons to “promote a satisfactory adjustment of our international relations” (Scientific Panel). The United States needed to show its military might to Japan, but also, and maybe more importantly, to the Soviet Union. The bombs would serve that purpose perfectly. This memo prompted Leo Szilard, ironically the man who had advocated the creation of the bomb, to take action against it (Einstein). He and sixty–nine cosigners, in a petition from the Metallurgical Laboratory in Chicago dated July 17, 1945—only one day after the test date—urged President Truman to consider the moral responsibilities associated with the unjust action of dropping the bomb (Archives 76). This was a dramatic step, and was a counterstrike to the June 16 memo from scientists such as Oppenheimer, Lawrence, Compton, and Fermi that advocated the immediate use of nuclear weapons (Archives 76, cover page). The petition stressed the lack of justification for such a ruthless act and the ramifications of almost limitless “destructive power which will become available in the course of future development... opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale” (Oak Ridge Petition). Whether Szilard’s change of heart came from the German surrender or
from seeing the awful power of the bomb at the test, he and the other scientists opposed to the drop felt that they must make their voices heard, regardless of the effect. The Szilard petition was regarded with hostility from some, particularly those in the military, but with respect from others. Even before organizing the petition, Szilard had begun to come under scrutiny, with Gen. Groves himself seeking evidence against him (Archives 201). Two later petitions, the Oak Ridge Petitions, arose addressing other significant points and demonstrating the amount of dissent among scientists. Both followed the Szilard petition in asserting that the bomb would impose “world–wide social and political consequences” that would only serve to be detrimental to the United States and that, without warning the nations of the world, would propose diplomatic and military problems as well (Oak Ridge Petition). These opposing petitions sprang from multiple factors, including the moral issues behind dropping the bomb, the realization of the power of the bomb, and the understanding that with the defeat of Germany, the purpose for the production and use of the bomb was hypothetically eliminated. They urged the president to alert our allies to our intentions and to allow Japan a chance to surrender with the knowledge that a refusal would be followed by the use of a new weapon. These petitions were, however, largely disregarded over fear that Japan would take American hostages and prisoners into the cities being bombed, and of the horrors of the otherwise inevitable war. While the debates over the bombs were becoming more divided, President Truman was focusing more on whether to tell Russia about the bombs than to reverse his decision at this point.

Many who had considered the subject believed that it was advisable to inform the Soviet Union of the success of the Manhattan Project in order to prevent postwar feelings of suspicion and hostility. Even through Winston Churchill’s pleas for an earlier Big Three meeting to discuss the bomb prior to July 24, 1945 at the Potsdam Conference, no mention to Russia of the bomb had been made. Oppenheimer recalled intense “pressure to get [the bomb] done before the Potsdam Meeting” (Alperovitz 148). Truman had postponed the meeting for as long as possible, to the intense frustration of Churchill, until he was sure that the U.S. had a working bomb. In regards to informing Stalin, although Russia had kept its word in most military matters, Truman had intelligence from all sides that Stalin was not to be trusted. Averell Harriman, the ambassador to Russia, stressed that Truman realize Stalin was breaking the Yalta agreements, planning to take over neighboring countries and install Soviet control. Most were in agreement that any transfer of intelligence to Russia had to be done carefully and prudently. Stimson wanted to extract a reciprocal benefit, namely the democratization of Russia, in return for information about the bomb (Stimson). Other advisors counseled Truman to brief Stalin on the weapon, as we had Churchill, to forestall an arms race. Truman chose only to informally tell Stalin of “a new weapon of unusual destructive force” (Byrnes 263). Although Stalin showed no reaction, Truman’s action quite possibly pushed the Soviets to rush their own production of an atomic bomb. Fear of this pushed the U.S. to take subversive steps against the Soviets, buying up uranium deposits and tightening security around Russian officials, causing a break in Russo–American relations that would begin a short time before the bombs were dropped and last throughout the Cold War (Alperovitz 158).

After years of work and months of debate, Little Boy was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The target was the Aioi Bridge; the bomb missed by only fifty feet. A warning in the Potsdam Proclamation had told the Japanese they would face “prompt and utter destruction” if they did not surrender immediately, and the devastation was incredible. In an instant, over 66,000 people were killed, and another 69,000 injured. Fat Man was dropped on Nagasaki three days later, dropping its population in a fraction
of a second from 422,000 to 383,000, and leaving over 25,000 others injured. A black stone monument marks the hypocenter of the bomb, which vaporized, burned, and killed everything in its path and scourged thousands of others with radiation poisoning and mutilation. Truman later declared that the “force from which the sun draws its power had been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East” (“The Atomic Bomb”). It was an action that would change the course of history.

The decision to drop the atomic bombs on Japan was a topic of intense debate on all sides of the political spectrum then, and continues to be today. Historians take hard stands on the value, morality, and justification of dropping the bomb. One of the most well–known quotes on the dropping of the bomb from the past is that of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Although expected to react with fervent assent, Eisenhower expressed his misgivings about dropping the bomb and his opinion that, “the Japanese were ready to surrender… it wasn’t necessary to hit them with that awful thing” (Eisenhower 380). As a high–ranking member of the armed forces, Eisenhower stands out as a surprising voice of dissent among both the military and conservative American officials. General Douglas MacArthur, America’s top general in the Pacific, shared Eisenhower’s sentiment, noting the lack of military justification for dropping the bomb. Among the members of the White House staff and cabinet who also added their disapproval, some members of the Interim Committee itself were not behind the drops. Ralph Bard, the undersecretary of the navy, as well as Stimson, are examples of civilian leaders of the military having qualms about the bombs. Many seemed to share the opinion that “the Japanese war was really won before we ever used the atom bomb” (Bard).

However, in keeping with his job as President Truman’s advisor and secretary of war, Stimson made statements after the bombing that an invasion was “expected to cost over a million casualties to American forces alone” (Miles 121–140). Many historians today maintain that dropping the bomb did not save the lives that justified its use. Although the pressure to shelve the bomb was great, noting the moral injustice of dropping such weapons on cities, the geopolitical and diplomatic issues for the United States, and the obvious military ramifications dealing with communist Russia, the strong, patriotic, and logical argument of those advocating the use of the bomb seemed to outweigh any dissenters (Lanouette 266–267). The momentum that had been driving the United States through the war, bolstering the booming wartime economy and pushing the scientists to create the bomb, was a force that could hardly be harnessed and would be even more difficult to stop by merely showcasing the bomb (Alperovitz 656). The premise was simple: if Japan had not surrendered by now, it was clear it would need an inevitable defeat on the horizon to do so. Without imminent defeat in sight, the Japanese would fight a brutal battle for their homeland, one that would go on to the last man. However, some actually advocated an invasion because they firmly believed it would have been a very short time before Japan surrendered, and that our government knew that because we had broken the Japanese code (Zinn). The general idea of the outcome of the invasion, however, came from Japanese radio and newspapers that railed against the United States and rang out a call to arms to all Japanese—sentiments that did not bode well for a short American invasion (The Race to Build the Atomic Bomb).

Aside from resulting in the loss of countless American lives, this plan of action seemed foolish for the U.S., who would be stuck in a dead–end war while its competitors would surpass it economically and militarily. Clearly, to men like Byrnes and Groves, and most importantly, President Truman himself, this was an unacceptable and unwise course of action. To these men, the political and other issues took a back seat to saving American
lives. Many today consider this the correct choice between using the bomb and conducting a suicide invasion of Japan, but still others maintain that there were other options open to President Truman, and question why he seemed to ignore and even avoid them. Whether those alternatives would have truly worked is a hypothesis based on conjectures and assumptions; what historians have is Truman’s mindset and his consequent decision. With that knowledge, some have even gone as far as to label Truman as an evil-minded war criminal, while others blame the misperceptions and intragovernmental propaganda for affecting his decision. Those who agree with Truman’s decision view him as a strong-minded patriot; critics as a man ignorant to the “real human consequences of the use of unchecked disproportionate power…” (Williamson). Regardless of Truman’s character, the bombs were dropped, historically defended by the saving of American lives and as retribution for the attack on Pearl Harbor. The world would never be the same.

With the dropping of the bombs came the expected immediate reactions, including surrenders from the Japanese and complete shock throughout the rest of the world; additionally came the more far-reaching reaction of the beginning of the arms race with the Soviet Union and the Cold War. In fact, almost immediately after the bombs were dropped in 1945, Russia and the U.S. entered into the predicted arms race. Russia detonated its first atomic bomb in 1949, a copy of the Fat Man bomb called Joe 1, in Kazakhstan. Simultaneously, debates in the U.S. arose over building a hydrogen bomb and other, more powerful bombs believed possible. The first hydrogen bomb, Bravo, was completed and tested by the U.S. in 1954, with Russia following close behind, exploding the world’s largest nuclear bomb in 1961.

Only a year later the world came terrifyingly close to a nuclear war as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis between Russia and the U.S. (Timeline 1960). International and submarine-launched ballistic missiles were soon introduced, followed by the signing of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty and the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) in Moscow in 1972. In 1977, the United States tested a neutron bomb, or enhanced-radiation weapon, which was designed to cause immense and lethal radiation damage. It was not further developed because of the severity of its effects (Timeline 1970). By 1988 the U.S. and the Soviet Union signed the Agreement on Notification of Missile Launches, and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) (Atomic Archive). With the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 90s the Cold War was coming to a halt, but nuclear weapons were possessed by almost all major powers in the world—all a product of the scientific developments and eventual detonation of the Manhattan Project’s two atomic bombs on Japan decades earlier.

Tied into these concrete examples of the effects of the Project, there was a much more abstract force at work in shaping the bombs’ effect on the future. Since the beginning of the arms race, past the end of the Cold War and up to the present, nuclear weapons have been steadily becoming a reality for many nations. Although the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 currently has 189 states signed on, the world still deals with issues surrounding nuclear weapons as new nations attain nuclear power. North Korea, for instance, tested its first bomb in 2006, and nations such as Iraq, Pakistan, and Israel have caused political strain over their nuclear weapons policies (Du Preez). Similarly, Iran has been battling the International Atomic Energy Agency to expand its uranium enrichment under auspices of a civilian nuclear energy program. Because of these developments, international policy is in a constant state of flux. In this time of uncertainty, it is important that the world remember the original atomic bombings and the history behind them. Looking back into American history, we see the men who toiled for hours under the Manhattan Project, the brave soldiers who died on the battlefield, and the men who influenced decisions during World War II.
This may lead us to jump to conclusions about our nation’s use of the atomic bomb, but the problem of the bomb goes far deeper than U.S. history, for the greater issue breaks free of American history into the history of humanity itself. Broadening our perspective, then, we must look at the men who died fighting for nations that were not our own, and we must share the horror of those who witnessed the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The scars created on those days still burn in the hearts of citizens of nations around the world. While it may seem easy to look back on the use of the atomic bomb as just another day in history, the lasting effects of this action cannot be ignored. What was our goal in dropping the bomb? Above all else, America was striving for peace. We were searching for an end to a war that seemingly had no end in sight. We wanted to finally be able to put our minds to rest. However noble our intentions, what did this action bring? Instead of peace of mind, it brought a lasting and biting fear. It began a new kind of war, one that could not be followed battle by battle, one that, seemingly, could never be won or lost. This Cold War would leave the world fearing its own destruction could come on any given day, at the simple click of a button, and that fear would extend even past the end of the Cold War. So, in this light, can one truly look at an atomic weapon as a source of military defense? Indeed, the broad scale of change and long-lasting effect of only one instance of use proves otherwise.

Today there is rumor of nuclear proliferation across the globe and with each new nation that obtains a nuclear weapon the worry of the world increases tenfold. Above self-defense and global recognition stands the altar of the general good. Let us again look at our objectives, a world where nuclear power is a daily threat is a world where peace of mind cannot exist. We are not a nation that advocates destruction. We are not a people who will sit by as we watch our world crumble. We should not be a people, then, who allow our world to be torn apart at the seams by the pull of nuclear threats. We must realize the need for a limiting of nuclear power that allows no nation to push its own motives over the general good. We must not forget the cataclysmic events of our past. This is the road to safety. This is the road to a future where the world will not have to live in fear. This is the road to peace, and we must follow it without faltering, for in peace lies hope, and without hope, the future may never come to pass.

In retrospect, The Manhattan Project was one of the most significant—and secret—projects ever undertaken, shaping the future of the world in a way far beyond what its creators could have imagined, stirring moral debates on the controversial conditions of Japan’s surrender, and creating both short- and long-term effects in military conditions which put the United States in a deadlock with the Soviets up to and through the end of the Cold War. Through intense domestic and international secrecy surrounding the Project, the United States was able to create and detonate the most devastating weapon then known to man. However, the most important lesson learned from the bomb cannot be expressed in a scientific formula. It is a harsh reality, yet a simple idea, that the entire world could potentially be destroyed by the flip of a switch. True, a world war was ended with the dropping of the bombs, arguably saving hundreds of thousands of lives, but the same event marked the beginning of the production of untold numbers of arms and weapons. Perhaps the real lesson to be learned is where science and ethics meet. While ideally science should pursue knowledge, there is a point where knowledge becomes dangerous, and, given its danger, should be checked. This paper cannot explore the extensive limits of science or the ethics of the bomb; suffice it to say that we can never know if fewer lives were saved with the dropping of the bombs, but we must do everything in our power to stop such a loss of life from happening again.
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Instructor’s Foreword

I was a bit concerned heading into the Winter quarter that my new class, “Chick–Flicks and Break–Up Songs: The Rhetoric of Relationships,” would only yield arbitrary explorations of dating and social life at Stanford. Jocelyn Jiao’s essay is perhaps the best example of why my concerns were unfounded. Although class discussions were largely based on the amorous pursuits of Stanford freshmen, our research and writing often tackled issues of identity, communication, and sociological pressures—all serious issues covered in nearly every academic text. Jocelyn’s paper took the same course, initially exploring the seemingly light–hearted issue of “yellow fever” (the unspoken fascination of Asian culture/people by other races and cultures) and turning her inquiry into an argument about what it means to be Asian American and female in the context of a socially diverse environment like the one present at Stanford.

In order to explore these issues, Jocelyn spent hours researching data–heavy doctoral dissertations, antiquated books written on forgotten subjects like Orientalism, and conducting focus groups and surveys to gauge the impact that such issues have on fellow students. It was a tiring, and trying, months–long project that pushed Jocelyn into discussions that she probably never intended. I was never worried about her ability to complete the project, but I was becoming more conscious of how big her inquiry had become when she began applying her primary research results to the findings in her contextual analysis. Again, my concerns as an instructor were ameliorated after I received a wall post on my Facebook account from Jocelyn the night the paper was due. When she should have been putting the final touches on her essay, she instead took the time to write: “I should let you know that this monster of a paper has taken over/ruined my life. And I’m kinda enjoying it. Thank you.” After reading through Jocelyn’s final paper though, there’s no doubt who should be thanking whom.

Chris Gerben
used to read out loud to empty rooms in houses that were not mine. When I was in elementary school, my parents spent every Sunday cruising around the city, looking for open houses, condos, or renovated apartments. I had no interest in those freshly painted dwellings; often, as some real estate agent pitched towards my eager parents, I would wander around listlessly or lean against some spotless counter. Sooner or later, I started bringing along books with me to read so that I wouldn’t be so bored—anything from Nancy Drew to *War and Peace* (which I did not understand a word of). Stumbling around those often–unfurnished rooms, it was oddly consoling to feel the worn spines under my palm and even the sting of the edges of the paper: I received countless comforting paper cuts on those Sundays. While my parents floated to one side of the house, I would sit myself down in the furthest, smallest room and read. The silence, however, would soon get to me. So, sooner or later, I began reading out loud.

Growing up Asian and female was not easy. *Why don’t your eyes slant up*, cried some boys at school as they pulled at my hair. *Why are you ugly*. When I hit them in retaliation, they yelped back: *you’re so violent, you’re not even a girl, you ugly boy*. It only drove me to strike back quicker and harder, but I could never verbally defend myself. I was helplessly voiceless, silent even as the words pounded at my teeth, stretching my vocal chords taut. The boys’ taunting seeped into my skin with no trouble at all. I was unarmed, exposed. The only thing I could think to do was to hit them and then run away to some corner to cry. *She’s dumb too*, they would snicker. *Can’t even talk*. Strangely enough, reading out loud saved me. Whatever grievance I had suffered during the week, I would weave into the words of the book I read on Sunday. When the villains howled with rage, so did I. When the heroines whispered in grief, so did I. By fifth grade, my voice started taking on a life of its own: I started composing speeches, rants, and delicious one–liners that I could use against my torturers. “You don’t hurt me,” I would shout towards wood–paneled walls, at the cream–colored armchair. And one sunny Monday morning, fresh from practice, I faced my bullies on the blacktop and snarled: “You can’t hurt me; I don’t care what you say!” I screeched and railed until every drop of bitterness had spilled out of me, onto concrete, into bright air. The boys backpedaled and stared. That moment, my voice, their faces: glorious, glorious.

Yet, one question begs to be asked: why did I have so much trouble speaking in the first place? Why was my first instinct to feel ashamed, as if my mouth were too unworthy to fill with words? For years, I have struggled to answer this question. I have even come to know other Asian American girls who have felt or do feel the same way. In fact, my experience was in no way unique or as truly horrifying as it could have been. As exposed by research of the sociological development of the Asian American female
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identity, a sizable portion of Asian American women find themselves voiceless during social or intimate situations. This repression of the self has been institutionalized and normalized by prevalent racial stereotypes that define Asian women as either obedient, docile mutes or exotic toys. These stereotypes even form the basis of the concept “yellow fever”: non–Asians, usually Caucasians, claiming a sexual or romantic preference for the Asian race. Even more startling is the fact that most Asian American females do not defy their own subjugation; whether out of apathy or ignorance, Asian American women do not actively work to challenge or neutralize the labels placed upon them.

**The Birth of Something Terrible**

The female half of the Asian race suffers a long history of fetishization in the West. In his article, “Orientalism in America during the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century: Portrayals of Marriage Guides,” the author Heasim Sul explores Orientalism through the lens of the marriage guide, a popular literary genre that “represents and deals with sexual information in Victorian America” (Sul 31). Though Sul claims, “American Orientalism portrayed Europe as well as the Arabs, Islam, the Africans, and the American Indians…” (Sul 31), East Asia is often also associated with the exotic, the backwards—the classically Oriental. Therefore, one can presume that East Asia and the Middle East would identify similarly to the average nineteenth–century American. Sul presents a highly specific test case, the marriage guide; yet, their writings can speak for an entire country’s disgust for the Orient and all its peoples. While the typical Victorian marriage guide typically contained guidelines for choosing a spouse, proposing marriage, and enduring pregnancy, it also included “medical information about sexual organs and behaviors.” Orientals supposedly had “abnormalities of women’s sexual organs,” especially “dealing with deformities in… particularly the vulva” (Sul 31). Such “deformities” directly correlated with “a lower stage of evolution” and that “the moral maturity of a society was thus said to affect anatomical development of the body” (Sul 32). As a result, the marriage guides presented the Orient as “a place full of sexual energy where emotion and the physical senses were so pervasive that they took over the realm of reason, justice, and morality” (Sul 32). Orientals became, in many senses, the “Others”—crude, ignorant, and sub–human compared to morally sound, scientifically enlightened Americans.

Patricia Wong Hall’s article on historical Asian roles in American visual media presents another distinctive outlook on racial stereotyping—through the lens of motion pictures of the twentieth century. Her research shows that the flux of Asian typecasting often has depended upon the political relations between the United States and Asia. During World War II, “Americans considered the Japanese ‘the bad guys’ and the Chinese, ‘the good guys’” (Hall 1)—they were portrayed accordingly in the films of the time. But what is especially interesting are the roles that Asian women often played in early films. Anna May Wong, the first Asian woman to be featured in American cinema, had roles that were “exotic,” “sensuous”—but always “villainous” (Hall 1). She embodied the prototype of the “Dragon Lady”; movies of the following decades would typecast Asian women as similarly “evil, coy, mysterious, and cartoon–like” (Hall 1). One film of particular interest, *The World of Suzy Wong*, debuted in 1960. In *Suzy Wong*, Nancy Kwan played Mei Ling, “a Hong Kong prostitute with a ‘heart of gold,’” who embodied the new female Asian stereotype: “docile, passive, and living to please their men” (Hall 1–2). This “deferential,” obedient Asian female waits on her masculine, dominant Caucasian lover. Her individuality and intelligence have been infantilized; her passive
nature renders her helpless and marginal. Furthermore, there is an implied role of sexual passivity and servitude as well; Mei Ling and the other roles Asian women played were "geishas" or "lotus blossoms" (Hall 2). Though one would think that being well-versed in carnal knowledge could have lent these women some measure of clout or authority, the psychological infantilization of their characters deems them morally “beneath” and utterly dependent upon their lovers. Coinciding with Sul’s claims about Orientalism, the sexually exotic again seems irretrievably linked to the ethically, intrinsically inferior.

One can perceive the unmistakable connection between films’ racial typcasting described by Hall and the Oriental “Otherness” evident in Sul’s marriage guides. Both depict the Asian race as foreign, sexually deviant, and morally unsound—intrinsically inferior to the Caucasian race. The Asian stereotypes in Hall’s article clearly draw upon the attitudes toward Orientals presented in Sul’s article: to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Americans, Orientals were beings not only curious or amusing, but inferior physically and mentally. Such classification formed the basis for the racial stereotyping of the Middle Eastern and East Asian races. One can even infer that contemporary “Asian fetishes” trace their roots to this sinister precedent, this overtly bigoted view of the Orient as a place of sexual vulgarity and deformity. The blatantly racist teachings of the Victorian marriage guides reveal that the “Asian fixation” stems not from simple sexual lust but from this twisted taxonomy of the races.

**The Monster Hides Beneath My Bed**

If one simply attempted to be aware, one would immediately recognize that America’s attitude towards Asians has not changed much during the past century. Current everyday popular American media and culture still batter and flatten the Asian woman’s identity into that of a marginalized, lesser creature. For example, *Miss Saigon* and *Madama Butterfly* are beloved, contemporary works of art that are sadly indicative of this long-standing bigotry. In both cases, Asian women are portrayed, as Hall points out in her article on Asian roles throughout twentieth-century cinema, as intrinsically inferior to their Caucasian male lovers. These Asian women cannot even be respectable wives; they must embody the lure of the strange, the obscene—the devious, exotic seductresses who lead decent white men from the yellow brick road. The patronizing roles they play do not give them any measure of independence or intelligence. Even 2006’s box office hit *Memoirs of a Geisha*, which grossed hundreds of millions of dollars worldwide and featured a Japanese geisha searching for love, was still at heart a story about an Asian prostitute. Of course, in the end, these “lotus blossoms” do not retain any hold over their Caucasian lovers. These white men, for whom these Asian women have laid down their lives, ultimately abandon their “exotic” mistresses for the white “marriage material” back home. In both *Madama Butterfly* and *Miss Saigon*, the Asian woman—marginalized, abandoned—consequently commits suicide, while the beautiful music and production hide the horror of a life taken in despair. Sul would say that Mei Ling, Butterfly, and all similar characters clearly embody the sexualized, servile Oriental: less than human. Thus, these productions convey the same message as Sul’s nineteenth-century marriage guides and Hall’s sexualized, trivialized film prostitutes—that Asian women are marginal figures, that their needs and wants come secondary to those of white men.

Further evidence of the relevance of these stereotypes can be found in the oddest of places—for example, the recent trend in restaurants of serving sushi lying atop women’s bodies: “naked sushi,” or “body sushi” (R. Shin 1). Clearly, practicing restaurant owners
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are attempting to sell more food by eroticizing its presentation, by bringing together two of the masses’ most profitable passions: food and sex. The practice obviously objectifies the female body, but Cherry Cayabyab, president of the Seattle chapter of the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum (NAPAWF), had another reason to object strongly to the trend: “...the reason why we’re going after this is [because] there is a distinct way Asian women are being recruited for such a concept” (qtd. in R. Shin 1). Aileen Trilles, another member of NAPAWF, states that body sushi “...perpetuates stereotypes that Asians are exotic things...” (qtd. in R. Shin 1). Daniel Park of Bonzai Asian Pub and Bistro, which offers body sushi weekly, claimed that the practice does not objectify females nor Asians, but is instead “art in a restaurant setting” (R. Shin 1). Such a defense can only be viewed with skepticism, considering how the naked female body is inevitably a sex symbol, no matter how it is dressed or where it is placed. As Trilles asks pointedly, “If a guy were naked as platter, would that draw crowds to come in” (qtd. in R. Shin 1)? Whether restaurant owners will admit it, “body sushi” is not simply an erotic ploy. It has inherently demeaning implications—that the female body’s practical function is that of an unassuming object. Furthermore, having an Asian female lie atop a table and allow food to be eaten off her furthers the expectation that Asian women are passive, voiceless—and they are willingly, happily so. Norma Timbang of the Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center in Seattle reveals the detrimental implications of utilizing the body for commercial aspects so haphazardly: “When women are objectified, they are more likely to be victims of violence” (R. Shin 1). Violence against Asian women is a prominent, unrecognized issue that reveals the internalization of existing stereotypes; it will be explored further on in this paper.

Further proof of the merciless objectification of Asian women pervades American everyday life. The Village Voice, a free weekly newspaper published in New York City, contains a large section of adult ads in the back. In the April 12, 2002 issue, 33 percent of the ads were “Asian adult ads” (E. Shin 1). These ads attempt to remain politically correct by using “friendlier terminology like ‘Asian’ rather than ‘Oriental,’ ‘Sweet’ rather than ‘Sweet–Smelling’”; yet, as Elise Shin writes in AsianWeek, “...who’s reading these nuanced differences when one is undergoing a visual locked down on what looks like an exposed nipple” (E. Shin 1)? Shin illustrates her point further by exposing a similar trend in the Verizon Super Pages: in 2002, “Asian escort ads comprised only 8 percent of the listing....” In the most recent version, they consist of almost 50 percent of the ads (E. Shin 2). The widespread misconception that Asian women are exotic playthings leads to “a culturally sanctioned imbalance of power,” according to Gill Greensite of the University of California Santa Cruz Rape Prevention Education Program (qtd. in Han 2). It allows “some white men [to] use racist stereotypes to enhance their dominant roles and reinforce the Asian woman’s passive role” (qtd. in Han 2). From Miss Saigon to “body sushi” to “Sweet–Smelling Orientals,” these Asian stereotypes have invaded popular media and daily life. Indeed, one could say that American culture actually reinforces the subjugation of the Asian woman.

The Monster Occupies the Heart

Every teenager struggles with his or her identity during puberty; often, youth will adopt and shed identity after identity while forging their self-conception. Countless self-reflections of Asian American women can be found simply by flipping through any local Asian American newspaper; in these first-hand accounts, these women recount
their internal struggles with their entwined racial and gender identity. In *A. Magazine*’s April 1991 issue, Suzanne Wah Lee describes her insecurities about her appearance as a teenager: “I flipped through countless editions of *Vogue*, *Seventeen*, and *Glamour*, gaping at pictures of long–limbed, bird–thin, white models... I remember standing before the mirror and making the inevitable comparisons, feeling empty and insecure” (S.W. Lee 1). Such magazines exalted one ideal body: “tall, thin, blonde, blue–eyed... breasts out to there, and legs that went on forever,” characteristics “...unattainable—if, by birth, you happened to be Asian” (S.W. Lee 1). Such messages can be shown to have direct negative consequences on the psychological development of female Asian American teenagers. Cong–suk Han’s article for the *International Examiner*, “Distorted Images,” explores the range and effect of negative media images of Asian Americans. He cites Paula Yoo’s article “Troubled Waters” for the *Examiner*, in which she wrote how, as a teenager, “...she hated her nose, hair and eyes... she wanted red curls and freckles. She wanted to be anyone except herself” (Han ). This institutionalized self–hatred, Han claims, is highly detrimental to the development of Asian American youth; according to him, “students who are preadolescent may not have the cognitive skills required to separate stereotypes from reality.” Yoo’s struggle with her own identity may echo that of many an Asian American youth, “the result of internalizing the media image that Asians were less than human” (Han 3). Compounding the problem, Asian role models were either inaccessible or unavailable altogether. “...Images of Asian women were scarce” in the first place, and Hollywood’s version of the Asian woman included the likes of Suzy Wong and Anna May Wong—the Asian screen sirens of early American film described in Hall’s article (S.W. Lee 1). Lee found their one–dimensional identities to be “as real... as Saturday morning cartoon characters” (S.W. Lee 1).

Dr. Diane Carol Fujino’s dissertation, *Extending Exchange Theory: Effects of Ethnicity and Gender on Asian American Heterosexual Relationships*, unearths a similar point after she asked several hundred UCLA college students to rank the physical beauty of Asian Americans versus Caucasian Americans:

…both White and Asian subjects rated White Americans significantly more attractive than Asian Americans.... This finding is not surprising given the American standard of beauty that favors European features presented in the media... and evidenced by, among other data, the demand for double–eyelid surgery by Asian women. (Fujino 130)

An apparent preference for “European features” insinuates at the persistent influence of Sul’s Orientalism, the nineteenth–century belief that Orientals were somehow physically deformed and evolutionarily inferior to the average Caucasian American. Yes, Fujino does not state that Asian facial appearances were necessarily found to be unattractive; yet, the very fact that Asian women would consider double–eyelid surgery suggests that they find their own natural features lacking. Furthermore, by undergoing the procedure, Asians themselves perpetuate the prejudice staked against them. Even in the globalized, highly connected world that we now inhabit, the Anglo–European standard of beauty ultimately reigns supreme. To this day, to Caucasians and even fellow Asians, the “Oriental” is still the “lesser.”

The rest of Dr. Fujino’s study attempts to apply exchange theory, “a learning theory that focuses on the rewards and costs potential mates and relationships can offer” (Fujino 37), to explain the high rate of interracial marriage between Asian women and non–Asian men. She finds that “…the majority of non–Asian partners are White” (Fujino 14) and that “a larger percentage of Chinese and Japanese women marry White men than Chinese and Japanese men marry White women” (Fujino 12). These assertions correlate with
the points presented in Hall’s article: in movies throughout the early–twentieth century, Asian women were servile objects whose sole purpose was to please their Caucasian lovers—the Miss Saigon with her G.I. Joe. They were never paired with Asian men (Hall 1). These films created the expectation that Asian women aim to please and engage only with Caucasian men, and this expectation is clearly met in Fujino’s study. Though one cannot claim that the films of the past century directly convinced Asian women to marry Caucasian men, they certainly reflect a certain attitude about whom Asian women do and should date—they propagate the expectation. Thus, one can see the current relevancy of the so–called harmless “yellow fever”; Hall and Sul’s articles detail its extended history, but Fujino’s study, done in 1992, illustrates racial stereotypes’ unrelenting influence among even the country’s youthful, college students.

This is not to say that all Asian women fulfill the prevailing expectations. Yet, even those who do find their own identity cannot escape the presence of such misconceptions. Lee’s “cartoon characters,” being the only Asian women in popular media, created false expectations in non–Asians about how Asian women should appear and act. As Lee describes, “even if I rejected these Hollywood icons, these caricatures had etched themselves into the collective mentality… some non–Asians could not—or would not—divorce the stereotypes from the reality and continue to view [Asians] as Suzie Wongs or Dragon Ladies” (S.W. Lee 1). This disconnect between Asians and the stereotypes placed upon them is expanded upon in Elise Shin’s article in AsianWeek on her own experiences with Asian fetishization: “The other day, a coworker said it was his fantasy ‘to have sex with an Asian chick like you.’ Over a candlelight dinner, a first date confided he doesn’t date white [sic] women and can only come on a woman’s face” (E. Shin 1). While neither of these men directly expressed their hope that Shin would indulge predilections, they obviously confided in her with the expectation that she would not, at least, be instantly repulsed. Shin does recognize the perversity of such expectations: “While this is obviously an issue of power, what is fetishization but a form of sexual power politics” (E. Shin 1)? Yet, she ultimately does not bluntly reject the advances: “…I should have thrown wine in his face. I should have said something, but I didn’t” (E. Shin 1). To recognize the implications of such sexual preferences illustrates that Shin is an astute, mentally capable woman. Yet, she does not take the next, seemingly natural step and openly express her disgust; she does not reveal her inner discomfort. While one could argue that such a decision is personal, this hesitation to speak seems to afflict Asian women en masse. Shin admits herself, “I think about the lesser things I’ve remained quiet about and it’s a disease, I think. Our culture of silence is becoming a disease that is holding us back” (E. Shin 1).

As mentioned earlier, the most serious consequences of this “culture of silence” occur in the realm of physical abuse within a relationship. In 1991, “Asian women and children made up 13 percent of Massachusetts domestic violence deaths” (Furiya 2). In fact, throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, there was “a rise in domestic violence reports and deaths among Asian women and their children” (Furiya 1). Further, “Asian women are 2.3 times more likely to be murdered in a domestic violence situation than white women” (Furiya 1). In Australia, Asian women are six times more likely to be murdered by non–Asian husbands than are white women (Furiya 1). Yet, as Chairperson of the Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Rev. Cheng Imm Tan points out that the battery of Asian women is “…such an overlooked issue…. Women don’t have a voice” (qtd. in Furiya 1). This is primarily due to their own apparent reticence to confront their abusers directly. According to Tina Shum, a social worker at San Francisco’s Cameron
House, “Asian American women are more likely than not to seek professional help” (qtd. in Furiya 2). Ernest Lew, attorney at Nihon Machi Legal Outreach, a San Francisco nonprofit legal agency, rationalizes this decision: “These women view legal counsel as their last alternative following fruitless attempts to turn their abusive relationship around on their own” (qtd. in Furiya 2). By refusing to actively fight their abusers, these women unconsciously choose to be voiceless. They have internalized the expectations that they must be docile and accepting. Furthermore, the Asian American community itself does not necessarily support the legal efforts of its battered women. When the San Francisco Cameron House, a multiservice agency based in Chinatown, started its Battered Women Assistance Program fourteen years ago, “the churches didn’t accept [the program] because they didn’t believe [it was] saving the marriage” (Furiya 3). By placing the state of a marriage above the well-being of the woman, even the Asian woman’s close community debases her social position and value.

One could say that most women trapped in abusive relationships must, to some extent, avoid confronting their abusers; of course, all consistently battered women must, at the least, feel insecure about their worth and value as human beings. Yet, only Asian American women find themselves in the position in which the surrounding culture—American culture—consciously forgives and even encourages their trivialization. This institutionalized prejudice afflicts even top government officials, the supposed role models of the nation: when three U.S. military personnel beat and raped a twelve-year-old Okinawan girl in Japan in 1995, commanding officer Admiral Richard C. Macke commented to reporters: “I think it was absolutely stupid, I’ve said several times. For the price they paid to rent the car they could have had a girl” (qtd. in Wong 1). Of course, these words led to his forced resignation. Yet, they reveal the prevalence of the perception that the Asian woman is “a saleable item,” “a delectable bargain” (Wong 1), and like an object, expendable. New York City’s Asian Women’s Center has long contested that violence against Asian women is directly linked to racial prejudice: “Over the years, the center has butted heads with specific industries that promote images or acts of violence against Asian women. For example, Asian mail-order bride catalogs, massage parlors that exploit women, and media stereotypes and images such as the ‘Miss Saigon.’” As shown before, the attitude that Asian women are trivial, are helpless, is prevalent on the screen, on the dinner table, throughout daily life. It is no wonder that Asian women have processed such messages about who they should be and have internalized them.

Knights Riding Out to Battle

Of course, one should not presume that all Asian American women passively accept the lot assigned to them—far from it. In fact, multitudes of Asian Americans are beginning to rise up in defiance of such stereotypes. One does not have to look far in literature to find accounts of Asian American women resisting their own subjugation and trivialization. At the end of her article, Elise Shin finally speaks: she lectures a cat-calling, sixteen-year-old boy. Shin calls out to all her fellow Asian women as she concludes, “We need to speak out…. Say something. Say anything. Every word is one of defiance that we’re not all whores looking for happy endings” (E. Shin 2). In addition, Asian women’s groups are sprouting and coming into relevance—the NAPAWF, for example, celebrated its tenth anniversary this past December at the Loyola Marymount University campus in Los Angeles. Founded in 1996 by one hundred Asian American attendees at the UN’s Fourth Conference on Women, the growing organization now consists of seven chapters.
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throughout the nation (Spees 1). Asian American literature itself continues to break down barriers as well: Geraldine Kudaka published in 1995 the first anthology of Asian American erotic literature, *On A Bed of Rice*. During an interview with *Yolk* magazine in 1998, Kudaka describes how “some of the initial reviews… regarding this book were negative…. People wanted more parlor/G.I. kind of stories, heavier on the sexual content, more populist in appeal” (S. Lee 1). Yet, she ultimately decided that the collection should consist of works about “the real experiences of Asian Americans… the human side of a people that have, for a long time, been regarded as objects of sexual desire, not a people of deep emotional and relational experience.” As a result, many of the included pieces do not simply contain erotic fluff, but instead focus in on the realm of personal struggle, shame, and sadness (S. Lee 2). *On A Bed of Rice*, like Shin’s piece of self–reflection and the NAPAWF’s work, bases the Asian American identity in true, personal experience instead of the banal. From the amount of available literature on the subject, one would imagine that increasing numbers of Asian Americans have begun taking active steps against the stereotypes. One would think that most Asian Americans must be, at least, conscious of the issue at hand. Yet, as my primary research indicates, this is far from the case. Even in the aggressively intellectual and politically correct sphere of Stanford University, non–Asians and Asian Americans alike actively or passively perpetuate the racist stereotyping of the Asian race.

*Testing the Monster Myself*

Because of my childhood experiences, so much of my personality is based off of the necessary fact that I am indeed Asian American. It is therefore inevitable that my personal feelings are intertwined with the issue at hand. I have always expected that other Asian Americans have had to mentally situate themselves in relation to existing stereotypes. I have always assumed that each and every Asian American has experienced some sort of “racial experience,” being preferred, ignored, maltreated—being treated differently, period—based solely on race. Therefore, I went into my primary research with the goal of configuring the various ways Asian Americans do confront their racial identity. For this purpose, I decided to utilize two methodological approaches: an online personal survey and a focus group. First, I wanted to test whether Asian American racial stereotypes truly exist; my secondary sources detail the possible effects of such prejudices but do not base any assumptions or conclusions in concrete numbers. Using a personal survey seemed enviable, because it presented an efficient method to rapidly gather responses; it would be impossible to perceive the presence of a established racial stereotype from only a few, sparse interviews from a limited number of people. In addition, since virtually all Stanford students find it imperative to check their e–mail in order to stay updated for classes and to keep in contact with fellow peers and professors, having the survey based off a website, *Surveymonkey.com*, required survey participants to simply take a few minutes off of their already compulsory e–mail checking to fill out a few questions online.

The focus group seemed like another enviable research method because of its emphasis on group interaction; since my secondary sources did not seem to address how Asian American females might rebel against or counter such existing racial labels, I decided I had to obtain the evidence myself. I assumed that if I could gather several female Asian Stanford students and other non–Asian Stanford students, I would have the required racial tension in the group to allow room for disagreement over the issue—I wanted to see how my fellow Asian American females would respond to the presented stereotypes
in the presence of non–Asians. After all, stereotypes are not founded and perpetuated by
academic writings, but in daily life during normal conversation; it is too easy to express
one’s true emotions when hiding behind the inevitable disconnect of the written word. It
is too easy to claim to be an independent, fearless woman on paper. I therefore wanted to
re–enact typical normal conversation to observe the Asian American female’s day–to–day
coping with her racial and gender identities; in other words, can we Asian American
women be brave and confident about our identity each moment of every day—when it
is most essential? Also, since racist prejudice is naturally a sensitive topic, most Stanford
students will not willingly admit to having racist presumptions. Therefore, the focus group
proves even more useful because people generally speak more frankly when spontaneously
responding to another person when addressing a posed question.

The survey yielded expected results that correspond with the claims of my secondary
sources: 70% of survey participants, when presented with a picture of a random Caucasian
man, “Bob,” and Asian woman, “Claire,” and asked to describe their relationship, thought
that Bob “made the first move” (Jiao, Survey). One respondent wrote, “Claire looks too
cute and sweet and demure to make a move on a guy.” Another wrote, “…whenever I’ve
seen Caucasian men with Asian girls, they [sic] girls always really cater their boyfriends….I
would assume that ‘Claire’ is a VERY ‘obedient’ girlfriend” (Jiao, Survey). When
participants were presented with a picture of an Asian girl standing against a wall, “Cassie,”
and asked to describe her physical appearance and possible personality, 55% imagined
“Cassie” to be “shy.” 27% described her as either “demure,” “innocent,” or “pure” (Jiao,
Survey). Interestingly enough, the overwhelming majority of participants imagined
“Cassie” to be either a student or in modeling or retail. Only two respondents wrote that
“Cassie” was any pre–medical or pre–business track in school; only one thought she could
be a “young professional” (Jiao, Survey). One cannot deny that there is an underlying
trend running through the results: none of the participants placed “Claire” and “Cassie”
in a position of power. For the former’s case, not one person thought “Claire” could have
initiated the relationship; not one person described her as the more energetic, sociable
half of the couple (Jiao, Survey). “Cassie” was described in a similar manner; none of
the survey participants imagined her to be an extrovert, and no one imagined her to be
currently on any particularly strenuous career path (Jiao, Survey). While none of the
survey answers were blatantly racist, the results obviously showed that Asian females are
perceived to be passive. This correlates faithfully with the stereotype that Asian women
are docile and compliant, that the “Oriental” does not act but is acted upon. What is
more interesting is that 81% of the survey participants were Asian females and 64% were
either undergraduate or graduate students at Stanford (Jiao, Survey). Even some of the
most intelligent young Asian women in the nation have internalized this prejudiced, false
view of themselves.

While the survey results were useful, the focus group interaction yielded far more
curious findings. The group consisted of ten freshmen; the first question I posed was:
“What are Asian girls like? Is there any particular way in which they act or present
themselves” (Jiao, Focus Group)? I expected that at least one person, Asian or not, would
venture out a politically correct disclaimer such as, “Well, I don’t think any race or gender
can be generalized….” This was not so. Instead, the non–Asian males (two Caucasians, one
Hispanic, and one African), without a moment’s hesitation, listed several descriptions that
follow the exact stereotypes: “more down to earth than white girls,” “sweeter,” “humble,”
and “more innocent” (Jiao, Focus Group). One in particular revealed that he also thought
that Asian girls had “sideways vaginas” that were “wider” in some unimaginable way (Jiao, Focus Group). Overall, the boys did not seem to think that their words were in any way particularly limiting or discriminatory. When asked if “yellow fever” is in any way a “bad thing”—unfair or offensive to the Asian race—these same males shook their heads. They commented that it is simply a compliment to be the “preferred” race; one asked rhetorically, “If it’s working for you, what’s the problem” (Jiao, Focus Group)? Throughout this entire conversation, I remained silent. Though I felt compelled to explain some of the racially prejudiced implications of “yellow fever,” I wanted to see what the Asian girls, most of whom I would name as good friends of mine, would say. I waited for a reaction. Not one girl directly responded to her fellow male freshmen. One girl volunteered an example of a man approaching her with the words, “Konnichiwa!” Another mentioned that she did not particularly identify with being “Asian” at all; it was simply her race and did not reflect on her development as a person (Jiao, Focus Group). Yet, ultimately, they said nothing. I felt like I was the only person who was offended by what I was hearing. At the end of the session, I offered my own opinion; I explained some of my research and demonstrated that such stereotypes are rooted in bigoted views of Asians that have been propagated through the past two centuries. After doing so, there was a long pause throughout the room. None of the participants in the group seemed to have thought about the origins of the “Asian fixation” (Jiao, Focus Group). From the sounds of it, both Asian females and non–Asian males did not feel altogether comfortable with the information I had presented.

It was only after the session had ended when, to my surprise, my Asian friends approached me and expressed their concern. One mentioned that some of the ways the non–Asian males described Asian girls was “creepy” (Jiao, Focus Group); they all agreed that they felt like such stereotypes did not have any real basis. They were also deeply disturbed by the male who had claimed that Asian girls had unusual genitals (Jiao, Focus Group). Yet, because the girls had not said any of this during the actual focus group, I had assumed that they had no feelings on the matter. I did not understand why they had not felt compelled to speak—to speak when their very right of self–creation was being questioned. It deeply disturbed me that the self–repression I had read about in books had manifested itself in those close to me. By not speaking out, my fellow female peers had let their silence be taken as agreement; they let the non–Asian males walk away unenlightened, unchallenged. They had not spoken when it was most needed of them. Moreover, they did not feel it was necessary to do so. My friends aided in their own enslavement.

We Are All St. George

If even Stanford students—some of the most educated, intelligent youth in America—can fall prey to racial stereotypes or will remain voiceless in the face of such prejudice, then surely this only demonstrates the precarious position the Asian American woman occupies in the minds of fellow Americans. She has been systemically marginalized and trivialized by American culture and media; her institutionalized repression has existed for two centuries, and one can only presume that it will take just as long, if not longer, to set her free. I do not imply that Asian women should begin rioting in the streets. Instead, I call upon Asian women of every age, ethnicity, and background to first and foremost fulfill their duties to themselves; they should love themselves for their unique quirks, their own idiosyncrasies. Though stereotypes and false assumptions may seem untamable, they will only prevail in the face of silence. If we Asian American females refuse to indulge the
most unconscious bigotry and suppression, then no person can accuse us of compliance. We must raise our voices and speak truly, sincerely, without hesitation.

I own a quote book, an amassed collection of uplifting words I have come upon—words said by Neil Gaiman, Gloria Steinem, and Eleanor Roosevelt. I lend it to those I care about who are in pain, in need, in doubt. All these rich quotations say this: you yourself are the highest truth—let nobody tell you otherwise. But, I tell my friends, that is only half of it. You must use your mouth, that sorry messenger; your lips are not meant to conceal but to reveal, not meant to be stiff but open and sincere. You must shout these words, send them tumbling into silent rooms, into crowded buses. Most of all, I tell my friends to speak. Speak and it will all be yours.

I no longer read out loud to empty rooms. I do not need to.
Works Cited


Instructor’s Foreword

Theodor Adorno once called for thinkers to imagine the essay as “an arena for intellectual experience.” In “Hugo Chávez’s Debut: Rhetoric and Petro–Politics in the World Theater,” Annalise Blum does just that by coming to terms with the complexities of the controversial Chávez as he performs and strategizes on national, regional, and international rhetorical and political stages. What Annalise achieves so brilliantly in her essay is a fusion of content and form. While confessing that Chávez’s extreme contemporaneity makes him difficult to understand, Annalise’s dramatic structure enacts for readers what we can definitively say about him before the curtain of time gives us some historical distance on his performance: that Chávez is playing at petro–politics, that he is turning global oil struggles into a theater of power and a rhetoric of resistance positioned against the United States.

The subtleties of Annalise’s approach will be evident to any reader who spends a couple of hours with her essay. But what might further interest that reader is how Annalise’s approach emerged out of a truly recursive and revisionary process of writing and research; the form of “Hugo Chávez’s Debut” was the product of a writer’s devotion to her subject and to the labors of composition. The essay began as a traditional academic paper, a contextual analysis that sought to frame the various debates around Chávez. Following the contextual analysis, I presented the class with the challenge of inventing some “informal” strategies for organizing their research–based argument. Upon reflection, Annalise realized that dramatic rhetoric is central to Chávez’s strategy, and that dramatic rhetoric might therefore make sense as a structural principle for her RBA. This was no easy task. Annalise had to figure out the dramatic corollary to a transition between paragraphs; she had to spend time with political plays such as Tony Kushner’s unforgettable Angels in America in order to master dramatic form; she needed to sort out how to write a “play” and still construct a recognizably academic argument rooted in research. Annalise even internalizes this last problem in her essay, giving us a narrator who is also a researcher, one at times humorously surrounded by a clutter of sources, drafts, magazines, and books. Through considered choices such as these, Annalise actually shifts us away from the metaphor that Adorno offers for the essay. Annalise’s essay is finally not an arena for the intellect, but a theater of cognition that persuasively draws its audience into the dramatic intricacies of one of the most compelling actors in geopolitics today.

Joel Burges
Hugo Chávez’s Debut:  
Rhetoric and Petro–Politics in the World Theater  
A Dramatic Essay in Three Acts  

Annalise Blum  

PROGRAM:  

Playwright’s Notes  

ACT 1: The National Stage  
Scene 1: “El Libertador”  
Scene 2: Venezuela’s Second Liberator  
Scene 3: “El Presidente”  
Scene 4: Petroleum and Poverty  
Scene 5: Success?  
Scene 6: No Verdict on Venezuela  

ACT 2: The Regional Stage  
Scene 1: Buying Influence  
Scene 2: Fighting Imperialism  

ACT 3: The Global Stage  
Scene 1: Negotiating with the Axis of Evil  
Scene 2: Flashback—The UN, September 20, 2006  
Scene 3: The Face–Off  
Scene 4: Two Rallies  
Scene 5: The Response  
Scene 6: Final Words  
  
Playwright’s Afterword  

CAST:  

The Narrator: A frustrated researcher, attempting to portray Hugo Chávez in a balanced manner. The narrator always stands downstage left on a separate section of the stage.  

The Hero: Hugo Chávez, dressed in a black suit, with a bright red tie. Around his neck hangs a military medal and over his right shoulder he wears a sash of red, blue and yellow stripes—the Venezuelan flag.  

The Inspiration: Simón Bolívar, wearing the helmet of a Russian dragon and a blue tunic with red trim and gold buttons. He carries the black banner of a privateer with a skull and crossbones superimposed on a motto: “Liberty or Death.”1  

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1 Adapted from a quote by Gabriel García Marquez in Tariq Ali, Pirates of the Caribbean (London: Verso, 2006), 125.
The Critics:
– Michael Shifter, vice president of the policy analysis center *The Inter-American Dialogue.*
– Alma Guillermoprieto, a Mexican journalist who writes for both the British and American press.
– Oscar Arias, president of Costa Rica.
– Eduardo Fernandez, the leader of the opposition party in Venezuela.
– Chorus of critics, a group of men ages 40–45, dressed in crisp, unwrinkled suits and carrying briefcases.


The Supporters:
– Bernardo Alvarez Herrera, Venezuela’s ambassador to the U.S.
– Jorge Rodriguez, the Vice President of Venezuela.

The Pollster: LatinoBarómetro, a well-respected independent Chilean polling firm.

The Villain: United States President George W. Bush, a cowboy hat rests at a casual angle atop his head.

PROPS:
Petroleum
Rhetoric
Politics

PLAYWRIGHT’S NOTES:

A Disclaimer:
This is a work of rhetorical drama. All the characters are based upon real figures, many of whom are still alive today. To avoid misrepresenting those portrayed in this play, words which belong to the speaker are in quotation marks, and I have cited the work where the quotation was reproduced. I have taken some liberty in imagining what each character would be likely to say in each scenario; if a character’s line is not quoted, you may assume that the words are the creation of the author.

A Brief Statement of Purpose:
United States President George W. Bush views him as “a threat [to] democracy” (Sweig). *Time* magazine chose him as one of the 100 most influential people in both 2005 and 2006. Last year, the Colombian magazine *Semana* named him “man of the year” for having “modified the political map of the subcontinent, distributed his oil wealth in every direction, challenged the United States, and gone from being perceived as a tropical clown to the Latin American leader with the greatest political influence” (Shifter). This controversial character is Hugo Chávez, the current president of Venezuela.

Who is he really? As the descriptions above reveal, Chávez is a complex and influential figure, yet many discussions of him fall prey to an extreme and polarized
view. In doing so, they fail to present him for who he truly is—an actor. Caught up in a worldwide power play of oil and politics, Chávez is indeed so dramatic that he begs to be portrayed theatrically. However, discounting Chávez as a manipulative, scheming dictator set upon bringing down the U.S., or a pure and idealistic socialist liberator, will not further our understanding of his nuanced character.

While I have structured this play as Chávez seems to see himself—a legendary hero fighting to save the world from the imperialist “devil”—it is done with a sense of irony. My aim is not only to expose the audience to Chávez’s world, but also to present equally those arguments against him, in the voice of his critics. Through the rhetoric of the theater, I hope to avoid a static view of Chávez’s character and instead provide a balanced picture of the motivations and implications of his actions. Aiding in this endeavor is the inherent theatrical nature of the three stages in Chávez’s progression to power: Venezuela, Latin America, and the world at large.

**ACT 1: The National Stage**

Setting: “The tropical República Bolivariana de Venezuela, situated in the northern portion of South America, is a country rich in history, natural resources, and culture” (Tarver and Frederick 1). Venezuela has a land area of 352,143 square miles and a population of 25,730,435 (CIA World Factbook). It is bordered on the south by Brazil, on the west and southwest by Colombia, and on the east by Guyana. Dependencies include Margarita Island, Tortuga Island, and many smaller island groups in the Caribbean. The capital and largest city is Caracas. Venezuela is the world’s fifth largest exporter of oil (Harman).

**Scene 1: “El Libertador”**

(The stage lights remain off as the voice of Hugo Chávez speaks passionately in the darkness.)

**Hugo Chávez:**

“Bolívar is not just a man, Bolívar is a concept. More than just a theory, Bolívar is a complex set of ideas related to the national, South American, Caribbean, and world arenas…. He spoke of what today we call a multipolar world. He proposed the unification of South and Central America into what he called Greater Colombia, to enable negotiations on an equal basis with the other three quarters of the globe. This was his multipolar vision. Bolívar was also anti–imperialist. He said, “The United States seems destined by providence to infest America with misery in the name of liberty”” (Guevara 11).

(The stage lights go up as Simón Bolívar enters from stage left. He takes a seat in a simple wooden chair center stage, facing the audience.)

**Simón Bolívar:**

I was born on July 24, 1783 in Caracas, Venezuela. Orphaned at age nine, I grew up in the home of wealthy relatives who paid for my private tutoring but later sent me away to military school due to my stubborn nature (Tarver and Frederick 45). On a trip to Spain in 1799, I met my wife Maria Teresa Rodríguez del Toro and we returned to Venezuela. Maria tragically died of fever shortly thereafter, and, overcome with grief, I returned to live in Europe. “The death of my wife placed
me on the path of politics very early... it made me follow thereafter the carriage of Mars rather than the arrow of Cupid” (McCaughan 12). It was then I vowed to myself that I would liberate and unify the Americas.

I spent the next twenty-five years in South America calling and fighting for independence. In September 1815 I wrote my Carta de Jamaica, or Jamaica Letter, accusing Spain of being “an aged serpent who could not keep Spanish America subject any longer” (Tarver and Frederick 53). When a massive earthquake hit Venezuela, killing an entire regiment of 15,000 independence troops, those still loyal to Spain declared that the earthquake was a sign that nature was against our movement. I told them, “If nature is against us we will fight it and make it obey us” (McCaughan 13). With my independence troops, I conclusively defeated Spain in the battle of Carabobo and established Venezuelan independence on July 5, 1811 (McCaughan 13).

My dream was to liberate and unify the entire Spanish-speaking continent (Ali 127). In 1826, I held a meeting of Latin states in Panama, but internal divisions soon tore the continent apart. When at last my dreams died, my body soon followed—on December 1, 180.

As I once said: “He who serves a revolution ploughs the sea” (McCaughan 15).

Scene 2: Venezuela’s Second Liberator

(A single light illuminates the narrator from above, standing in the downstage left corner of the stage.)

Narrator:

Following independence from Spain in 1911, Venezuela was plagued first by a succession of military dictators, and next by a number of ineffective and corrupt “democratic” governments. It was not for another two centuries that a second “Libertador” would arrive to save Venezuela—this time from the perceived threat of the imperialism of the United States of America.

(Light over the narrator is extinguished. Hugo Rafael Chávez Frias enters stage right. He stands center stage, his left hand casually resting in his pocket.)

Hugo Chávez:

I was born on July 28, 1954 to Hugo de los Reyes Chávez and Elena Frias (Gott 26). My parents were school teachers. While their salaries were insufficient to support our family, they gave me something perhaps more important: a love of politics. My brothers and I were brought up by our grandmother in the small town of Sabaneta (Herrera). My childhood dream was to be a professional baseball player, so I entered the military academy to play baseball (Guevara 14). Once there, I majored in communications, obtained a degree in army engineering, and created and hosted my own radio show (Herrera).

2 Hugo Chávez seems to have been inspired by Bolívar’s use of inflammatory rhetoric.

3 During catastrophic floods in Venezuela in 1999, Chávez chose this quotation for a giant mural in downtown Caracas (McCaughan 13).

4 “In 1930, to mark the centenary of the death of Bolívar, Venezuela paid off its entire foreign debt” (Ali 45).
After seventeen years as a lieutenant in the army, I began to organize the Movimiento Bolivariano Revolutionario, named for my hero Simón Bolívar (Gott 38). Years of greedy governments had devastated my country; Venezuelans were crying for change. A journalist once explained it well: “The 1970s had been the glory years… when Venezuelans were led to believe that they might soon inhabit a rich and developed Western country, but in the early 1980s, they were finally replaced by the harsh reality of devaluation and indebtedness, leading to a worsening spiral of poverty” (Gott 38).

In February 1992, the Movimiento led a coup against then–president Carlos Andres Perez. While the coup failed, I was given ninety seconds to speak on national TV to discourage the remaining rebels. While I was unaware of its effect at the time, this short statement launched my political career. I said; “Comrades: unfortunately, for the moment, the objectives that we had set ourselves have not been achieved in the capital…. Where you are you have performed well, but now is the time for a rethink; new possibilities will arise again and the country will be able to move definitively towards a better future” (Gott 67). Perez put my fellow rebels and me in jail for the next two years. When I was released, a “journalist asked me ‘Where are you going now comandante?’ I answered, ‘To power’” (Guevara 18).

Blackout

Scene 3: “El Presidente”
(The light over the narrator is illuminated.)

Narrator:
Chávez ascended to power rapidly due to huge support among the Venezuelan people, many of whom regarded him as a potential savior. With popularity ratings of over 80%, he won his first election in 1998 with an impressive 56% of the vote (Gunson). After entering office, he immediately called for a national referendum on a new constitution, which was written in 1999 and passed with 1% of the popular vote (Sylvia and Danopoulos 68). Venezuela’s elections appear to have been fairly conducted, but Chávez has since managed to fill the judicial and legislative branches with his supporters through questionable means (Gunson). It is therefore difficult to determine the depth and extent of his undemocratic manipulation of the Venezuelan political system.

(Narrator’s light goes out. Enter stage right the critics: Michael Shifter; Alma Guillermoprieto, the pollster; the Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera; the Venezuelan Vice President Jorge Rodriguez; and the leader of the opposition party, Eduardo Fernandez. They each take a chair, forming a semi-circle facing the audience. Once they are seated the press marches in, stands center stage in front of the people in the chairs and speaks out to the audience.)

The Press:
In May 2004, when Chávez’s party, the Fifth Republic Movement, had a majority in the National Assembly, they passed a bill to “increase the number of Supreme Court justices from twenty to thirty–two, thus allowing [Chávez] to pack the court with handpicked political loyalists” (Shifter).

(The press exits.)
Michael Shifter:

One thing is clear: “Behind democratic trappings and a fig leaf of legitimacy, Chávez has concentrated power to an astonishing degree” (Shifter). Chávez’s charm and persuasive rhetoric has so captured the adoration of Venezuelans that most are unaware of the power he has accumulated. Chávez has, in essence, entrenched himself immovably as president.

Alma Guillermoprieto:

(Guillermoprieto nods his head in vigorously.) I completely agree. In fact, “he governs not as if he were the president of a divided nation, but as if he had a national mandate to carry out his Bolivarian revolution, as if he had taken over the presidential chair for keeps” (Guillermoprieto).

Michael Shifter:

He may be trying to do exactly that—just look at the newspaper. (The press enters stage right, and stands center stage, to report.)

The Press:

“On Jan. 31 [2007], Venezuela’s congress voted to grant Chávez’s request for extraordinary powers, allowing the President to pass laws by decree for 18 months…. The President has also indicated that he will seek to remove constitutional limits on presidential terms, so he can serve indefinitely” (“Venezuela’s Chávez Wins Lawmaking Powers”).

(The press exits.)

Michael Shifter:

This new development plainly reveals that Chávez is exploiting democratic means to gather power. Venezuela will soon be a repressive autocracy. (Venezuelan Vice President Jorge Rodriguez fidgets as Shifter speaks, and, when he finishes, abruptly stands. He speaks passionately.)

Vice President Jorge Rodriguez:

“We want to install a dictatorship of real democracy” (“Venezuela’s Chávez Wins Lawmaking Powers”).

Alma Guillermoprieto:

A “dictatorship of democracy”? Isn’t that an oxymoron?

Opposition Leader Eduardo Fernandez:

Yes, it is. (He too stands.) Venezuela is straying further and further from democracy—this new law will convert “the President into a dictator” (“Venezuela’s Chávez Wins Lawmaking Powers”). (He stamps his foot for emphasis.)

(A group of supporters in the audience jump to their feet, and storm the stage in indignation.)

The Supporters:

(Speaking hurriedly.) Do we get a chance to refute all of these lies? We, the Venezuelan people, are visible and vocal about our love for Chávez. Can’t you see? Is there better evidence than the tens of thousands of supporters who attend rallies to show their support for him? How about the fact that almost
60% of voters rejected a recall referendum on Chávez’s presidency in 2004 (Bulmer–Thomas)? We want Chávez to rule our country!

**Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera:**

*(Calling to back stage.)* Can you please bring us some more chairs? If we can’t have Chávez himself, we must at least hear the views of the Venezuelan people. *(Motions for the group to sit. Speaks to them.)* Yes, yes—you’re right. *(Turns to the critics.)* As I keep trying to explain to the government of the United States, “the changes occurring in Venezuela reflect the true spirit of the country’s people, and if these changes do not happen now, they will happen eventually. President Chávez’s emergence is not an accident, nor should it be taken as a surprise” (Herrera).

**LatinoBarómetro:**

“Our of the populations of the eighteen Latin American countries studied, Venezuelans are the most likely to describe their government as ‘totally democratic.’ Similarly, Venezuela came in second in terms of citizens’ satisfaction with their system of democracy, ranking behind only Uruguay” (Herrera).

**The Supporters:**

Now, how can you deny that Venezuela overwhelmingly supports Chávez and his policies?

**The Critics:**

This proves nothing. We cannot take such a polling result seriously if we don’t know how those interviewed define “totally democratic.” *(The stage lights blackout. A spotlight illuminates the confused–looking narrator on the edge of the stage, holding a book in each hand.)*

**Narrator:**

The elections and polls illustrate that Chávez possesses an impressive amount of support among the Venezuelan people, however his recent actions reveal that he is hungry for power. His extensive control over the country makes it nearly impossible for other politicians to challenge him. If term limits are removed, then competitors may only get a chance at office if they can outlive Chávez. But after generations in poverty, perhaps this sort of “dictatorship of democracy” is what the Venezuelan people want. After all, only they can decide what is best for them. As Rafael Caldera, a previous president of Venezuela, said, “It is difficult to ask the people to burn for freedom and democracy while they think freedom and democracy are not able to feed them” (Ali 56).

For those outside Venezuela it is hard to know what to make of the situation. Are the elections really fair? Is Chávez repressing the opposition? How much is Chávez buying people’s support? A fair assessment of the controversy demands answers to these elusive questions.

*(Light above the narrator extinguishes.)*

**Scene 4: Petroleum and Poverty**

*(Light again illuminates the narrator, who no longer is holding the books.)*
While Chávez’s increasingly undemocratic control of Venezuela is troubling, the dominant force establishing Chávez’s power is something even more powerful than democracy—oil.

(The light above the narrator goes out and the stage lights come on to reveal the press standing and lined up in a row across the stage. In the center of the line one member of the press has a sign hanging around his neck that reads “Business section,” and next to him is another member of the press designated “Archives.”)

**The Press:**

(The “Business Section” takes one large step forward and speaks.) Historically, Venezuela has had a love–hate relationship with oil. This is because “in Venezuela oil is everything” (“Using Oil to Spread Revolution”). At 2.2 billion barrels per day, oil is the country’s only significant export. And with recent prices at almost $70 per barrel, the Finance Director of Venezuela’s national oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela S.A., has reported that he expects revenue of over $85 billion this year (Harman). However, “oil has also been a curse. Its profitability has boosted the value of Venezuela’s currency, making imports cheap and exports uncompetitive, thus killing off much local industry” (Friedman). As a result of this “curse of oil,” the economy is hugely dependent upon Petroleos de Venezuela, which accounts for “80 percent of export income, 27 percent of the gross national product, and 40 percent of the government budget” (Guillermoprieto). Not surprisingly, Venezuela’s economy rises and falls with the unpredictable fluctuations of the world oil market. Chávez has been fortunate that oil prices have risen dramatically during his presidency: oil cost only $12 per barrel when he took office—today it is around five times that price (Shifter).

(As the “Business Section” steps back to the rejoin the line, “Archives” steps forward.)

To further his Bolivarian revolution, Chávez needed more control over this oil wealth. “In February 2002, he appointed a new board of directors for Petroleos de Venezuela in a move to gain greater control of the agency” (Tarver and Frederick 152). However, this move provided an excellent pretext for those who had been planning a coup since the day Chávez took power. A two–day strike was called, with the “explicit assumption that it would only be lifted after the resignation of the president” (Gott 224). More than a dozen people were killed on the first day of the strike, and the high command members of the military demanded that Chávez resign “in response to the uncontrolled violence” (Tarver and Frederick 152). In a confusing chain of events, Chávez did not resign and, after being imprisoned for a few days, regained control over the country.

There is still much controversy over which side bears responsibility for the deaths. In *The History of Venezuela*, H. Michael Tarver and Julia C. Frederick write, “Chávez thugs clashed with the protesters, killing more than 15 people and injuring over 100 more” (152). Meanwhile Richard Gott, in *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution*, explains, “firing had apparently come from both sides, and the question of who bore the responsibility for these deaths became a matter of immediate and lasting controversy, but the majority of those killed were Chávez supporters” (225).

“All the evidence indicates that the plot in Caracas was known to the U.S. government, yet no effort was...
The opposition tried to provoke Chávez’s resignation again in December of the same year with an economic coup: key industries, including the petroleum industry, went on strike. In January of 2003 Chávez finally crushed the strike, firing 18,000 of Petroleos de Venezuela’s employees.

*(The press exits stage left. The crowd of supporters enters and assembles expectantly, facing a podium on stage right. Looking tough, Chávez strides in and stands at the podium.)*

**Hugo Chávez:**

At the end of that ridiculous strike I told you: “‘We have reached the far-reaching decision to begin a thorough restructuring of our company, Petroleos de Venezuela, to make it stronger and more efficient, and more responsive to the interests of the nation—and not to those of a small group of privileged people’” (Gott 253).

Our resources—*your* resources (Chávez points out to the supporters)—have been too long plundered by greedy politicians. It is time for us all to share in our country’s wealth.

“‘By 2021, whatever it costs, there will be zero poverty in Venezuela’” (Gunson). This will be a momentous challenge—but don’t we deserve it? “‘There is no way the system can cure itself… 60 percent of Venezuelans live in a critical state of poverty” (Ali 55).

We have already accomplished much. “In just seven years of Bolivarian Revolution, the people of Venezuela can claim important social and economic advances. One million four hundred and six thousand Venezuelans learned to read and write. We are 25 million total. And the country [has been] declared illiteracy–free territory. And three million Venezuelans, who had always been excluded because of poverty, are now part of primary, secondary and higher studies. Seventeen million Venezuelans—almost 70% of the population—are receiving, for the first time, universal healthcare, including the medicine, and in a few years, all Venezuelans will have free access to an excellent healthcare service. More than one million seven hundred tons of food is channeled to over 12 million people at subsidized prices, almost half the population’” (Ali 232).

*(He punches the air.) I will eradicate poverty—everyone deserves to be freed from the unjust struggle for basic survival!*

**Blackout**

*Scene 5: Success?*

*(The stage lights come up to reveal the supporters, including Bernardo Alvarez Herrera, Venezuelan ambassador to the U.S., and the critics in their seats facing the audience. The press marches on stage and stands directly in front of the others.)*

**The Press:**

Chávez’s strategy is not new to Venezuela. “In the 1970s, [Venezuelan president] Carlos Andres Perez nationalized the oil industry and other made to inform the Venezuelan government of what was going on. Quite the reverse… since the opposition leaders had visited Washington on several occasions in the early months of 2002—and secured the go–ahead for their schemes” (Gott 224).
‘strategic’ sectors. He also used an oil windfall to improve the lot of the poor, an effort that fell apart when oil prices plunged in the 1980s” (Romero).

(The press exits.)

Alma Guillermoprieto:

While Chávez’s idealistic rhetoric about eradicating poverty may be inspiring to Venezuela’s poor, Chávez is following the path of previous Venezuelan leaders by implementing unsustainable social policies. “The many ambitious social welfare and education programs launched by Chávez… suffer already from an essential flaw: as with everything else Chávez creates, their existence depends on him” (Guillermoprieto). By promoting policies that rely upon him, Chávez brings attention to himself, wins loyal supporters, and creates the conditions under which his continued presidency is “necessary” for the success of the country.

(Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera, clearly distressed, interrupts.)

Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera:

What you are ignoring is that these social projects are long overdue. “The country’s ranking on the UN’s Human Development Index continues to rise…. The Venezuelan people are being provided with the basic tools to become productive and competitive” (Herrera). How can you declare literacy to be unsustainable?

The Critics:

Yet, you do admit—don’t you—that, despite the oil boom, 11% of Venezuelans remain unemployed (“Using Oil to Spread Revolution”)? (The supporters nod unhappily.) What could more clearly illustrate the superficial nature of Chávez’s policies? Rather than waste money on shortsighted social projects, Chávez should have invested it in improving the economy. Because of his mismanagement, the economy has only revived with the increase in oil prices, revealing Venezuela’s unhealthy dependence on a volatile international market. By not investing some money in programs to diversify Venezuela’s economy, Chávez lost an important opportunity to strengthen the country and provide Venezuela’s poor a more long–lasting escape from poverty. In fact, Chávez has actually damaged the economy with detrimental policies that reduce Venezuela’s oil production.

(The press enters stage right, walks to center stage in front of the chairs, and announces...) 

The Press:

“Since Chávez took over in 1999, production in the state–run oil fields has fallen almost 50 percent” (Harman).

(The press exits.)

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7 “The early results were disastrous. The economy shrank by over 6 percent in 1999, failed to grow in per capita terms in 2000 and 2001, then shrank by 8.9 percent and 7.7 percent in 2002 and 2003…. Only the revival of 2004 (17 percent growth), fueled by a sudden jump in international oil prices, brought gross domestic product back to the level it had been when Chávez took power” (Gunson).
The Supporters:

Look, before addressing more long–term issues, Chávez must take care of the people’s immediate needs: food and medical attention. And without a literate and educated population, there is no way to improve the economy in a sustainable manner. In fact, the economy was most damaged by those traitors who were supported by the United States in the 2002 strike.\(^8\) It is inappropriate and imperialist for other countries to interfere in Venezuela. We won’t stand for it!

Blackout

Scene 6: No Verdict on Venezuela

(The narrator, looking extremely frustrated, and surrounded by piles of books, newspapers and magazines in disarray, is illuminated.)

Narrator:

With criticisms and counterarguments that appear equally valid, it is difficult to disentangle truth from fallacy. The pro– and anti–Chávez camps are so polarized that the debate has become an unproductive bickering over statistics and irreconcilable opinions. However, this discussion does illustrate that, while it is hard to know if Chávez has implemented the best policies, he cares about the welfare of poor Venezuelans, making him a significant improvement over previous Venezuelan leaders. However, his obsession with publicity and showy short–term projects suggests that he may be more motivated by the garnering of support than by reducing poverty in the long term.

Similarly confusing is the debate over Chávez’s impact on the economy. Following the lead of Venezuelan rulers before him, Chávez has neglected to strengthen the Venezuelan economy by reducing its reliance on oil, and instead, propped up his own regime on petroleum profits. Oil fuels a powerful cycle that increases Chávez’s power: with profits from oil sales, he can buy support for “democratic reforms” that allow him to take more control, helping him claim even more oil profits, and the cycle continues.

Further complicating the situation is the fact that the policies of previous leaders may still have an impact on the country: how much are statistics, such as the high unemployment rate, a result of previous leaders’ incompetence?

Without the benefit of a retrospective view, it is impossible to pronounce Chávez as good or bad for Venezuela. What is clear is that Chávez’s strategy of petro–politics has been successful in winning him support and control. The power Chávez now exerts over Venezuela gives him the freedom to move on to stage two: Latin America.

Blackout

\(^8\) “If the country is in low water today, the blame attaches not to the government’s performance, but overwhelmingly to the destructive venom of the opposition, whose eight–week blockade of the economy and oil industry this winter cost Venezuela $6 billion, guaranteeing an even more drastic fall in GDP in 2003 than the 8.7 percent registered in 2002” (Wilpert).
**ACT 2: The Regional Stage**

Setting: Latin America consists of the areas of North America and South America south of the United States where Romance languages are spoken. It has an area of 21,069,501 square kilometers, includes 20 countries and has a total population of more than 500,000,000. The total gross national income per person is $,600 (World Bank). The largest cities in Latin America include Mexico City, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, Lima, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago and Caracas.

**Scene 1: Buying Influence**

(The light illuminates the narrator.)

**Narrator:**

Armed with oil resources and a successful strategy, Chávez strides confidently into the regional political theater. Now with Latin America as his audience, he again adroitly uses petro–politics to gain influence. As he did nationally, Chávez has taken inspiration from past leaders; some of Chávez’s policies actually build off of the work of previous Venezuelan governments. “Venezuelan oil diplomacy is not new, it goes back to 1984 when Mexico and Venezuela joined forces to provide assistance to countries in the Caribbean basin suffering from high oil prices” (Bulmer–Thomas). This time, Chávez can provide assistance, in exchange for support of his world vision.

(The light over the narrator goes out. Lights come up on the main stage to reveal the critics, Michael Shifter, the supporters, the Costa Rican President Oscar Arias and the LatinoBarómetro sitting in the chairs. Once they sit down, the press marches in and stands center stage.)

**The Press:**

In May 2005, energy ministers from Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela agreed to develop a field in Venezuela’s heavy–oil belt in the Orinoco, a refinery in Brazil’s northeast, and an oil and gas venture in Argentina. In June, Venezuela set up Petrocaribe, an agreement that offers twelve Caribbean countries cheap credit for oil imports. On July 22, at a meeting of Andean presidents, Chávez proposed creating a program called Petroandina, which would promote cooperation among these oil–producing countries on pipelines and refining (“Using Oil to Spread Revolution”).

(The press exits.)

Michael Shifter:

In fact, under Petrocaribe, Venezuela has agreed to provide these Caribbean countries “198,000 barrels of oil a day… with ‘soft’ financing for up to 40 percent of the bill” (Shifter).

**The Supporters:**

There’s nothing wrong with that! Latin American countries need to expand and strengthen their economies. Our region deserves to finally have a voice. In any case, Chávez is doing even more than promoting Latin American power. He is also furthering peace, justice and a Latin America unified around these noble ideals.
Michael Shifter:

(Shifter nods knowingly.) You’re right—Chávez is trying to spread leftist and populist ideologies. You all have clearly been swayed by his rhetoric. “Chávez’s supporters and opponents have both attributed to him considerable responsibility for the resurgence of Latin America’s left most recently with the election of Evo Morales in Bolivia” (Shifter). Chávez may also be financially backing political candidates within Latin America who adhere to his ideology. “Although no hard evidence has yet come to light, critics often charge that Chávez has helped fund the rise of like-minded political figures, such as Morales” (Shifter).

The Critics:

Furthermore, “Argentine President Nestor Kirchner is also embarking on a more radical route (fueled by Venezuelan oil and cash) than he would otherwise, no doubt, have dared” (Gunson).

By financing the rise of leftist leaders, Chávez can create a Latin America that is both indebted to him, unified around leftist beliefs, and opposed to the U.S. However, despite his persuasive generosity and grand rhetoric, Chávez has had mixed success in Latin America.

LatinoBarómetro:

“How interesting! President Arias, why do you think that is?

Costa Rican President Oscar Arias:

I’m not surprised. We value the ideals of democracy in Latin America—how can we support Chávez? The new special powers given to him by the Venezuelan Congress constitute “a negation of democracy. There is a simple difference between a dictator and a democrat: if the democrat has no opposition, it’s his job to create it, but the dream of the dictator is to eliminate all opposition” (Reel). Chávez’s actions are those of a dictator. He is working to eliminate democracy in Venezuela. He will not succeed in the rest of Latin America.

(Chávez storms in, protesting.)

Hugo Chávez:

How dare you discuss my dreams for Latin America without me! (He motions angrily.) And how can you listen to Arias, who is clearly in Bush’s pocket?! (To Arias.) Are you hoping this might win you an invitation to visit Bush’s ranch?9

9 While the exact conversation was not available, this exchange is based on a true event. See the Caracas Chronicles available at <http://caracaschronicles.blogspot.com/2007/02/oscar-worthy-performance_8327.html>.
Costa Rican President Oscar Arias:

(Calm and composed—a contrast to Chávez.) Just because I don’t support your policies does not mean I support Bush’s actions either. “Bush is too much of a warmonger for my taste” (Reel).

(The stage darkens and the narrator is illuminated.)

Narrator:

While Chávez’s actions in Latin America have been more straightforward than those in his own country, it is yet again too soon to determine the results. Just as he won the support of Venezuela’s poor through subsidized social services, Chávez has bought the support of his less–affluent neighbor countries through generous oil deals. While many Latin Americans may still dislike Hugo Chávez for his undemocratic tendencies, their governments nonetheless accept his offers to sell them oil at artificially low prices, which aids the growth of their economies.

In addition to gaining influence and power throughout Latin America, Chávez has personal incentives in helping these economies strengthen and expand. First, it is to his advantage to diversify the countries that buy Venezuela’s oil. Currently Venezuela exports over 50% of its oil to the U.S. (Shifter), and the economy will continue to be fed by “the enemy” unless Chávez can promote increased oil consumption and purchases among Latin American countries. Chávez’s other overarching interest in strengthening Latin American economies is to empower himself, and the region as a whole, to challenge the hegemony of the United States.

Blackout

Scene 2: Fighting Imperialism

(The narrator, holding a small Venezuelan flag in one hand and an American in the other, is illuminated again.)

Narrator:

Chávez’s world is black and white, where left fights right, and the hero fights the villain. This tactic is particularly successful against Bush, who famously declared: “You’re either with us or against us.”

In his stated goal to spread a “Bolivarian” revolution, Chávez has chosen the United States as an enemy comparable to the Spanish colonists of Bolívar’s time (“Using Oil to Spread Revolution”). By winning support and influence throughout Latin America, and by promoting left–leaning politicians, Chávez aims to create an anti–American block.

(Light over the narrator extinguishes. Michael Shifter, the critics and the press hurry onto the stage, looking over their shoulders as they come.)

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10 Oil trade is a two–way street: the U.S. depends on Venezuela for 11% of its oil imports (“Energy Security”).

Michael Shifter:

Finally, a chance to talk without that circus of supporters jumping at
our every word. It must be explained: “Chávez has taken full advantage of
a confluence of favorable factors—lots of money, Latin America’s political
disarray, U.S. disengagement from the region, widespread hostility to the Bush
administration—to construct alliances throughout the Western Hemisphere
and beyond. He has skillfully managed to establish himself as a global and
regional leader, using oil money and brash anti–Americanism to attempt to
construct a counterweight to U.S. power” (Shifter).

The Critics:

Unmatched in Latin America, the vast extent of Chávez’s oil wealth allows
him to buy both support and anti–U.S. sentiment. Financially challenged
Latin American countries that may not be whole–heartedly against the U.S.
can hardly refuse Chávez’s generous offers. Further, by polarizing relations
with the U.S., Chávez forces countries to choose a side, persuading more
moderate countries to join his cause.

“‘Governments are happy to pocket Venezuelan subsidies. His willingness
to meddle in their internal affairs may cause some discomfort…. But if you
break publicly with Chávez you’re playing Bush’s game.’ So South American
governments have ignored American pleas to shun… Chávez” (“Using Oil to
Spread Revolution”).

(Stage lights dim to black, and the narrator’s light illuminates.)

Narrator:

Chávez aims to create a more equal playing field—one in which he can
challenge the United States. In gaining the support of other Latin American
countries, he hopes to create a counterweight to the dominance of the U.S.

While the result of Chávez’s attempt to win the hearts and minds of
Latin America is unclear, it is an ongoing process. Whether or not they adhere
to his ideology, Latin American countries cannot reject his generous offers
of oil, allowing Chávez to expand his economic influence and gain power.
Meanwhile, Chávez is supporting the rise of politicians who do wholeheartedly
support him.

For now, he has had sufficient success in Latin America to continue expanding
his power—this time he enters the third and ultimate stage: the world.

Blackout

ACT 3: The Global Stage

Setting: The world has a total area 510,072 million square kilometers and, as of July
2006, a population of over 6,525,170,000 people (CIA World Factbook). There are 268
nations, 197 of which are part of the United Nations, an international organization
created in 1945, that aims to promote cooperation in peace, security, international law,
human rights, humanitarian affairs, and social and economic development. The most
common religion is Christianity, which makes up 33.03% of the population; 20.12%
of people are Muslim and 13.34% are Hindu. Based on an estimate for 2006, the Gross
World Product is $65 trillion, and GDP per capita is $10,000 (CIA World Factbook).
Scene 1: Negotiating with the Axis of Evil  
(The narrator is illuminated.)

Narrator:

With tactics that are suspiciously familiar to those who have followed his acts in Venezuela and Latin America, Chávez has now brought his strategy of inflammatory rhetoric and petro–politics to the international theater. While previous Venezuelan leaders have exploited their petroleum–based power both nationally and regionally, Chávez is the first to use Venezuela’s resources to influence world politics. His primary purpose in this endeavor is to promote a multipolar world through the construction a powerful anti–U.S. coalition.

(The narrator’s light goes out. The stage lights turn on as Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera walks onto the stage and sits in the center chair. The press marches in from stage right and stands center stage in front of him.)

The Press:

On February 20, 2007, Chávez signed an agreement with the mayor of London to provide cheap fuel to subsidize the bus fares of low–income Britons (Quinn). This generous agreement is part of Chávez’s proclaimed mission to combat world poverty.

When Chavez took a “world tour” in July 2006, “he used every opportunity to disparage the United States” (Hanson). On this tour, Chávez also signed economic agreements with Iran, Russia and Vietnam.

However, his most controversial action is being the only country “to vote against the decision by the International Atomic Energy Authority to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council” for failing to halt its uranium enrichment program. Furthermore, “the support given by Chávez to Saddam Hussein in Iraq before his overthrow has not been forgotten in Washington. Coupled with Chávez’s preference to divert Venezuelan crude [oil] from U.S. to Chinese refineries, the Bush administration now sees him both as a threat to U.S. energy… and as a potential proliferator of weapons of mass destruction” (Bulmer–Thomas).

(The press exits.)

Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez Herrera:

(He stands to address the audience, pleading for their understanding.) “It is no secret that relations between the United States and Venezuela remain tense. But Venezuela is simply not a threat to the United States, much less an enemy…. Internally, Venezuela seeks to implement the measures needed to promote growth and secure social development; externally, it seeks regional political integration with which to ensure that Latin America can spur the growth of internal markets and more fairly negotiate with other global powers, the United States included. The Bush administration continues to view changes in Venezuela as a threat and has sought to use every political means at its disposal to isolate President Chávez. The people of Venezuela and the region know better” (Herrera).
Narrator:

While there is probably some truth to Ambassador Herrera’s claims, his conciliatory rhetoric is a striking contrast to Chávez’s words. In addition to being very vocal about his hatred for President Bush, Chávez’s cooperation with international pariahs does give the United States legitimate cause for concern.

Blackout

Scene 2: Flashback—The UN, September 20, 2006

(The stage lights illuminate to reveal Hugo Chávez standing center stage at a podium.)

Hugo Chávez:

“Yesterday the devil came here. Right here. (Chávez crosses himself.) And it smells of sulfur still today. Yesterday, ladies and gentlemen, from this rostrum, the president of the United States, the gentleman to whom I refer as the devil, came here, talking as if he owned the world.

“As the spokesman of imperialism, he came to share his nostrums to try to preserve the current pattern of domination, exploitation and pillage of the peoples of the world. An Alfred Hitchcock movie could use it as a scenario. I would even propose a title: ‘The Devil’s Recipe’… the hegemonic pretensions of the American empire are placing at risk the very survival of the human species. We continue to warn you about this danger and we appeal to the people of the United States and the world to halt this threat, which is like a sword hanging over our heads.”

Blackout

Scene 3: The Face–Off

(The lights come up on the stage to reveal the press standing center stage.)

The Press:

Ever since Chávez’s explosive and accusatory speech at the UN, relations between he and George W. Bush have been extremely tense. Therefore, it came as a surprise when Bush announced plans to visit Latin America in March 2007. Bush spent a week visiting Brazil, Uruguay, Columbia, Guatemala and Mexico. However, Bush was unable to avoid Chávez, who carried out a parallel tour, holding confrontational rallies in neighboring countries in an attempt to “cast the two presidents’ dueling tours as an open battle for Latin America’s soul” (Reel).

Blackout

Scene 4: Two Rallies

(A split scene. On stage right Bush lectures a crowd in Bogotá, Colombia. Action is frozen on stage left where Chávez rallies a crowd in Nicaragua.)

George W. Bush:

“It’s very important for the people of South America and Central America to know that the United States cares deeply about the human condition, and that much of our aid is aimed at helping people realize their God–given potential” (Greene, “President Bush Defends U.S. Record”).

(Looking down at his notes.) “I’ve brought with me $75 million to help young Latin Americans improve their English and study in the U.S., $350 million to help families get mortgages and the deployment of a Navy medical ship to provide care to about 85,000 people” (Dodge and Runningen).

(Bush and the crowd in Nicaragua freeze. Chávez and those at his rally in Nicaragua unfreeze.)

Hugo Chávez:

(Gesturing grandly, with sweeping arm motions.) The Bolivarian Revolution is spreading. But “the American empire is the firefighter of the conflagration with their very well–known divisive antirevolutionary policy, reactionary policy, and with their agents infiltrating among all those countries” (Greene, “Bush Touts U.S. Aid to Guatemala”). The U.S. aid Bush is bringing is a “laughable sum”—he clearly has ulterior motives. “He’s trying to confuse, defraud and divide. We must break the chains of imperialism. There won’t be any more wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing, nor these manipulative discourses, nor these handouts like Bush is offering now that he has discovered there are poor people in Latin America” (Reel).

Unlike the imperialist power to the north, I care about the people of Nicaragua, and all of Latin America. In fact, your leaders have just agreed to accept my offer to supply Nicaragua with oil at a discounted price. Together we are strong! (He punches the air.) We will fight off George W. Bush and his imperialism!

(The crowd cheers wildly and waves little Nicaraguan and Venezuelan flags.)

Blackout

Scene 5: The Response

(The stage lights come up to show the critics and the supporters sitting and facing the audience, but as far apart from one another as possible. The press marches in and stands center stage, in the space between the groups. It announces to the audience...)

The Press:

“In remarks [before he left on his trip], Bush took a populist tone, using the phrase ‘social justice’ five times in decrying government corruption and the failure of some leaders to meet the basic needs of citizens” (Dodge and Runningen).

The Critics:

How ironic! Bush appears to be imitating Chávez’s strategy: in publicizing the financial assistance the U.S. is providing Latin America, he is using Chávez’s economic tactic of buying support; in making general statements about improving the condition of lives in Latin America, he is using Chávez’s rhetorical strategy of grand self–righteousness.

The Press:

On his trip, Bush has attempted to convince Latin America that the United States is a compassionate nation. However, some Latin Americans were not glad
to see him. Two thousand “demonstrators chanted ‘Down with Bush’ and burned American flags in Bogotá on Sunday during the president’s seven–hour stop in Colombia” (Greene and Elliott).13

The Supporters:

(Angrily indignant.) Who does he think he is? Bush has ignored Latin America since he first took office! Now he comes here and tries to be our ally—we will not be fooled by his pathetic attempt!

Blackout

Scene 6: Final Words

(The narrator is illuminated.)

Narrator:

Chávez has progressed through three stages in expanding his spheres of influence: the national stage of Venezuela, the regional stage of Latin America, and now the world stage. In each, he has had the dual goal of spreading his Bolivarian revolution and promoting his vision for a multipolar world. As he learns from his experiences, Chávez has adapted his techniques to best serve distinct situations and audiences. However, his overarching strategy—to attack Bush and build a coalition able to challenge the “imperialism” of the United States—remains the same.

There are persuasive arguments both for and against Chávez. Perhaps it is most effective to realize Chávez’s polarizing nature and avoid being taken in; refusing to choose a side allows one to hold a more balanced and nuanced perspective.

Nonetheless, Chávez’s growing influence is apparent. His involvement in international politics has profound implications for Venezuela, Latin America, the United States and, ultimately, for the world. If oil prices keep rising, Chávez will continue to have his dreams funded—perhaps by those who despise him most. With his enormous wealth, his ever–expanding influence, and his experience and skill manipulating petro–politics, Chávez is a force to be reckoned with.

(Light over the narrator goes out. Chávez stands alone on an empty stage, gesturing, his right hand forming a strong fist.)

Hugo Chávez:

“We will fight for Venezuela, for Latin American integration and the world. We reaffirm our infinite faith in humankind. We are thirsty for peace and justice in order to survive as a species. Simón Bolívar, founding father of our country and guide of our revolution swore to never allow his hands to be idle or his soul to rest until he had broken the shackles which bound us to the empire. Now is the time to not allow our hands to be idle or our souls to rest until we save humanity.”14

Blackout

END OF PLAY

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13 It was the first visit to the Colombian capital by a sitting U.S. president since Ronald Reagan visited in 1982 (Greene).

Playwright’s Afterword:

I must confess—this was a work created amidst personal confusion over my own beliefs and opinions about Chávez. I am the narrator, trying to stay unbiased, yet inevitably swayed by the arguments I hear, frustrated that I never know how to respond to the question: Is Chávez good or bad? I still cannot say. A huge diversity of groups are affected by Chávez’s actions: is he good or bad for Venezuela? Latin America? The U.S.? George W. Bush? The world’s poor? And there is an equally diverse set of motivations behind Chávez’s actions: Latin American unity, fighting “imperialism,” world peace, countering Bush, Chávez’s hunger for power, Venezuelan power, Latin American power, reviving socialism and leftist politics, a multipolar world. We will never know if he is acting out of self-interest, or a real desire to promote equality and justice in the world.

To tackle the myriad problems I faced in fairly portraying Hugo Chávez, I sought a rhetorical medium that would reflect Chávez’s complex character. Most representations of Chávez set out to depict him as simply good or bad; but even children know that angelic heroes and evil villains are unrealistic—real people are more complicated.

So why do we ask such a simplistic question about a world leader? Because Chávez has provoked the question by forcing people to choose sides. As the narrator explains at the end of the play, rather than give in to Chávez’s polarizing nature and produce yet another biased view judging Chávez’s character, I wanted to probe deeper and explore the patterns emerging from Chávez’s actions and expanding power. His influence is clearly based on his oil wealth and his forceful rhetoric—but those factors do not explain the aura he now effectively possesses. Through drama, Chávez turns the world into a theater, and politics and petroleum become his props. Bush becomes the evil villain, and Chávez himself is the noble hero and underdog. It is a universal story; everyone can follow along. And when people get hooked on the drama, who does not secretly wish for the hero to prevail? In the end, Chávez derives his power over his audience through the creation of an emotional response. Taking seriously Shakespeare’s line—“All the world’s a stage”—Chávez builds a world theater for his success.
**Works Cited**


ESSAYS FROM THE
INTRODUCTION
TO THE HUMANITIES

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Boothe Prize Winners
& Honorable Mentions
INTRODUCTION

The courses that make up the Introduction to the Humanities (IHUM) program present Stanford freshmen with opportunities to engage with significant issues, themes, and ideas concerning human identity and existence. Students select from a wide range of offerings specifically designed for the first year of college. Rather than establishing one core list for all, Stanford values the importance of providing students with the freedom to choose topics close to their individual interests. Distinguished faculty members address these topics in lectures, and students explore them further in discussion sections and writing assignments. The Boothe Prize honors excellence in writing in IHUM. This volume includes recent winning essays and runners–up.

The student authors bring an admirable seriousness and engagement to bear on the texts they have chosen to treat in their essays. We believe that the intense intelligence of the writing results from the flexibility of IHUM, which allows students to choose topics which matter to them. The success in their writing validates the decision to organize freshman humanities in terms of freedom of choice rather than a single canon.

Reading through the essays, one cannot but be impressed by the diversity of topics and the subtlety of argument. Allysia Finley writes eloquently on Hamlet, a central work of the traditional canon of Western literature, while showing how the language of the drama displays the instability of traditional worldviews, in the face of the spread of the new cosmology of Copernicus. In contrast, Sylvia Tomiyama steps outside of tradition by turning to Samuel Beckett, a twentieth–century author poised between modernism and the avant–garde, and his play Act Without Words II. She approaches the play with analytic complexity by invoking a postmodern theory of performance and identity. Tariq West draws on even more contemporary material about South Africa: Mark Mathabane’s Kaffir Boy, and Richard Attenborough’s film, Cry Freedom. He deftly uses these sources to pursue his topic, the organization of space and race in apartheid society.

That is an extraordinary sweep: from the origins of modern consciousness in the literature of early modern England, through the adversarial culture of modernist theater, to the contestation of space in political transformations. The runners–up bring other, equally ambitious intellectual concerns into play. Juliet Rothenberg illuminates Doctor Zhivago with the aid of a theological category, Peter Kardassakis traces threats to freedom in dystopic fictions of technology, and Dinah Lewis carefully considers a disturbing image, a postcard of a lynching, to ask how context determines meaning.

These essays represent some of the best of freshman writing at Stanford. We congratulate the Boothe Prize winners for 2006–07, as well as the nominees and finalists, whose names are listed in this book. We are proud of these essays, and we are sure that you will find in them clear evidence of the vitality and passion for humanistic learning that flourish during students’ first year at Stanford.

Russell A. Berman, Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program
Ellen Woods, Associate Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program
Spring 2006 Winner

Sylvia Tomiyama

Instructor’s Foreword

Sylvia’s achievement in “Performing, Essentially: The Anxiety of a Non–essential Identity” begins with the difficulty and disparateness of the material she tackles. The philosophical complexity of Judith Butler’s “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” and the seeming absurdity of Samuel Beckett’s Act Without Words II make each text challenging in its own right. Especially impressive is how Sylvia’s essay offers neither a simple comparison nor straight application of the theory to the literature. Instead, she reads Butler’s theory, a cornerstone of contemporary feminism, through the lens of Beckett’s mime. Sylvia demonstrates that, while Butler abandons any notion of an essential gender identity, the humorousness of Beckett’s piece betrays the way in which Butler’s theory depends upon an assumed—albeit ungendered—human essence to justify its critique of traditional gender roles. The limpid prose of this essay only adds to Sylvia’s achievement and confirms what I have come to expect from reviewing her work through her three quarters of IHUM. Sylvia’s theoretically sophisticated analyses and elegant style constantly struck me, and, in many respects, this essay represents a culmination of her year in the program. Undoubtedly, it also anticipates the perceptive and eloquent work to come in future years from this talented young scholar.

Mark Sander
Performing, Essentially: 
The Anxiety of a Non-essential Identity  
Sylvia Tomiyama  

Both Samuel Beckett’s *Act Without Words II* and Butler’s analysis of gender in “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” argue that repeated discrete actions, performed according to unwritten scripts that are shaped by history (Butler 521), create identity. Butler specifically focuses on the construction of gender identity, while *Act Without Words II* makes a point about human identity in general. However, closer scrutiny reveals an important, fundamental difference between Butler’s theory and Beckett’s play—while Beckett suggests a complete lack of human essence, Butler still adheres, however implicitly, to the notion of a shared essence of humanness.

The heart of Butler’s theory may be summarized in one quote: “Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (519). According to this, she argues that gender identity is not an essential, god–given and unchanging part of human identity, but rather one that has “*social temporality*,” meaning that it depends upon the trends of society at a given time and evolves with time. It is constructed with the “*appearance of substance*” or of a consistent essence that the person him/herself comes to believe in (520). Therefore, there is no “gendered self […] prior to its acts” (520) but rather the gender identity is created by the continuous repetition of such acts and the person’s belief in the constructed identity.

In the same way, the two characters in Beckett’s *Act Without Words II* construct their identity through their repeated stylized movements. The film begins with two lumpy sacks, rather than two human beings. When each pops out—the first of which Beckett names A, and the second B—the construction of their individual identities, A and B, begins. Both A and B run through everyday movements, especially those daily rituals that nearly all people carry out, such as eating or changing. They both do these actions in a very specific routine; the patterns of these routines are identical, but the content of the action differs significantly from A to B. In effect, it is like seeing the same dance routine performed by both A and B, but differing drastically in style. They each have a signature pose, which is repeated often, usually after one complete motion such as brushing teeth, stretching out, or pulling on pants. A tilts to one side with his knuckle on his forehead, like a morose version of Rodin’s *The Thinker* and B checks his watch on a chain. A’s motions, in general, are slower and look more painful; he is often bent over as if the burden of living were just a little too heavy for him, and goes through the daily routines with difficulty, often pausing. Though both A and B eat and put on and take off their clothes, A spits out what he eats, takes pills, and prays. Combined with his signature pose, at the end of which he usually sags down, A creates an identity that is melancholic and downcast. On the other hand, B’s motions are snappy and animated; he goes through a couple of energetic stretching moves, and stands relatively straight and tall. He also performs more and distinct actions, like checking his appearance, brushing his hair, straightening his
shirt, and reading the newspaper. With his signature pose of looking at his watch, B gives a livelier, matter–of–fact impression.

It is thus the motions that define the two characters; the repeated motions of the specific routines create the characters’ identities, rather than express an essential, pre–existing identity. As Butler argues for gender, which can be generalized to identity in Beckett’s play, “these [performative] attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal” (528). When A and B are not making these motions, they are reduced to lumpy little sacks that are carried around like things, which belies the existence of an essential identity that pre–exists the motions. In the end, A begins his routine again, and the play suddenly cuts off while he is in the middle of his act, suggesting a repetition that will continue indefinitely. Finally, while the different music in Enda Hughes’s filmed version helps establish two different identities, it is only a complement to the actions of the two characters. Without the music, as in the stage version, A and B are still identifiable, whole characters.

Just as the identities of A and B are defined by the routine actions of daily life that have been repeated over and over again, so are gender identities culturally conditioned. Of gender, Butler says, “the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives” (526). This, in simple terms, means that there is no original to an individual’s enactment of the script of gender, for there is no essential identity of male or female (i.e. THE perfect male and THE perfect female). Similarly, the actions of A and B may be taken as scripts of living or life, but there is no original, essential model of living. The daily routine of life is a script that has been enacted by everyone, but there is no perfect original of which the others are copies. Thus, A and B act out the daily routines of life—the “already existing directives”—such as brushing teeth and eating, but they “enact interpretations within the confines” by virtue of the choice of action as well as the style of enactment, creating their individual identities. Further, Butler reveals that “if ‘reality’ of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential and unrealized ‘sex’ or ‘gender’ which performances ostensibly express” (527). When applied to Beckett’s play, if identity is created by a series of repeated discrete acts, then there really is no essential identity for each person; they are simply constructs of their certain motions. Therefore, whereas Butler argues that a continuous, essential gender identity does not exist, Beckett applies this notion to the identity of each person, claiming that there is no essential personal identity. In the unease of this revelation lies the problem of Butler’s theory.

Effectively, Butler’s argument is a non–essentialist notion of gender—there is no essential gender identity. At the same time, however, she still assumes that there is a universal, essential human identity. This is the largest departure from Beckett’s play. In Butler’s view, humans are naturally, originally human, but are forced into a “binary restriction on gender identity” (530) as they act out the gender script day–to–day, in order to survive in a society where there are punitive consequences to their acting otherwise. Thus, Butler’s target is this binary restriction, and the self–perpetuated belief in this system, which forces people to relinquish the “power […] to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds” (531). Clearly, she argues for the change in the male–female dichotomy which is the scripted gender identity, but this argument rests on the notion that there is an essential human identity. The assertion that there is a problem with the gender dichotomy presupposes a fundamental human identity that is distorted/restricted by that dichotomy. Indeed, she displays a degree of reluctance
to deny even the notion of an essential gender identity. She fears it may be detrimental to
the feminist agenda, in part because of social policies which “are designed to limit, and at
times, eradicate the existence of women” (529) and their suffering. While she overcomes
these reservations by arguing that we ignore the complexities of gender constitution and
lose the power to change the existing gender realities when we assume that the category
of woman and man are essential givens, her argument still relies on an essential human
identity that is disfigured by the binary categorization of gender.

Meanwhile, Beckett’s *Act Without Words II* emphasizes and showcases this lack of
essential human identity. Since, here, identity is constructed through a series of discrete
actions, there is a lack of continuity that defies an essential human identity; this is
emphasized in the film through the choppy motion (few frames per second) of the two
characters, and the disjoint feeling given by the sudden change in camera angle or distance
when the characters pose, which happens quite often. They are also placed in frames of
film, which implies a sequence of discrete moments, analogous to the sequence of discrete
movements that create the identities of A and B. Furthermore, when the character is not in
motion, he is shown as a lump, not even in a human shape, and is carried around like a sack
of potatoes, denying any sort of essential humanness that is present outside the repeated
performative motions of the daily routines. In Beckett’s play, then, there is a realization
and emphasis on the bitter truth of existentialism: the absurdity and meaninglessness of
life if and when human identity is viewed as a series of repeated stylized acts.

However, inherent in Beckett’s play is humor. There is something silly and absurd
about seeing a stick poke a lumpy sack and watching a person pop out of it, performing a
series of acts as if he were a little mechanical toy. Beckett’s play mocks our obsession with
our subjective lives which, of course, is based on an essential or continuous identity, since
the two very different approaches to life—brooding and thoughtful or matter–of–fact
and lively—don’t matter; in the end, both A and B are simply shapeless lumps unless they
sustain their actions. It is darkly humorous, too, that the meaninglessness of life becomes
represented by lumpy sacks. The play mocks our personal worries and our steadfast belief
in the continuation of our essential identities: A prays and B exercises—both actions that
depend on having a future, since both are intended to ensure future well–being, but none
of this matters since they simply return to being lumps after they pray/exercise and then
repeat the actions all over again.

In this humor, Beckett’s play actually shares sentiment with Butler’s reluctance to
give up an essential human identity. We must laugh, or detach ourselves all together
and mock the absurdness of our lives the way the play does, because the thought of
a completely meaningless existence is so disturbing. Both the humor in Beckett’s play
and the retention of an essential human identity in Butler’s theory respond to the same
anxiety: that if identity is merely a construct of repeated actions, informed by culture and
history, then all our lives are reduced to meaninglessness and absurdity. Butler’s reluctance
to follow the idea of performative identity through to its absolute end—the complete lack
of human essence shown in Beckett’s play—and the humor of Beckett’s play suggest the
deep discomfort associated with the negation of essential identity, revealing the grip that
the aura of human identity continues to hold on us all.
Works Cited


Instructor’s Foreword

Juliet Rothenberg possesses a vibrantly Socratic disposition. During her two quarters as a student in “Poetic Justice: Order and Imagination in Russian Literature,” Juliet agilely, lucidly, and tirelessly answered each question and questioned every answer. Unsurprisingly, she proved to be one of the most masterful section leaders (of any rank, untenured or tenured) I have ever witnessed. Her written work displays this hallmark dynamicity, rigor, and creativity. Two weeks before each paper due date, Juliet would visit my office with reams of assiduously collected textual evidence and with a remarkably streamlined and sophisticated conception of her topic. The surfeit of evidence merely demonstrated Juliet’s investigative rigor and her willingness to think deeply about textual elements that appear to the unreflective reader only tenuously connected.

The essay for which Juliet won honorable mention, “The Immaculate Theory of Fatherhood in Dr. Zhivago,” should be properly considered as the sequel to Juliet’s first quarter essay on mothers as Grand Inquisitrexes in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s magnum opus, The Brothers Karamazov. Since the era of the Great Reforms (Tsar Alexander II’s emancipation of the serfs in 1861) and the inception of the Russian revolutionary movement, the relationship between parents and children has been a theme to which Russian authors have recurred in order to depict the conflict between the old regime and the new order. Both of Juliet’s essays on this theme offered strikingly creative, multileveled, and nuanced readings of the relationships between parents and children, and more than this, “cracked open” the novels as a whole. Readers of Boris Pasternak’s Noble Prize winning novel, Doctor Zhivago, are made uneasy by its poet-hero’s unheroic behavior, and in particular by his flagrant violation of “family values.” In the upheaval of revolution and civil war, Yurii Zhivago abandons no less than three families with little evidence of regret. Juliet unflinchingly takes on Yurii’s abandonment of wives and children and demonstrates how Yurii, in his philosophizing and metaphors, contrives a “doctrine” modeled loosely on Christ’s nativity that serves as justification for his abandonment—a justification which releases him from family bonds in order to serve unencumbered his poetic muse.

Lynn Patyk

SPRING 2006 HONORABLE MENTION

Juliet Rothenberg

Instructor’s Foreword

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Lynn Patyk
The Immaculate Theory of Fatherhood in
Doctor Zhivago
Juliet Rothenberg

Pasternak’s novel opens as ten–year–old Yurii Andreievich Zhivago climbs onto his mother’s grave and despondently howls like a wolf cub; he is an orphan placed in the care of surrogate parents. While the novel’s powerful theme of child abandonment pervades much of the work, it is Yurii’s own abandonment of his children that Pasternak’s novel underscores. After fate draws Yurii away from his offspring, his attempts to reunite with them are feeble at best. Inasmuch as Yurii’s abandonment of his children seems heartless, it is important to understand this act not as a rejection of his children: instead, the abandonment results from Yurii’s perceived exclusion from the Immaculate Conception, with which he associates all childrearing. In fact, Yurii’s poetry can be seen as his attempt at emulating Immaculate childbirth. Although Yurii’s children flourish in spite of being abandoned by their father, Pasternak ultimately suggests that Yurii’s Immaculate theory is an elaborate self–deception.

In his musings upon the birth of his son, Yurii perceives childbirth as resulting from Immaculate Conception. Most strikingly, he writes,

It has always seemed to me that every conception is immaculate and that this dogma, concerning the Mother of God, expresses the idea of all motherhood. At childbirth..., the man’s part is as irrelevant as if he had never had anything to do with it, as though the whole thing had dropped from heaven. (281)

Yurii’s musings refer to the Church’s Immaculate Conception doctrine, which holds that the Virgin Mary conceived extrasexually by the grace of God. In a parallel to the Church’s doctrine, Yurii feels excluded from conception in spite of his obvious role as the seminal figure, and he associates his exclusion with that of the corporeal father in the Immaculate Conception. In the Immaculate theory Yurii creates, however, his role is “irrelevant” at childbirth as well. Even in the childrearing itself, Yurii feels excluded; in his view, “Alone..., [the mother] feeds and rears the child” (281). Although Yurii leaves the implications of his Immaculate theory unstated, his “doctrine” ultimately affirms a lack of paternal involvement that could justify his abandonment.

While many would view abandonment as harmful to children, Yurii’s doctrine enables him to see it in a positive light: he believes his offspring have been protected by virtue of their Immaculacy. In his description of a nature scene, Yurii distinguishes between Immaculate orphans and forsaken orphans. He ponders, “Deserted by man, the fields look... orphaned as if his absence ha[s] put them under a curse. The forest, however, well rid of him, flourish[es] proudly in freedom as though released from captivity” (467). In Yurii’s view, the fields are forsaken, while the orphaned forest is Immaculate and associated

1 Contrary to popular belief, this dogma lacks a scriptural basis, and other Russian novelists (notably Tolstoy) have pointedly questioned the assumption.
with God: “God, so it seem[s] to him, dwell[s] in the woods” (468). In this allegory, Yurii associates forsaken children with the fields, which suffer under abandonment. The forest, in contrast, is able to flourish because of the presence of God. In Yurii’s view, the true father is not in fact the human father, and abandonment by the biological father facilitates “freedom as though released from captivity” (467) by allowing Immaculate children to forsake their worldly relationships for a relationship with God the Father.2

Initially, Yurii’s children suffer in the wake of his abandonment, belying the forest allegory. In the end, however, we find that his children are like the flourishing forest: Sasha and Masha attend school and write their father “very warmly and affectionately” (484), Marina’s children have loving grandparents to support them, and Tania will be cared for by Evgraf, a successful general (511). In fact, Tania at one point declares that even in the hard times, “[she] knew [she] wasn’t alone in the wood,” suggesting that a God–like presence watched over her in the forest (517). All of Yurii’s children have been protected, and in some cases, have flourished, in spite of abandonment by their father, and this appears to corroborate his Immaculate theory as a whole.

While the forest allegory seems to validate Yurii’s absence by virtue of the Immaculate theory, it is difficult to create an analogy between Yurii—the biological father—and a figure within the biblical nativity. As a maternal figure, the birthing mother is analogous to the Mother of God. Many interpretations of Doctor Zhivago associate Yurii himself with Jesus (Patyk), yet it would be tenuous to argue that Yurii retains his Christ–like role here, for unlike Christ, he is not the offspring of the Immaculate Conception. As a mortal rather than a deity, Yurii could be the father figure Joseph, but his constant absence in childrearing makes this role unlikely. At the same time, as the male participant in the conception who simultaneously abstains from childrearing, Yurii could be seen as God. Still, assigning this role to Yurii is also problematic. First, Yurii asserts that at childbirth, his role “is as irrelevant as if he had never had anything to do with it, as though the whole thing had dropped from heaven” (281). Since heaven is the place where conception occurs and from which he is excluded, Yurii places himself in opposition to a Godly figure. If, as I have argued, Yurii’s children are like the forest where God dwell[s] (468), it is difficult to claim that Yurii, like God, dwells in the lives of his children. Yurii’s fatherhood is a fatherhood of absence and neglect: he twice forgets that his daughter Masha exists, and he is entirely unaware of his daughter Tania’s existence. As he is neither Jesus nor Joseph nor God, the role that Yurii plays in childbirth does not fit within the biblical matrix at all.

Yurii’s poetry can instead be seen as his attempt at emulating the childbirth from which he feels excluded. Yurii’s descriptions of creating poetry and creating a child are very similar. Birthing mothers have an “aura of isolation” (281), just as Yurii’s writing is a very solitary act. Additionally, during his wife’s childbirth, Yurii imagines she is “lying, say, at the level of one of those desks at which you write standing up” (104), further linking childbirth to writing. Yurii explicitly associates childbirth with poetry when he remarks, “the words of the psalm are put into [the new mother’s] mouth” (281). In the Russian tradition, a psalm is the ultimate creative act; as a holy work, a psalm is inherently superior to poetry. The psalm’s superior creativity is bestowed on the childbearing mother, rather than on the poet, and hence childbirth achieves the goal for which poetry can only strive.

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2 In this allegory, Pasternak references Orthodox hagiography, in which saints often forsake familial ties out of religious devotion.
According to Yurii, “art has two constant, two unending concerns: it always mediates on death and thus always creates life” (89–90). Yet, arguably, Yurii is exaggerating, for art does not create life to the same degree childbirth does. Yurii acknowledges poetry’s shortcomings in this regard when he associates childbirth with the language of life and death. He imagines that during childbirth, his wife is “a barque that plie[s] between an unknown country and the continent of life[,] across the waters of death” (104–105) and that her language is inaccessible to all: “as no one ha[s] explored the country where she [is] registered, no one [knows] the language in which to speak to her” (104–105). Through this metaphor, Yurii insinuates that even poets have not succeeded in speaking the language of life and death, for no one is able to speak this language to the mother. Poetry for Yurii, then, is closely related yet inferior to childbirth. Yurii does abandon his poetry much as he abandons his children throughout the work, yet Yurii always returns to his poetry. In contrast, he rarely returns to his children, and he abandons them in the end. Poetry, consequently, is Yurii’s emulation of childbirth, and it is an undertaking he more consistently performs than fatherhood itself.

While Yurii’s Immaculate theory may appear to be complete, Pasternak explicitly states that Yurii’s choice to sacrifice his children in favor of his poetry is misguided. Yurii has a dream in which he feels forced to choose between his son and his lover, Lara (392–393). What is particularly significant about this passage is that Lara is Yurii’s poetic muse; when he is around her, “the passion to write possess[es] him” (431), and “in her the inarticulate principle of existence [becomes] sensitive and capable of speech” (391). Yurii’s choice, therefore, in part appears to be a choice between poetry and true fatherhood. When Yurii chooses poetry, the narrator remarks that Yurii is “sacrificing [his son] to a false notion of honor” (393), implying that Yurii’s Immaculate theory of fatherhood is an elaborate self-deception.

On a more substantive level, Pasternak also undermines the initial premise on which Yurii’s Immaculate theory is based. While Yurii’s theory is premised on the father’s irrelevance, Pasternak reveals that the Zhivagos demonstrate strong connections between father and son. Although Yurii has never met his own father, there are many parallels between the two characters. Both abandon their children, and both appear to feel guilt at this abandonment: the elder Zhivago shows “unaccountable affection” to a boy Yurii’s age (16), as though attempting to atone for abandoning Yurii, and Yurii himself often questions his own fatherhood. In addition, the two men’s deaths are uncannily parallel: the elder Zhivago dies by jumping off a train (11), while Yurii dies after disembarking from a trolley (489). Among the many similarities between these two scenes, both Zhivagos’ deaths are watched by former acquaintances who do not realize they know the victims (11, 492). Yet there is also a spiritual connection between the two Zhivagos, for the one time that Yurii omits a prayer for his father is the time his father is dying (12). We see here a stronger spiritual connection between Yurii and his son, Sasha, while the connection between Yurii and his absent father is marked. Among all of the other babies’ voices in the hospital, Yurii correctly identifies Sasha’s cry because it “seem[s] to foreshadow the future personality and destiny of a particular human being” (172). In short, Yurii understands Sasha’s spirit. In demonstrating these connections between father and son, which lie outside of the realm of Yurii’s Immaculate theory—a theory premised on the father’s irrelevance—Pasternak undermines the power of Yurii’s Immaculate philosophy.

3 These strong connections between father and son can be found elsewhere in Russian literature, particularly in the work of Dostoevsky.
Yurii’s abandonment of his children, therefore, only appears to be justified by his Immaculate theory of childrearing and the forest allegory. Yurii’s poetry as an emulation of the childbearing act is in the words of Pasternak “a false notion of honor” (393), and Yurii’s theory as a whole ignores the similarities between father and son. Indeed, the fact that the Immaculate theory is flawed is perhaps the reason that Yurii is tormented by his fatherhood: he himself may not believe his own justifications of abandonment. Much as the novel’s beginning centers on Yurii’s orphanhood and his surrogate parents, the novel’s end centers on orphanhood and surrogate parenting. In the last pages, both Yurii’s biological and literary progeny are left in the care of surrogate fathers, underscoring the connection between the two forms of offspring. Instead of a despondent wolf cub’s howl, however, the caretakers of Yurii’s literary legacy hear an “unheard music of happiness” (519). Perhaps, this joyous music reveals the rewards of fatherhood as experienced by the surrogate fathers, the rewards that Yurii himself never fully realized.

Instructor’s Foreword

As teaching fellows in IHUM, we divulge one cardinal rule to our students early in the Fall quarter: never begin an IHUM essay with those peerless words, “In the history of the world….” Our explanations are many and convoluted: “it is just not possible to compress the history of the world into five pages and attend to close reading; the history of the world is still being written and was, in point of fact, only implied in lecture; might not the history of the world be reoriented as the history of the word? Discuss.” While our students marvel at demands which seem the rhetorical equivalent of dancing on the head of a pin, we pride ourselves in having dispensed with the obvious and quickly turn tail, back to the intricacies of the text itself. But, if we are honest with ourselves, it is this very movement between grand ambition and fine detail, between close reading and profound commentary that animates our own pursuit of scholarly significance.

Allysia Finley’s remarkable essay, “Hamlet’s Place in the Cosmos,” is an exemplary combination of these two impulses, merging the historical and the literary, the bold vision and the intricate detail. She argues that patterns of celestial imagery in Shakespeare’s most famous play, including eclipses, lunar cycles, and solar allusions, chart the chaotic effect of the Copernican revolution on the English Renaissance consciousness. Neither reductionist nor heavy–handed, her essay debates Hamlet’s exploitation of celestial imagery to assert his primacy in the new heliocentric world order—an order that threatens the political hegemony of his rivals, Claudius and Polonius. Allysia carefully shows that Hamlet is playing with fire: his own appropriations of the language of cosmological revolution are often febrile and unstable, his aspirations to right family wrongs threatened by larger political operatives who have a high stake in the old orders, cosmological and otherwise. Reading Allysia’s essay is an exercise in the delight of resonance. She uncannily taps into Shakespeare’s larger poetic project which connects the drama of the stage to the drama of his times, an age both removed from and near to our own. In Allysia’s brilliant concluding analysis of Hamlet’s capitulation to a political universe not yet ready for new truths, she quotes Hamlet’s deathbed lines: “Let it be. Horatio—I am dead.” As the lyrics of the Beatles’ song revolved in my head, I knew that, although we may no longer question the truth of Copernicus’s discoveries, our IHUM courses still allow students to delve into the regenerative wisdom, and whimsy, of great art. Allysia’s essay is high testament to the innovative thinking that comes from that endeavor.

Alice Staveley

AUTUMN 2006 WINNER

Allysia Finley
Hamlet’s Place in the Cosmos
Allysia Finley

In his play *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark*, Shakespeare subtly explores the evolving notions of cosmic order during the sixteenth century. One of the most significant and controversial ideas to arise during that time was Copernicus’ heliocentric model. It disputed the ancient Greek astronomer Ptolemy’s geocentric model of the earth fixed at the center of the universe with the stars, planets, and moon orbiting in distinct outside spheres. These celestial objects by nature never intersected or traveled outside of their spheres. While most people in Shakespeare’s day still agreed with Ptolemy’s geocentric model, many scholars considered Copernicus’ theory very plausible. Confusion over the cosmic order ensued. In the play, Hamlet represents the new world view that challenges the established social, political, and cosmic hierarchies. By associating Hamlet’s mad and menacing behavior with the moon’s “lunatic” influence, Polonius and Claudius reveal just how absurd and dangerous they consider these ideas. Hamlet, however, rejects their conceptions of him and the universe. Instead, he compares himself to the steadfast sun fixed at the center of the new, heliocentric system. Although Hamlet maintains that he is the stable sun, Shakespeare’s celestial imagery describing Hamlet’s erratic behavior suggests otherwise. While some may argue that the play is flawed because of the inconsistent parallels between Hamlet’s character and the cosmic order, this inconsistency serves a purpose. By not presenting one clear and definite interpretation of Hamlet, Shakespeare intends that the audience experience for themselves the bewilderment of living in an uncertain cosmos.

Just as Claudius and Polonius are suspicious of Hamlet’s character, they appear apprehensive about the subversive, new ideas; their repeated references to Hamlet as the moon reflect their fear that the new order will destabilize the old order. By associating Hamlet, a representation of the new order, with the moon of the old order, they suggest that amalgamating the two incompatible orders necessarily results in disorder, or “lunacy.” Already in the opening act of the play, Polonius affirms that Hamlet is a menace who cannot be trusted. Polonius warns Ophelia that “for nature, crescent, does not grow alone/ in thews and bulk, but as this temple waxes/ the inward service of the mind and soul/ grows wide withal” (I.iii.14–17). On a literal level, Polonius explains that when the moon’s crescent waxes, its volume also grows. Similarly, he suggests that as Hamlet’s power increases so does his egoism, or his “inward service of the mind.” Another implication of this allusion is that just as the moon’s shape constantly changes, so does Hamlet’s disposition. Even though the lunar cycle is predictable, the old order considered it arbitrary because they did not understand its cause. Likewise, Polonius considers Hamlet’s behavior illogical and therefore dangerous because he cannot discern his motives. Polonius clearly does not understand what triggers Hamlet to, metaphorically, wax or wane. Apprehensive of Hamlet’s unpredictable character, Polonius advises Ophelia to protect her chastity because “the chariest maid is prodigal enough/ if she unmask her beauty to the moon” (I.iii.40–41). Polonius suggests that scrupulous women debase themselves when they succumb to the charms of the “moon.” By explicitly referring to Hamlet as the moon, Polonius
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makes clear what was merely implicit in the aforementioned allusion: Hamlet’s alluring character threatens the integrity of the old order. Hamlet represents the novel ideas that appeal to the new generation of thinkers and that challenge the conservative order. By preserving his daughter’s chastity, Polonius seeks to preserve his conservative ideas in the new age. An ulterior motivation for his separation of Hamlet and Ophelia is to maintain familial and hierarchal order. As Polonius later tells Claudius, Hamlet is “out of [her] star. This must not be” (II.ii.150–151). Referring to the geocentric model, Polonius suggests that just as the moon and stars revolve in separate celestial spheres, Hamlet and Ophelia occupy different positions in the social hierarchy. Although Polonius uses the word “star” instead of sphere, he believes that Hamlet and Ophelia revolve in different social circles. According to Polonius’ conception of cosmic and hierarchal order, their union “must not be.” Though Polonius strives to preserve this established order, Hamlet’s romance with Ophelia undermines his efforts. Ironically, in the end, Polonius’ attempts to preserve order merely create disorder and tragedy as Ophelia goes insane. This irony causes the audience to contemplate whether men should try to preserve an order that is incompatible with the changing universe.

Similarly, by associating Hamlet’s madness with the moon, Claudius and Polonius suggest that any attempt to reconcile the new and old orders is not only dangerous but also irrational. When Claudius asks Polonius what troubles Hamlet, Polonius claims that Ophelia is “the very cause of Hamlet’s lunacy” (II.i.2). Implicitly invoking medieval folklore that links the moon to madness, Polonius affirms that Hamlet’s “lunacy” is the result of Ophelia’s denied affections. By referring first to the geocentric model and now to medieval folklore, Polonius demonstrates his attachment to the narrow-minded ideas of the dark ages. He later pays for his narrow-mindedness with his own death when he insistently tries to prove that Ophelia causes Hamlet’s madness. Polonius hides behind the arras in Gertrude’s bedchamber, confident that Hamlet will confess his despair over Ophelia. His shriek of surprise when realizing his mistakenness precipitates his murder. Polonius’ death suggests that misguided dogmatism leads to catastrophe when people awake from their delusions unprepared to face a startling reality. As with Polonius’ endeavors, Claudius’ attempts to maintain a fixed order fail. When he asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to discover why “[Hamlet] puts on this confusion/ Grating so harshly all his days of quiet/ With turbulent and dangerous lunacy” (III.i. 1–4), Claudius seeks a rationale for Hamlet’s irrational behavior. Like Polonius, he appears disturbed by Hamlet’s “lunacy” because it contradicts Hamlet’s normally “quiet” character. Regardless of whether Claudius believes Hamlet feigns madness, he clearly considers Hamlet’s lunacy a threat that must be subverted. Like many religious and state figures at the time, the King fears that a disruption of order, whether it be social or cosmic, will undermine his position and power. These recurring allusions to Hamlet as the mad and menacing moon reflect a latent fear that the new order will disrupt the stability of the old order.

Though Polonius and Claudius refer to Hamlet as the erratic moon, Hamlet conceives of himself as the steady sun at the center of a rapidly revolving system. In the opening act of the play, Hamlet draws the central focus onto himself when he appears before Claudius. Wallowing in his own affliction, he expresses annoyance at Gertrude and Claudius’ feigned grief and hurried marriage. When Claudius asks why the clouds still hang on him, Hamlet retorts, “Not so my lord; I am too much in the sun” (I.ii.69). Hamlet’s sullen clothes, caustic remarks to Gertrude, and subsequent suicidal monologue suggest that his tone is darkly ironic. Hamlet plays on the word “sun,” suggesting that as the son he still
grieves for King Hamlet even while others seem to have forgotten his death. However, Hamlet’s mourning suggests clearly that he is not “in the sun.” Deeply affected by his father’s death, Hamlet feels out of character. Nevertheless, he assumes central significance in the scene. Hamlet’s ironic comment that he is “too much in the sun” suggests that he feels the court focuses too much on him and not enough on his father’s death. This verbal irony mirrors the contradiction Hamlet sees between Gertrude’s ostensible grief for King Hamlet’s death and her real joy in her marriage to Claudius. Hamlet also challenges the motive behind Gertrude’s unnatural marriage to Claudius. One reason Gertrude marries Claudius is to maintain order and prevent chaos after King Hamlet’s death. However, Hamlet rejects the idea that an unnatural order like the geocentric model is preferable to the confusion and discomfort that may result from the introduction of a new order. To Hamlet, the old order is just as horrific as the disorder that it seeks to subvert.

The pointed irony behind Hamlet’s allusions to himself as the sun reflects his self-assuredness and distrust toward this old order. For example, when Polonius pries Hamlet for the cause of his confliction, Hamlet tells Polonius to “Let [your daughter] not walk i’ th’ sun/ Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive friend, look to ’t” (II.ii.201–203). This connection between Ophelia and the “sun” appears arbitrary until the next few lines when Hamlet seems to confirm Polonius’ fear that Ophelia will compromise her chastity. In this context, Hamlet refers to himself as the sun and, according to the pun, as the King’s son with whom Ophelia has conceived. Regardless of whether Hamlet and Ophelia actually consummated their relationship, Hamlet refers to himself as the central sun rather than the peripheral moon to emphasize his significance in the new world order. Hamlet also conceives himself as a source of illumination. This illumination blinds and disorientates Polonius who cannot discern the irony and nuances of his speech. However, as the play progresses Hamlet himself becomes disorientated by others’ constantly revolving positions. He finds himself challenging his friends’ and Ophelia’s devotion and questioning his own existential significance in a world where all men become worms’ meat. According to Hamlet, everything in the “distracted globe” (I.v.104) is uncertain and brief “as woman’s love” (III.ii.175). In a poem to Ophelia, he writes, “Doubt that the sun doth move/ Doubt truth to be a liar/ But never doubt I love you” (II.ii.124–127). Hamlet doubts the established truths of the world, but nevertheless claims that his love for Ophelia is sincere and steadfast. His doubt of the sun’s motion reflects his skepticism of the conventional ideas of cosmic order. By challenging the geocentric model, he questions others’ conception of him as volatile. Rather, he insists that he is as steady as the sun of the new heliocentric model.

However, Shakespeare’s celestial imagery contrasts Hamlet’s conception of himself as the stable sun with his haphazard behavior. Notably, the play opens with Horatio invoking the cosmic omens that appear before Julius Caesar’s death to foreshadow Hamlet’s fall into disarray: “As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood/Disasters in the sun; and the moist star/Upon whose influence Neptune’s empire stands/Was sick almost to doomsdale eclipse” (I.i.129–133). The “disasters in the sun” preface Hamlet’s references to himself as the sun and portend his unstable behavior. By qualifying stars with fire and blood, Horatio foreshadows the death and destruction that come to fruition as a result of the disaster and “sickness” in Hamlet’s character. While this cosmic imagery may refer to the play Julius Caesar rather than to Hamlet, it nevertheless foreshadows Hamlet’s confused behavior that becomes more evident as the play progresses. Polonius in fact later bridges the connection between the two plays when he claims to have played Julius Caesar
and been killed by Brutus. Notably, Hamlet kills Polonius two scenes later, ultimately actualizing the death that the cosmic imagery in the first scene foreshadows. Hamlet’s rash murder of Polonius and nonchalant reaction likewise suggest his sick and unsettling behavior. His scathing remarks to Gertrude in her bedroom recall this idea of sickness: “Heaven’s face does glow/O’er this solidity and compound mass/ with heated visage, as against the doom/ is thought–sick at the act” (III.iv.58–60). Hamlet’s words “heated” and “thought–sick” aptly describe his state of mind. In a sense, heaven’s face mirrors his own: both are “thought–sick” at the earth. He reflects this disillusionment toward the world when he calls the earth a “sterile promontory.” But despite the disillusionment he expresses to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he later revels in the players’ presence. While in one moment Hamlet is sullen, in the next he becomes jovial. Because his emotions and behavior constantly waver depending on the circumstances, Hamlet is clearly not as stable as the celestial imagery that he appropriates would suggest.

Only at the end of the play does Hamlet realize the sense of stability to which he aspires. Hamlet’s anger and disillusionment transform into gravity when he stares down at Ophelia’s grave to ask, “What is he whose grief/ Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow/ Conjures the wand’ring stars and makes them stand/ […] This is I” (V.i.267–270). Hamlet suggests that his grief is so powerful that it makes the stars stand still like in the heliocentric model. While it is unclear whether the entire cosmos also transforms from the geocentric to heliocentric model, it is clear that Ophelia’s tragic death has produced a new, more stable order. The image of the stars coming to a rest mirrors Hamlet’s change to a more restful state of mind. After Ophelia’s funeral, Hamlet no longer acts mad. Rather, he finds peace of mind. He amenably submits to Claudius’ request to duel and even apologizes to Laertes for his mad behavior. As he tells Horatio prior to his duel, he will “let be” (V.ii.238). Consequently, Hamlet’s death at the end of the play seems less tragic because he calmly accepts his fate, uttering, “Let it be. Horatio—I am dead” (V.ii.370). Hamlet uses his last modicum of energy to surrender his legacy and power to Horatio and Fortibras rather than to try to prolong his life. Perhaps what makes the play so tragic is that Hamlet ironically comes to peace with himself only to face death shortly thereafter. However, because Hamlet’s state of peace is short–lived, the audience cannot be certain whether it is real or merely another transformation of the “sun.”

Throughout the play, celestial allusions juxtapose the ideas of the old order with those of the new order. Hamlet comes to represent the new, enlightened age while Polonius and Claudius reflect the conservative world views. The tension between these characters mirrors the conflict between the old and new orders. While Hamlet views himself as the illuminating, stable sun of the new heliocentric system, Polonius and Claudius compare him with the erratic moon of medieval folklore. However, as Hamlet’s mood constantly changes, so does the celestial imagery that Shakespeare uses to describe him. The inconsistency in the play’s cosmic allusions parallels the incongruity between the court’s conception of Hamlet, Hamlet’s conception of himself, and Hamlet’s own behavior. Because of these inconsistencies, the audience and readers are left uncertain of the natural cosmic order and, likewise, of Hamlet’s genuine character. Just as men could debate theories of an indefinite and infinite cosmos but never arrive at definite conclusions, so too can the audience ponder the mystery of Hamlet’s character but never find a clear resolution.
Works Cited

**Autumn 2006 Honorable Mention**

*Peter Kardassakis*

**Instructor’s Foreword**

Written for “Technological Visions of Utopia,” Peter’s essay, “Perception in the Pursuit of Reality,” impressed our teaching team with its originality of argument and sophistication of construction. In it, he perceptively examines the complex relationship between social reality and individual perception within the context of E.M. Forster’s futuristic short story, “The Machine Stops,” and Aldous Huxley’s chilling dystopian novel, *Brave New World*. Peter addresses the overarching questions from the course about the relationship between “free will,” technology and utopia in terms of his own interest in the role of imagination and dissent in the development of the reader’s perception. Using close textual analysis, he argues that the literary allusions in both works serve as imaginative critiques of the controlling technological forces at work conditioning the homogenous societies in these stories. Furthermore, he astutely observes that there are two levels of readership encouraged by these texts; one is that of the imaginatively dissenting readers within the stories—Kuno and the Savage. The other is the readers of these stories, like Peter, who can glean from their textual example an alternate way of judging the gradations of information and misinformation which daily inundate us in a technologically advanced society. His conclusion—that being able to perceive the disjuncture between the “mere feeling of independence” and “the presence of human individuality” will lead to greater social creativity—is wonderfully illustrative of the best potential of utopian writing.

*Jennifer Barker*
Perception in the Pursuit of Reality
Peter Kardassakis

There is no truth. There is only perception. – Gustave Flaubert

Our reality in life is only as good as our perception of it. Especially in modern day America, where freedom of choice defines much of our culture, the role of perception is essential to maintaining free will as advances in technology allow outside forces to control the exchange of ideas in society. As technological advances allow authorities to influence sensual perception and information flow more and more, this phenomenon paradoxically makes society’s perceptions increasingly dependent on competing technological innovations to validate or invalidate them. In this way, a society possessing no free will can be, as far as its citizens are able to tell, one hundred percent free simply because its citizens have been tricked into misidentifying imposed limitations as personal choices. Fittingly, E.M. Forster’s short story “The Machine Stops” and Aldous Huxley’s novel Brave New World originally and realistically portray the effects of what happens when technologically influenced perceptions are imposed onto a society and allowed to supplant reality, consequently eliminating social freedoms in the process. Forster looks at how technology’s role in communication can influence perceptions, while Huxley discusses the potential of genetic engineering for creating a biased predisposition towards our experience of life; however, each author’s scenario achieves the same end—a society in which the loss of personal freedom is accepted by citizens blinded by technology’s ability to deceive the senses and inspire false confidence in misinformation. Thankfully, both writers also use literary allusion extensively in their stories to give their readers a historical measure by which to identify reality, and thus real freedom of choice, in the worlds they propose.

E. M. Forster paints a world in which the pseudo deity of “the Machine” controls every aspect of human interaction, thus eliminating the circulation of free thought. Through the instantaneous communication it allows, as well as the physical ease of lifestyle it encourages, the Machine directs human evolution both socially and physically. Forster notes that in Kuno and Vashti’s world, “the clumsy system of public gatherings had been long since abandoned” (110). Vashti’s interactions with other people in her time period repeatedly stress the fact that face–to–face social gatherings have been abolished for more efficient long distance communications through the Machine; simultaneously, this diminished need for travel is reflected in a physical weakening of the human body, further compacting humanity’s dependence on its technological deity. Though the machine “did not transmit nuances of expression,” society learns to get over this lack of emotional clarity (109). They cite the improved efficiency this permits, suggesting that Vashti lives in a society more concerned with “practical purposes” than actual human interactions. As her contemporaries become dependent on the Machine for all of their sensory input and information, the Machine gains the ability to control political thought and social expression, creating a culture of infinite uniformity, as Forster puts it: “seraphically free / From taint of personality” (122). Clearly this implies a society void of free will, but what
about the fact that humanity has freely chosen to empower the machine so fully over them? While Forster is clear to specify that the results of this loss of freedom, such as the outlawing of the respirator and the establishment of “undenominational Mechanism,” are not the work of the Central Committee, his implication that society in general is responsible suggests that humanity, not the machine, is at fault for this loss (121–122). Overall, the free choice of an idle lifestyle supported by the Machine leads to the extinction of free will for the majority of individuals. And yet the majority does not see this loss of free will due to their impaired perception; Forster elaborates saying, “the human tissues in that latter day had become so subservient, that they readily adapted themselves to every caprice of the machine” (124). Through this manipulation of perception, Forster creates a world in which freedom is still technically alive in that no one force has disallowed free thought—thus Kuno’s ability to deviate from the world around him—yet due to society’s perception that everything coming from the Machine is good, humanity no longer possesses the desire necessary to exercise it.

In Aldous Huxley’s novel, *Brave New World*, the perversion of perception takes the form not of the control of communication, but of genetic conditioning. Huxley describes a world where, from the womb—though artificial it may be—fetuses, and later children, are taught to like the world in which they have been preselected to live. For workers “predestined to emigrate to the tropics,” “hot tunnels alternated with cool tunnels. Coolness was wedded to discomfort in the form of hard X–rays” (135). This process of associating cold with pain gives the embryonic babies experiencing it an innate predisposition towards warm weather. Conditioning allows for a world in which social prejudices become physical realities; for example, the Hatcheries intentionally deprive Epsilon embryos of oxygen to make them less intelligent. Upon being asked why one would keep an embryo below par, the Director replies: “Hasn’t it occurred to you that an Epsilon embryo must have an Epsilon environment as well as an Epsilon heredity?” (134). Not only are Epsilons stereotypically thought of as being mentally inferior, they are physically manipulated to be so. Thus society’s perception of reality becomes reality. When one recognizes the fact that—from a genetic standpoint—the babies selected to be Epsilons are in fact statistically more likely to be inferior, this practice’s connection to freedom becomes murky. One could argue that society is only tailoring environment to match a heredity created by Mother Nature. Of course, the babies in *Brave New World* aren’t created by Mother Nature, they are bred; and furthermore, fate dictates that while a child may suffer from inferior environment, some luck in genetics can make up for that. So by disallowing the presence of fate in the form of chance, Huxley’s society is inherently limiting not only personal freedom, but freedom in the form of nature’s unpredictability. It doesn’t necessarily matter that this is all done to increase social happiness. Huxley’s hatcheries create a society without ambiguity; what is destined to happen, happens; and, as a result, freedom of all forms is eliminated. Contrary to Forster’s society, where the desire to exercise freedom, not freedom itself, is removed, Huxley’s system of conditioned perception removes the human capacity to exercise free thought at an individual level, essentially removing the capacity for free will altogether.

While Forster and Huxley construct their dystopian environments using clearly dissimilar methods, the resulting “realities” created by each share many similar attributes. Because perception has become almost universally skewed in each, reality takes on different levels of existence; what is real to one group in society may or may not be so to the rest, thus freedom is not defined uniformly throughout. In “The Machine Stops,”
Kuno’s reality of life beyond the distorted information feed and conditioned environment provided by the Machine contradicts Vashti’s sense of security in knowing that life cannot survive away from the Machine’s protection, just as Vashti’s knowledge of a world of music greater than the distorted tunes of the dying Machine disagrees with a lecturer’s advice to “Beware of firsthand ideas!” (121). Within Brave New World, the Director’s knowledge of the genetic conditioning process contradicts his inability to disobey an order for quiet, instilled through that same conditioning; furthermore, the Savage’s knowledge of Shakespeare and Mustapha Mond’s knowledge of religion expand their reality to a world beyond the bookless prisons inhabited by conditioned Epsilons (139, 146, 137). Yet ultimately in both stories this multiple reality universe comes crashing down. In “The Machine Stops,” Kuno’s ability to think beyond that of the rest of society prepares the reader for a revolution amongst that society. According to Forster, as the Machine stops, humanity “dies,” but Kuno and Vashti “have recaptured life” because they can see a future beyond the machine, setting them free of technology’s limiting constraints (127). This shift in thought to look beyond conditioned perceptions into a world of greater free thought also occurs in Brave New World when the Savage debates with Controller Mond. The Savage, free of the constraints of genetic and social conditioning, vocalizes his great insight that freedom requires sacrifice, and thus free society requires the existence of toil and suffering. He does so saying, “What you need… is something with tears for a change. Nothing costs enough here” (147). The revelation of reality in Brave New World beyond what is conditioned does not require worldwide catastrophe to work its effect. It is a revolution in the mind of the reader, propagated by the Savage’s refusal to blindly accept society’s conditioning, which brings perception crashing down and a new emphasis on free thinking for Huxley’s reader. In the end, both authors use this revelation of a reality without forced perception as a tool to encourage questioning of the status quo by their readers, which in turn is meant to stimulate free thought and encourage freedom in our own world.

Not only do the authors achieve the same revelation of reality for their readers, they also both do so using literary allusion as a lens for revealing that truth in their fictional societies. The most central thematic use of allusion in either text comes in Kuno’s quotation of the fifth–century Greek philosopher Protagoras when he says: “Man is the measure… Man’s feet are the measure for distance, his hands are the measure for ownership, his body is the measure for all that is lovable, desirable, and strong” (116). By citing a well–known adage about the importance of man’s physical being as a measure of perceiving the world around him, Forster highlights the lack of reality achieved in Kuno’s society due to humanity’s physical dependence upon the Machine. Forster further utilizes allusion in the form of an ironic reference to Vashti’s ignoring a view of Greece—the birthplace of philosophy—because she finds no “ideas” there, as well as references to the conquering of Wessex, England, suggesting Kuno’s ability to conquer the machine’s deception after viewing the hills of Wessex with his own eyes (114, 119). Continuing this English theme, Huxley’s Savage uses extensive quotations from Shakespeare in his argument with Controller Mond. The Savage’s citation of Hamlet’s famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy saying, “Whether tis’ better in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune….” serves as the primary basis for his discovery that society’s greatest source of distorted reality comes from its abolition of suffering (147). The Controller’s response, referencing characters from Othello, only serves to exemplify the point that true perception in Huxley only comes through the knowledge of history and literature.
afforded to Mond as a world leader or the Savage as an unconditioned individual (148). While both Forster and Huxley are using textual allusion to further their themes on perception, they are also using them more subtly to warn their reader of the necessity of literature and history to maintain the exchange of free thought and the existence of free will in society. Overall, both authors use allusion as a foil to juxtapose past realities with the distorted perceptions they portray in order to give their works significance as a literary lens for discerning reality in our own time.

Throughout their writings, Forster and Huxley both embrace a multidimensional outlook on the role of freedom in dystopian society in order to emphasize the necessity of imagination, as well as the role of dissent in fostering that imagination under such settings. They establish a world in which freedom no longer exists in free thought, but in the misidentification of externally imposed thought as being one’s own. Thus the aspect of freedom associated with individual independence is preserved since humanity does not know any better; but a much more fundamental aspect of freedom, original thought, is formally abolished by society. While objective freedom no longer exists, the psychological benefits enjoyed by an individual who thinks that he or she is free still remain. Yet both Huxley and Forster imply that such a false sense of freedom is not merely enough; in each society a select few undergo their own quest to attain the capacity for free interpretation—such as Kuno and the Savage—and in doing so they set in motion a revolution in the minds of both society and the reader. Once this occurs and reality is exposed, under the pretext of individualism for society and under the lens of allusion for the reader, a genuine paradigm shift takes place in the definition of freedom. It loses its false identity as a mere feeling of independence and regains a greater identity as the presence of human individuality, in essence allowing for the inclusion of emotion and creativity in these fictitious worlds. For both Forster’s Kuno and Huxley’s Savage, as well as for the reader, this redefinition of freedom brings about a sense that the world exists beyond merely them and their static perception of it. Consequently this new sense of imagination is meant to serve as a source of hope that though society is far from ideal, it will someday transcend the limitations of externally imposed perceptions to form a utopia based upon free thought and originality. In the words of Ursula K. LeGuin: “It is above all by the imagination that we achieve perception and compassion and hope.”
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Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World.

Winter 2007 Winner

A. Tariq West

Instructor’s Foreword

The Johannesburg skyline that disturbingly but often beautifully juxtaposes skyscrapers with the fog of coal–burning stoves over Soweto and Alexandra and that frames Tariq West’s paper is one that powerfully marks the disparities of life in South Africa both during apartheid and for contemporary visitors to the country. But what Tariq does with the difficult task of using a mixed bag of biographical, autobiographical and historical texts and film to tell a story about the meaning of life for South Africans during the apartheid era goes beyond this simple contrast. He uses the texts to take us into the hearts and minds of black and white South Africans. Tariq carefully and respectfully traces and reveals the way that apartheid geographies did not just separate black from white but created spaces in which that separation appeared inevitable, natural and perhaps even a good thing. He argues persuasively that, in building these separate physical spaces and in controlling how people moved between them, apartheid structures also built separate social and psychic spaces, thereby effectively concealing for decades the extent to which each was dependent on the other. Tariq does the dangerous work few writers have the courage to do in trying to see through the eyes of other men, of trying in his writing to walk in the shoes of people he has and never will meet. In doing so, he is able to show the discomfiting complicity that existed between oppressed and oppressor in apartheid South Africa. It is this move that elevates Tariq’s essay beyond just good historical or anthropological analysis to a piece of work that disturbs and makes us question the spaces where we live and work today.

Kathryn Mathers
Space and Race in Apartheid South Africa

A. Tariq West

Two images epitomize for me the implications of physical space in the construction of racial identities during apartheid in South Africa. The first is a 1970s black and white photo of the Johannesburg skyline, its skyscrapers towering with presiding majesty over a landscape as rich with symbols of wealth and power as any in the Western world (Mathabane 180–181). This is the city that black South Africans fittingly called *Goli*, “City of Gold.” This first picture contrasts starkly with a second albeit also in black and white and also of a scene in 1970s South Africa (Mathabane 180–181). This image depicts a black family—a father and his four children—standing before a shack of rough construction. The structure is pieced together, no doubt, from whatever materials were available, much like the leaning rows of shacks that extend for a mile or more in every direction. Looking at the first of these disparate scenes, I try to make into my own the eyes of a white South African who is perhaps a lawyer or a newspaper man of the period. Looking on this “City of Gold” with these eyes, it occurs to me that the bounty spread before me is nothing other than a monument to my right to the privileges of citizenship in this nation carved from the savage wilderness of Africa. After all, it was my people’s genius that erected these buildings from the dust of the veldt and the human gears of society that turn within them; the lawyers, bankers and bureaucrats are men of my hue and my history. Black people occupy a justifiably vague periphery in my mind and in my space; there is nothing of theirs here and I consider myself generous to even allow them entry into my world as servants.

I abandon these privileged eyes for those of the black man in the second photo. I imagine looking on this second scene, on this landscape of plastic sheeting, scrap metal and corrugated cardboard, and thinking, “This is all my hard days of labor have earned me. This is all that my people have built for themselves.” I look then on the Johannesburg skyline in the distance, its monuments stand in towering condemnation of my surrounding squalor and of the poverty which I equate with my blackness.

The physical divides illustrated in these two photographs exemplify a conception of space that lies at the heart of the system of apartheid, of “separateness.” It was essential to the function of the apartheid regime in South Africa that racial identities be bound not only psychologically and socially, but physically as well. In order for the system to survive, black and white people had to live in separate spaces and identify themselves in a deep way with those spaces. This division of spaces served, on the one hand, to insulate whites from the origins of their privilege, from the systematic dispossession of black people that enabled their relative opulence. It served on the other to keep black people from identifying this privilege as something originating from their labor and laying claim to it as their own.

From the 1940s up until the last decades of the twentieth century, those passing along the roads that led to the sprawling black shantytowns of South Africa, would likely have encountered signs bearing the following:
“Warning. This road passes through proclaimed Bantu Locations. Any person who enters the Locations without a permit renders himself liable for prosecution for contravening the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation act 1945, and the Location Regulation Act of the City of Johannesburg.” (Mathabane 3)

This warning is a testament to the spatial dynamic that had to be enforced in order for apartheid to exist. Legislation such as the “Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation act 1945” was crafted not just to control the movement of apartheid’s black subjects, but also to protect apartheid’s beneficiaries from the dark mechanisms and inhumanity of their privilege. As one black South African comments, “[a]s a result [of the legislation barring entrance into Bantu areas by Whites], 90 percent of White South Africans go through a lifetime without seeing firsthand the conditions under which Blacks have to survive” (Mathabane 3).

While the suffering of black people may have been in the periphery of some white people’s consciousness, the physical separation and literal inability to see further allowed them the privilege of moral self-justification in the midst of the hidden unjustifiable.

The case of a white liberal newspaper editor in 1970s South Africa exemplifies the manner in which this spatial dynamic played out in the life of a white South African. Donald Woods lived in a comfortable upper-middle class home, complete with swimming pool and black live-in maid (Cry Freedom). Being a white liberal, he takes upon himself the task of condemning violence perpetrated against blacks by police in townships (Cry Freedom). He prints articles on this subject in his newspaper and even manages to secure some photos of the events in question (Cry Freedom). Woods fails, however, to conceive in any real way of the space within which his subjects inhabit as well as its relationship to his own privilege. Woods, for instance, feels perfectly justified returning to his suburban home each evening to be waited upon by his black maid even as he condemns the conditions under which black people live. There is no connection in his mind between his privilege and their lack thereof. His privilege comes of his own hard work, as far as he is concerned, and not from denying others of the same rights. Freedom fighter Steve Biko hints at the apparent disconnect in Woods’ understanding of his subjects and his relationship with them, asking when they first meet, “Have you ever spent any time in a Black Township” (Cry Freedom)? Interestingly, in his query, Biko divines the spatial nature of the disconnect between Woods’ understanding of his privilege and black dispossession.

In a later encounter between Woods and the black activist, the latter comments subtly on the incongruity of Woods’ situation, remarking in a curious tone in response to Woods’ accusation that he is a racist, “A White South African. 41 years old. A newspaper man” (Cry Freedom). In fact, what he seems to ask is, “How could you, a white editor who has never even been among black people, identify black racism much less chronicle the black experience?”

This is precisely the pillar that apartheid stood on: the inability of whites to “chronicle,” to identify with the plight of blacks in a meaningful way. This inability sprang not just out of prejudice or a lack of rational capacity, but rather from a sheer lack of contact with black people and their space. After visiting the physical space of the black township, and seeing firsthand how black people live, Woods realizes the urgency of black concerns. He realizes that the gradual change he championed as a white liberal—a change which could be protracted over decades and, as a result, ensure his and his children’s continued privilege—needed to happen immediately. At this point, Donald poses a serious threat to the apartheid system because he can no longer justify the conditions in the black space.
This sort of realization is exactly what the system and construction of spatial separation wanted to prevent, the empathy of the beneficiary of oppression with the oppressed.

Black consciousness activist Steve Biko explained once to his white liberal companion, Donald Woods:

“[if you survive childhood] you grow up in these streets, these houses [the streets and houses of the Black ghetto]. Your parents try, but in the end, you only get the education the White man can give you. Then you go to the city, to work, to shop. You see their streets, their cars their houses. And you begin to feel that there is something not quite right about yourself, about your humanity, something to do with your Blackness. Because no matter how dumb or smart a White child is, he is born into that world, but you, a Black child, smart or dumb, you’re born into this, and smart or dumb, you’ll die in it.” (Cry Freedom)

In this account of the black child’s encounter with the white world, Biko crystallizes conceptions of two distinct physical spaces. The first, containing “these streets and these houses,” is characterized by squalor, violence and poverty. The other, containing “their streets, their cars, their houses,” is characterized by symbols of wealth and privilege. Biko asserts that, when confronted with the contrast between the two spaces, a black man associates the “inhumanity” of the conditions in his space with his blackness. Further, when Biko comments on the different worlds that black and white children are born into, he refers not just to a world of privileges, but also to a disparate set of physical spaces which neither is likely ever to leave other than “to shop” or “to work” in the case of the black child. Thus, physical space was woven into the very fabric of what it meant to be black or white.

The conception of the white and black worlds as distinct physical spaces is not isolated to Biko’s experience; it permeates the language and understanding of many, if not all, black people under apartheid. A black woman once gave the following counsel to her son on the eve of his visit to his grandmother’s place of work, a white home in Johannesburg, “You’re going to spend an entire day among White people, the cleanest people on the earth. The last thing they need is a filthy Black boy contaminating their home” (Mathabane 185). She did not want her son to desecrate the white world with the filth of their own. In short, she was ashamed. The strained transit between these two physical spaces prominently marks black South Africans’ sense of their world; “PUTCO buses droned in the distance, carrying loads of Black people to the White world to work” and “…on weekends, Black people continued to feast and drink heavily in an effort to prepare for another week of hard labor in the White world” (Mathabane 24, 30). The only place for black people in the white space was as subordinates, as workers, and that was, it seemed, their only claim to it.

The phenomenon of black shame with regard to their physical spaces, as exemplified by the counsel of the black mother to her son on the importance of not polluting the white world, in conjunction with the imagery of transit between the two racially delimited spaces demonstrates how separation of spaces enabled the system of apartheid. That same black mother counseled her son on how to interact with Whites in their world thus: “Talk only when you are talked to; wear a smile, preferably your widest smile, at all times” (Mathabane 184). Thus, whenever white South Africans encountered black people in white space, they were clean, smiling and seemingly content, allowing white people to deny to themselves the ghastly realities of the black space. The black man or woman’s negative
conceptions of, and self-associations with, their space, kept them from confronting white people with their realities. There was, in effect, a tacit agreement between the oppressed and the oppressor: the black person would hide their discontent and the white person would pretend they did not exist. Further, the constant transit between the spaces meant that black people never occupied white space long enough to stake claims. Black people existed in white space only as clients, bound to their white patrons by an implicit social and economic contract of servitude. Bound by such an agreement that implicitly validated the white right to privilege, it would have been difficult for black people to understand the link between the bounty in this foreign space and the relative deprivation in their own.

In apartheid South Africa, space, therefore, became an essential component of racial identity. Apartheid required that black people have a vague and distanced conception of the physical space occupied by their oppressor in much the same way that the beneficiaries of this oppression, as exemplified by Donald Woods, could only justify indulging in all the privileges of white citizenship when distanced from black people. It required that this white space be foreign and abstract from the space that they themselves occupied. Unidentifiable as the fruit of their own labors, white space became cemented squarely as a white racial characteristic.

The separation of black and white physical spaces under this system allowed white South Africans to perpetuate the myth of their relative wealth and power as something entirely of their own creation, built solely with their toil and genius. On the surface, everything in their space was a testament to this. Conversely, it forced black people to accept ownership of their poverty, to naturalize it as something of their own making, essentially and shamefully black. It is, therefore, likely that one of the factors that led to the fall of apartheid was the increased entry of white people into black spaces and vice versa. No one who spent any amount of time immersed in the space of the other could ignore the enormous incongruity in the spatial myths perpetuated by the apartheid regime. For the white South African, the physical imagery of the black experience began to color their dreams and self-perceptions. For the black South African, the spatial imagery of white privilege became also, the imagery of their dispossession.
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Instructor’s Foreword

Dinah Lewis thinks too much. I tell her this all the time in class, “Dinah, don’t overthink it.” Yet, contrary to the mandate’s usual connotation, the activity of overthinking is a beautiful thing: it is, in fact, important and essential if we are to survive this “world on fire” at all.¹ To overthink is to consider all of the angles, the ins and outs, the politics as well as the ethics of, in our course’s case, art and life. Those two categories—art and life—cannot be overthought. In fact, overthought might be the very thing they require. To go past thought, to take thought to its agonizing, heartbreaking, and resolutely poetic limit, is to arrive at the place of art’s promise. Dinah does this overthinking well. To write about an image of a lynched black man, requires a politics and ethics of overthinking. It demands it. Not only does Dinah consider how this image operates within racist and anti-racist cultural logics but, in the spirit of overthought, asks what does it mean to “look” at all? Where does the “look” originate and what purpose does it serve? What happens when the circumstances of this “look” shift to different real and imaginary locales of “aesthetic” or “political” contemplation? Overthought asks these questions in the spirit of hope and yet, because of its nature, agonizes around the incommensurability of thought to arrive at the heart of the matter, that is, that this image is a record of “black pain” that is not localizable to the “past.” It did exist. It does exist. It inspires the refusal to reproduce the image. It inspires the refusal to reproduce the pain. Thank you, Dinah, for overthinking. It very well might save our lives.

Sarah Cervenak

¹ From Cherrie Moraga’s “Refugees of a World on Fire,” the foreword to the second edition of This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (Latham, N.Y.: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).
The Indeterminacy of Meaning: How Movement Affects Experience

Dinah Lewis

It is August 3, 1920, and Lige Daniels, a black teenager, sits in jail accused of killing an elderly white woman. A mob of angry white men, determined to show the world what justice really is, bangs down the jailhouse door, drags him out to the courthouse yard, and lynch Lige on an oak tree. As he hangs six feet in the air, his head tilted upward, the crowd of men and boys gathers beneath him. A cameraman, to celebrate the lynching, frames a photograph perfectly: Lige, in the center of the frame, hangs right above the heads of the mob. His head is tilted up, facing the sun that is shining from the upper right side. The courthouse is in the background, its roof marking a horizontal line that runs directly through Lige’s torso. Almost everybody looks at the camera, although a couple of men stare proudly at Lige, and a little boy smiles at his father. Then the cameraman presses a button, freezing their movements, their expressions, their positions, and time into a fixed image. It will become a souvenir: it will be made into a three-and-a-half by five-and-a-half postcard. Later on, the postcard will end up in both a book and exhibition entitled “Without Sanctuary: Lynching in America.” Now, the image of the postcard is available to anyone with Internet access.

In Regarding the Pain of Others, critic Susan Sontag focuses on the questions of “regarding” as it concerns images of pain—be it due to war, genocide, or slavery. Although she does not specifically talk about this image of Lige, she uses the “Without Sanctuary” exhibition in order to address the ethics of spectatorship. Having been asked to consider the relationship between movement and the visual for a dance studies IHUM paper, I decided to focus on how the movement of this particular image through space and time has shaped not only the role of the spectator viewing the photograph, but the meaning of the photograph itself. How has my experience with the image been different from those who encountered the same image in a museum, or those who bought and mailed it as a postcard? If the reappropriation of this postcard from one context to another can so drastically change not only the emotion and language associated with the photograph, but the actual identity of the people in the photograph, then is there an absolute meaning latent in the photograph? I will argue that the meaning of a photograph lies not in the truth of its representation, but rather in the relationship between the spectator and the image, as it is shaped by captions, the performative context of its appearance, and time itself.

As soon as the event was captured in a photograph, the lynching became objectified. Photographs have the ability to “turn an event or a person into something that can be possessed” (Sontag 81). The postcard in the exhibition, the copy of which is now on the Internet, was originally bought as a souvenir by a lady identified as Aunt Myrtle. Before dropping the postcard off at her nephew’s house, she was able to hold the event in her hands. In a sense, she owned Lige Daniels as he hung from the tree. Further, with the photograph in her possession, she was able to alter the event, by writing on the back of the postcard: “This was made in the court yard, in Center Texas, he is a 16–year–old Black
boy, He killed Earl’s Grandma, She was Florence’s mother. Give this to Bud. From Aunt Myrtle.” Short and succinct, showing no sense of shame or guilt, Aunt Myrtle’s writing on the back becomes a kind of caption for the photograph. In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger’s argument about paintings holds true for photographs: “It is hard to define exactly how the words have changed the image but undoubtedly they have. The image now illustrates the sentence” (28). Bud’s interpretation of the photograph “depends on how the picture is identified or misidentified; that is, on words” (39). In his aunt’s words, the boy who is hung (Lige Daniels) remains nameless. He is simply a sixteen–year–old black boy and no more. Moreover, this black boy is unquestionably guilty. Thus, the caption imposes a meaning onto the photograph, a meaning that will cause Bud to see the photograph as the photographer intended: a criminal, brought to justice, hanging from a tree, his face turned towards the sun, forced to face God for what he has done. Beneath him stand the proud citizens, men and boys, yet, their faces are still stern: nothing can bring back the woman the black boy killed.

Eighty years later, the postcard will be on a wall of the exhibition “Without Sanctuary,” surrounded by other photographs of lynching. The image will be the same and the writing on the back of the postcard will still be there. Yet, the postcard will have moved to a new context, and, despite the intentions of the photographer, the postcard will change from being a celebration of the lynching to a condemnation of it. As Sontag explains, “the photographer’s intentions do not determine the meaning of the photograph, which will have its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it” (39). Time and context alter the photograph’s meaning. The postcard has changed from being a souvenir to being a document that exposes the injustices of our history. It becomes part of a larger group of photographs that forces us to examine the “evil unleashed specifically by racism” (91). Clearly this drastic change in the role of the postcard can be explained mostly by the movement of time: Overt racism is no longer tolerated. Yet, the meaning of the postcard is also changed by its location in a photograph exhibition: photographs “weigh differently when seen in a photography museum… in the pages of *The New York Times*… in a book… every picture is seen is some setting” (119–120). In the exhibition, the setting is fixed. Everybody is quiet and respectful. Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” echoes through the room: “Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze / Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.” People, black and white, slowly walk through the exhibit to reflect, remember, and most importantly, to learn. Many people stand in front of the postcard of the hanging Lige Daniels. They make eye contact with the bloodless murder. Some may force themselves to look at Lige, who truly is, even after his death, without sanctuary. Others may find solace in the sight of the sun shining from the upper right hand corner of the frame, accepting Lige into heaven. Whatever the focus of the spectators, the images cry out: “This is what human beings are capable of doing—may volunteer to do, enthusiastically, self–righteously. Don’t forget” (115).

Yet, when such an image becomes available on the Internet, “there is no way to guarantee reverential conditions in which to look at these pictures and be fully responsive to them” (120). When I first came across a website with a picture of Lige, I was listening to the Beatles and talking online. This is drastically different from the atmosphere in which the image was presented in the exhibition. Every aspect of the exhibition, from the music to the lighting, reminded people of the meaning of the image: *to remember*. Yet, I was unable to see the photograph without seeing aspects of my own life surrounding

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it: the messy desk on which my laptop sat, the photographs hanging on the wall right behind my screen, my roommate talking on the phone out of the corner of my eye. My banal surroundings trivialized the photograph. For, when a postcard is available on the Internet, it is much like a painting’s presentation on television: “It enters each viewer’s house. There it is surrounded by his wallpaper, his furniture, his mementoes…. It lends its meaning to their meaning. At the same time, it enters a million other houses and, in each of them, is seen in a different context” (Berger 19). The relationship between the viewer and the photograph has become affected by the relationship between the viewer and the computer screen.

Moreover, unlike postcards, which are mailed from one person to another, or exhibitions, in which an image is in a fixed location, the Internet allows for the possibility of a completely decontextualized image. A simple “Google Image” search for the photograph will bring up the image of Lige without any narrative or explanation. One does not know whether the photograph was put on the Internet by a racist bigot or by a respectful historian. You do not know whether to close the window, haunted by what was just shown on your computer, or to force yourself to look at it, to respect it, to remember the horrible past of our country. In other words, when the context of an image is ambiguous, its meaning is broadened, and the image is more vulnerable to sweeping interpretations.

Susan Sontag once wrote that “a photograph has only one language and is destined potentially for all” (20). Yet, what I am suggesting is that a photograph has no language, no inherent structure of meaning; what makes a photograph “destined potentially for all” is that people are continually able to project their own language onto it. This can be demonstrated by Aunt Myrtle, when she, perhaps unintentionally, captions the photograph. She puts a narrative behind it, orienting the photograph towards remembering the old lady who was murdered.

Yet, language does not have to be reduced to words. For, the tone of the atmosphere in which the photograph is viewed can also act as a language: the location, music and lighting all work to project a meaning onto the photograph. Thus, when the photograph of Lige is shown in an exhibition, its atmosphere reorients the meaning of the photograph towards remembering not the old lady, who becomes absent from the photograph, but remembering Lige Daniels.

Now, as the photograph is available on the Internet, its meaning is ambiguous. It can be used both to celebrate the heroism and condemn the racism of the white men who hung him. For, this image—of a black man, hanging from a tree, with white men standing beneath him, staring into the camera—can be used to depict countless narratives. Thus, one must be wary of relying on an image to convey an ultimate message. This is particularly important in today’s political arena, where, despite the intentions of the photographer, the same photograph can be both “a cry for peace” and “a cry for revenge” (13). For, just because a photograph is a fixed image, does not mean that its meaning is fixed as well. As an image moves in time and space, its meaning is continually erased, transformed, and redefined.
Works Cited

