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Jorge is a graduating senior double majoring in Film & Media Studies and Latin American & Iberian Studies. He is Salvadoran-born and LA raised. He really enjoys critical and cultural theory. Someday he may write it. Jorge will be attending graduate school in the School of Cinematic Arts at USC in Fall 2010.
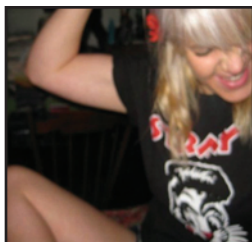
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Virginia is a Film & Media Studies major who will be sent out into the "real" world, kicking and screaming, this June. As far as film goes, she's rather fond of New Queer Cinema, admittedly awful horror films and *Sunset Boulevard*, but she'd really rather be rollerskating.

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Danielle Laudon is a graduating Film & Media Studies major. She has done research for the production company FilmEngine and excelled as a story analyst for the 4th STAGE International Script Competition. Being an unabashed, nondiscriminatory cinephile, she has thoroughly enjoyed every minute of study at UCSB.

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Se Young is a third year Film & Media Studies major. She wrote, directed, and narrated Ripped Off, a doc about the UC budget crisis. Currently she works as the Digital Media Coordinator for Associated Students Program Board and is interning at Original Productions (the creators of Deadliest Catch). After graduation, she hopes to write the next ridiculously popular fantasy teen novel series.

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Justin Kruszona is a graduating senior in Film & Media Studies and English. He owns over 300 DVD's and one day hopes to have large room full of them. Though he has suffered for it, his favorite movie of all time is Titanic. Justin grew up in Quartz Hill, CA and after graduation, hopes to move to LA, SF, or NYC to pursue a career in media distribution or public relations.

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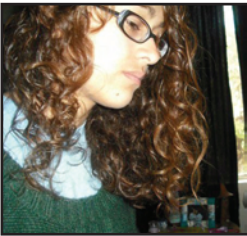
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Melissa is a third year majoring in Film & Media Studies. Melissa focuses her work on the production of cinema with the intention of using her knowledge to change the way media is made. Particularly interested in media's role as a product for social change, upon graduating, Melissa hopes to enter into a graduate program where she can pursue her interests in scholarship and filmmaking.

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Dan is a graduating senior, majoring in Business Economics with an emphasis in accounting. He plans on working in the finance department with the City of Goleta after graduation. When he is not studying or working at the city, Dan enjoys playing basketball, traveling, and maintaining his legacy. Check out his current project that goes live in Fall, *www.zillionears.com*.

FROM THE EDITOR

This year's *Focus* contains some of the most creative undergraduate scholarship surrounding the ideas of "conflict and uncertainty," themes that comment on the complicated state of current world affairs. By pointing to the intersection of problems in contemporary media, ideology, identity, technology, and social movements, undergraduate UCSB scholars have been able to voice their critiques and concerns regarding this mutating subject matter whilst contributing to scholarly debates on important issues of great philosophical
importance.

Focus Media Journal XXX is organized in three sections. The first section contains four essays concerned with issues of identity, sexuality and violence as they pertain to specific contemporary filmic and televisual texts. The second section is organized around the key areas of theory, aesthetics, and history in creative contemplations on spectatorship, politics and representation. Finally, the last group of essays seeks to interrogate our technological past, present, and future through thoughtful discussions on space and the emergence, creation, and negotiation of culture.

Due to the great defunding of public education and the growing scarcity of student resources as part of the larger economic recession, we almost gave up on publishing this year. However, thanks to generous individuals and on-campus funding sources we were able to gather the necessary money to complete publication. In addition to functioning through mischedulings, applying to graduate school, film festivals, roller derby, presentations, essay writing and a barrage of midterm and final exams, we managed to remain focused and accomplished our goal—that is, the little red book (no, not Mao's) you currently hold in your hands. It is with great enthusiasm that I present to you the 30th issue of *Focus Media Journal*. We are really proud of it. We hope you enjoy it!

Focus would not have been possible without your kind and encouraging actions. Being this year's editor has been a wonderful and illuminating experience. Having the opportunity to share this space and undertake this project with some of the most talented individuals I have ever met at UCSB has made this endeavor that much more valuable. On behalf of myself and the staff here at *Focus Media Journal*, I would like to personally thank Joe Palladino and every one of you who contributed their time and effort in making this journal a reality.

Yours truly,
Jorge Cuellar
Editor-in-Chief
2009-2010

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GENDER, SEXUALITY AND TEETH

Anthony Blahd

Introduction

Teeth (Mitchell Lichtenstein, 2008) is the charming story of a fairly average teenage girl confronted with a not-so-average female trouble. What can pseudo-scientifically be referred to as vagina dentata can more crudely and accurately be described as a set of razor-sharp teeth found inside of protagonist Dawn O'Keefe's nether-region. Lichtenstein's coming-of-age film utilizes this horror-film guise in order to explore a teenage girl's struggles with her body, self-image and sexuality in ways rarely depicted onscreen. *Teeth* depicts a young female constantly bombarded by hetero-normative sexual and gender discourses; Dawn's sexuality is repressed and her identity as a woman is marginalized by her school, her church and the overall performativity imposed upon her by the patriarchally dominated world she lives in. Dawn is initially frightened by the discovery of her physical abnormality, but eventually comes to terms with her feminine power and learns to use it as a weapon. Her transformation from timid to terror-inspiring strikes castration anxiety into the male characters (acting as surrogate for the viewer). The reversals of power is both unsettling and unnerving, but it is troubling and ultimately undermines the film's case for being a feminist text.

Blooming Sexuality

Dawn's sexuality is constantly shaped and mediated by discursive space. In one scene, for example, Dawn's class is seen studying the anatomy of male and female genitalia; the students study a male penis on one page and then turn the page to reveal a large sticker covering a diagram of a female vagina. The teacher informs the class that the school board insists on covering the image of the vagina, deeming it inappropriate for the classroom. This repression of sexual knowledge is a power source for male society. Judith Butler states, "… the recasting of the matter of bodies has the effect of a dynamic of power."[1] Dawn's dangerous uncertainty about her body and identity is both instilled and fed by the school system, an apparatus of state ideology. The restriction of knowledge about their own bodies means the females in the classroom cannot fully envision themselves as women: they are defined by what they lack, rather than by their own genitalia. In feminist theoretician Laura Mulvey's terms, "an idea of woman stands linchpin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence."[2] The feminine is, therefore, valued less than the masculine.

The heavily discursive biopolitical climate is reiterated by Dawn's involvement in the Chris-

Dawn goes to see the gynecologist.

tian church. Woman's inferiority to man is brought up in the biblical context of the story of man's creation, as Dawn and her fellow teens at church recite bible verses depicting how Eve was created from the rib of Adam. This ancient text could possibly be the starting point of phallocentric discourse. The verse is thousands of years old, but still shapes Dawn's conception of her identity. Dawn and her peers participate in a church program called "The Promise." The teens wear rings on their fingers as a promise to practice abstinence until marriage. Dawn is so adamant about "The Promise," that when talking to her crush (and eventual first victim) Tobey (Hale Appleman), neither is even able to say the word "sex." Foucault references the history of sexuality in Part Two of The Repressive Hypothesis, noting that "It had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of lan-guage, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present."[3] Through its censorship of knowledge, the church gains and maintains its power. However, this repression of sexuality can cause a backlash, or sexual awakening. It is this sexual awakening that ultimately causes Dawn to "weaponize" her body.

A Turning Point

Before Dawn is able to see the benefits of her mutation, she must first break free from the over-mediation that influences her identity by escaping from the realm of female performativity. This is not an easy process: Judith Butler says "…performativity must be understood not as a singular deliberate 'act,' but, rather as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse

produces the affect that it names."[4] Dawn's performative role is shaped from all sides, but is eventually broken by a graphic act of male-perpetrated violence that causes her to break ties with the church: Tobey rapes and abuses Dawn, but in the process, her vagina dentata claims its first victim. After accidentally killing Tobey, Dawn throws her promise ring, a symbol of her religious devotion and ideological ties off a cliff. Dawn's dismissal of the phallocentric education system comes next: she runs warm water over her textbook in order to remove the sticker censoring the image of the vagina. This is the first instance of self-reflection and free unmediated thought; she becomes fully aware of her difference. At this point in the film, Dawn is finally able to escape the realm of female performativity, and the text's feminist implications start to intensify.

Dawn's coming to grips with her mutation marks the feminist turn in the film. Dawn's vagina dentata is at first presented as a reactionary and seemingly incontrollable mutation. First, Dawn is as surprised and frightened as Tobey when her "teeth" sever his penis during his attempted rape. The second victim, a gynecologist, has his fingers inadvertently bitten off due to Dawn's trepidation and discomfort at being examined by the sleazily doctor. The third victim is a boy who drugs her and has sex with her. Their first scene of intercourse goes well; it is not until the second time, when the boy reveals that he only is having sex with her due to a bet, does the vagina dentata strike. The vagina dentata represents Dawn's inner femininity. As a violent response to violent patriarchal power, Dawn's condition gives her a newfound agency to challenge her phallocentric world. Dawn's traumatic sexual experiences constitute what Donna Haraway describes as "women's experience… anything that names sexual violation, indeed, sex itself as far as 'women' can be concerned. Feminist practice is the construction of this form of consciousness: that is, the self-knowledge of a self-who-is-not."[5] Lichtenstein presents the audience with several of these totalizing "women's experience's," depicting a scenario in which the woman is able to not only defend herself, but has the ability to reverse the experience.

Indeed, as Dawn becomes increasingly comfortable and at ease with her newfound power, her conception of it changes. A subsequent school scene depicts a teacher attempting to teach evolution, which due to legislation must adjust to specific and legally protected terminology. She describes how an ordinary diamondback snake develops a rattle as a helpful genetic adaptation. From this point on, Dawn refers to her vagina dentata as an adaptation rather than a mutation or disease and mutation is a theme throughout the film. The opening credits consist of supposed footage of a cellular mutation on the molecular level. Vagina dentata as a mutation serves to authenticate the false condition; because it is a mutation, it seems

more possible. The reference to the snake continues throughout the film as well, with allusions to Medusa. *Teeth* sometimes fashions Dawn as a Medusa-like figure, a dominating female monster. The Medusa story is often considered the first feminist text, and is widely analyzed as a feminist allegory. Freud declared that Medusa is depicted as "the supreme talisman who provides the image of castration."[6] Medusa became a monster after being raped in the temple Athena, paralleling Dawn's invocation of her vagina dentata after being raped and molested several times. This animal or monstrous association with feminism is not surprising. According to Haraway, "many branches of feminist culture affirm the pleasure of connection with human and other living creatures."[7]

Scared Stiff

In her essay, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," Haraway dehumanizes femininity, likening it to machinery. According to Haraway, the "…cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work."[8] With the cyborg model, the female is placed outside of the traditional conscriptions of gender performativity. The cyborg and its allegorical association with the woman is a "fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginary resource."[9]

Dawn's association with both the Medusa and the cyborg is a means for the filmmaker to not only highlight feminism in the film, but to position Dawn as a feminist symbol herself, in a space outside the body of the woman (or man). "Cyborg monsters in feminist science fiction define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by mundane fiction of Man and Woman."[10] Dawn is taken out of the realm of the human, allowing her to transgress political boundaries inaccessible to female subjects.

Dawn, like the Medusa, is both a symbol of male desire and a symbol of castration anxiety. According to Mulvey, "Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound; she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it."[11] Within *Teeth*, this castration anxiety is personified in Dawn's vagina dentata; her teethed genitalia represents the physical embodiment of the castration threat. The film itself is made by a male and appropriated for the male gaze, so the personified threat of castration invokes fear not only in the male characters but, more importantly, the presumed male viewer.

Dawn's villainous stepbrother Brad represents the gaze of the male spectator, abusing Dawn with his scopophilic, voyeuristic pleasures. Of all of Dawn's victims, Brad meets the most brutal end due to his history of abusing Dawn throughout their childhood and up to the present. The film opens with

exposition on the twisted relationship between Dawn and Brad: the pair are shown in a plastic swimming pool in their parents front yard where Brad apparently exposes his genitals to Dawn and requests that she show him hers. The frame captures Brad's arm moving towards her crotch, then several seconds later, Brad screams in pain. When he shows the wound to his parents, his finger appears to be bitten. This early encounter haunts Brad, imbuing him with a fear of castration that remains with him as he grows up. While this memory becomes foggy for Brad, his subconscious fear of the vagina is very real and can be witnessed through the remainder of the film. In one scene, for example, it is revealed that he only has anal intercourse with his girlfriend.

Castration anxiety hinges upon desire; the male desires the female, the female desires the phallus. Brad is sexually fixated upon Dawn throughout the film: he is shown attacking her suitors, and crudely flirting with her. For her part, Dawn clearly hates Brad but is driven to act when she discovers he was responsible for her mother's death. Once Dawn becomes aware of her power, she seduces a pleasantly surprised Brad with the intention of using her teeth against him. After Dawn refuses to be anally penetrated, Brad grudgingly has vaginal intercourse with her. Brad's fear and better judgment are impeded by his desire, leading to his violent castration.

Brad's castration anxiety is what ultimately connects him to the spectator. None of Dawn's other victims experienced castration anxiety during intercourse with Dawn because they were unaware of her condition. Brad (a surrogate for the viewer) is plagued by the threat of castration throughout the entire film. Brad is also similar to the viewer in his scopophilic tendencies: Mulvey claims that "scopophilia arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight."[12] In another scene Dawn in the bathroom brushing her teeth and about to shower; as she opens the shower door, Brad jumps out from inside the shower. Brad and the spectator share a similar gaze, they are both granted access into private moments in Dawn's life. Brad is constantly observing, constantly listening to Dawn through his wall. Mulvey notes,

> As the spectator identifies with the male… he projects his look onto that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male… as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence.[13]

Brad's scopophilia only enhances desire, which in turn serves to enhance the threat of castration. The combination of Brad's scopophilic nature and his intensified castration anxiety allow him and the spectator to share the same gaze.

Dawn's *vagina dentata* lies underneath.

Rendered Toothless

The concept of a feminist film by a male director is quite curious. Director Mitchell Lichtenstein seems to miss his mark at a truly feminist film. Film critic Kirk Honeycutt labeled *Teeth* "the most alarming cautionary tale for men with wandering libidos since Fatal Attraction."[14] This remark has been used by the filmmaker and distributors of the film as a tagline on the trailer and poster. Ultimately, Honeycutt's synopsis falls flat. If the film succeeded in radical feminism, there would be validity in Honeycutt's review. However, *Teeth* is not "a cautionary tale for men with wandering libidos." The film does not caution men against any real threat; it is pure male fantasy. Dawn ultimately poses no threat to the male viewer; it is the same male gaze that created the castration threat, which also destroys its value as a feminist tool. According to Mulvey,

The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the reenactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment, or saving of the guilty object; or else complete disavowal of castration threat by the substitution fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous.[15]

The male audience is presented with the threat of castration. However, throughout the spectral experience, the male is able to disregard the threat of castration by fetishizing Dawn. However, the male director appropriates this type of narrative

for the male gaze, thereby fetishizing the castration threat.

The 2005 film *Hard Candy* (David Slade) shares a similar premise with *Teeth*. It is the story of Hayley, a 14-year-old girl who finds Jeff, a 32-year-old photographer on the Internet. Suspecting that Jeff is a pedophile, Hayley lures him to a meeting where she drugs and tortures him. Narratives such as Hard Candy or *Teeth* ultimately do very little for the feminist viewer because they do not attempt to deconstruct the male/female binary; these narratives are mere reversals of the dichotomy, hedging the female dominant over the male. According to Derrida, these types of cultural systems are not deconstructed through reversal, but rather are deconstructed when the inherent contradictions are recognized. When the phallocentric nature of man vs. woman is noticed, not reversed, it begins to unravel. One part of the binary opposition is dependent on its counterpart; master is not master without slave; male is not male without the female. Jack Balkin on deconstruction:

> Deconstructive reversals show that the reasons given for privileging one side of an opposition over the other often turn out to be reasons for privileging the other side. The virtues of the first term are seen to be the virtues of the second; the vices of the second are revealed to be true of the first as well. This undoing of justifications for privileging is part of the deconstructionist aim of "ungrounding" preferred conceptions by showing that they cannot act as self-sufficient or self-explanatory grounds or foundation.[16]

A reversal of the binary does not aid in the deconstruction of the cultural system; male and female will continue as two separate entities dependent upon each other.

Dawn's dismissal of gender biased society, her acceptance of her adaptation and monstrous transformation serve to highlight gender differences in the male/female cultural system. *Teeth* brings up an idea of radical feminism, however, that radicalism is diminished through the negotiation and position of the male spectator. Merely interpreted as a feminist text, *Teeth* is quite fascinating; however, its feminist effect is impeded by the negotiation of the spectator.

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A CRISIS OF MASCULINITY, A QUESTION OF RESOLUTION

Danielle Laudon

In a nation embroiled in political and economic turmoil, it is little surprise that outbursts of violence have spilled onto our screens; film has become an important and cathartic means for working out a modern crisis of masculinity. Tom Stall (Viggo Mortensen) of *A History of Violence*[1] and Wesley Gibson (James McAvoy) of *Wanted*[2] are two men on the brink of a crisis of both masculinity and identity who handle their aggression in different manners. Tom, who prefers a simple, quiet way of life, is forced to violence in order to protect his family members and maintain their respect for him as a male. Wesley, on the other hand, is catapulted into a world of violence and through it must create his identity. Both films utilize their displays of violence to send varied messages about troubled masculinity: *Wanted* demonstrates a stylized representation of violence which solves Wesley's crisis, demonstrating violence as a beneficial means to an end, while *A History of Violence* utilizes a more naturalistic brand of violence, thrusting consequences upon Tom, revealing that though sometimes used as a necessary means of defense, violence is still something graphic, real and a force not to be taken lightly. In this paper, I will demonstrate how the stylized violence in *Wanted* promotes violence

as an acceptable means of saving masculinity, while the use of naturalistic violence in History questions its benefit. I will supplement my argument by analyzing selected sequences of violence from each film, tracing each character's progressive use of violence, their progressively violent sexual aggression and by analyzing how these stylized and naturalistic portrayals demonstrate the films' distinct sentiments toward violence as a resolution to the crisis of masculinity.

When the audience is first introduced to Wesley in *Wanted*, he is presented as a depressed failure of a man: Wesley's tyrannous boss has a vested interest in pointing out his shortcomings and his girlfriend seeks pleasures from his own best friend, suggesting Wesley's sexual inadequacies. As many critics have noted, this disenchantment with life feels quite similar to that of Edward Norton's character in *Fight Club*.[3] Critic Manohla Dargis of The New York Times writes, "Both have soul-sucking jobs, self-mocking voiceovers and a glamorous comrade in violence who ushers them into thrilling worlds of excitement and life-altering action..."[4] Wesley, as with Norton's character, is tired of living the life society has told him he must; the fact that he is failing miserably only compounds his frustration. Both films demonstrate

Viggo Mortensen portrays Tom Stall in *A History of Violence*.

male society's longing for father figures, resentment of the lifestyles forced upon them and, most importantly, both demonstrate men finding empowerment and catharsis through the painful use of violence. This exemplifies Wesley's crisis of masculinity which violence is set up to resolve.

Once Wesley is inducted into the underground assassin group called the Fraternity, the stylized nature of the violence then supports the use of violence as a means of achieving masculinity. "Flashy effects, zippy cuts, simulated death, walls of sound, wheels of steel"[5] are just some of the elements which describe the stylized elements which titillate the viewer and provoke pleasure in Wesley's use of violence. More specifically, the film borrows elements from ultra-violence to achieve such effects. Several sequences of violence involve montage editing shot at mul-

tiple speeds, utilizing copious slow motion shots. At times, the images on screen even pulsate, emulating the adrenaline pumping through Wesley's veins, causing the viewer to identify with Wesley as he participates in massacre killings. Take the final Fraternity attack, for example. As Wesley storms the textile factory in search of the Fraternity leader Sloan (Morgan Freeman), his entrance, guns blazing, is shot from multiple speeds. In slow motion, Wesley is seen unloading his bullets onto multiple passersby and even goes so far as to shoot through one man's blown-out skull cavity, using his dead, flimsy body as a shield. Kate Stables of *Sight & Sound* alludes to the connection between the use of ultra-violence and the resolve of troubled masculinity, saying "its ultra-violent exchanges are filled with antiauthoritarian rhetoric, castration-anxiety beatings, daddy-obsessed dialogue and

Angelina Jolie's sexy mother-substitute sidekick enforcing the hero's assassin homework."[6] Here, Stables connects the use of ultra-violence with Wesley's antiauthoritarian issues as well as his Oedipal issues which he acts out on Fox (Angelina Jolie); Wesley seeks both guidance and affection from Fox, which can be read as a result of his lacking a father figure. These elements supplement Wesley's need to prove his masculinity and exemplify how the use of ultra-violence allows him to achieve that.

The use of comedy in *Wanted* also serves to deaden viewers to the realities of violence and can be associated with the film's attraction to violence. When learning how to kill, Wesley graduate from practicing on pig carcasses to dead human beings. Three dead bodies, still adorned in their hospital gowns, emerge from a darkened room on meat hooks. Though the sight of bodies on meat hooks ought to inspire horror in association with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*,[7] Wesley ascends on the bodies smiling, poking their faces in amazement of how "real" they look. The viewer is then cued to respond with laughter that Wesley could mistake dead bodies for props. This further suggests the film's stance on the realities of violence and death.

Through use of naturalistic violence in *A History of Violence*, director David Cronenberg suggests something far different than Bekmambetov does with regard to the resolve of masculinity. While Tom Stall does not appear to be a man troubled by his own masculinity, his bravado is challenged when criminals from his past appear and threaten his safety as well as that of his family. It begins with Tom's initial act of heroism in his diner. When the film's previously introduced villains enter Tom's diner, Tom is thrust back into a life of violence. Within seconds, he breaks a coffee carafe against the older criminal's face, jumps over the diner counter, grabs the man's gun and lays into the second man, rapidly firing four shots into his chest. To up the stakes, in typical Cronenberg style, after receiving a stab wound to the foot, Tom shoots the wounded criminal in the face; a close-up on the man's flesh pulled from face ensues. In a revealing moment, Tom looks at the gun and the dead men with both concern and bewilderment at his own behavior. The scene occurs with no enhanced sound effects and no fanciful montage editing. Critic Richard Falcon cites Cronenberg's treatment of violence with "hyperreal" detail and links this naturalistic use of violence with the array of emotions this scene elicits from viewers. Falcon notes that "we instantaneously lose our bearings as we move through a complex of responses that include relief, excitement, titillation, shock, guilt and amusement."[8] Cronenberg, himself discusses the use of violence in this scene, explaining, "It was demanded, it was positive, it was justified and yet I needed to make it appalling at the same time. The audience starts cheering when he's killing people and they

stop when you cut to the result of the violence."[9] This scene demonstrates how Cronenberg's portrayal of violence challenges the concept that violence serves to empower masculinity without consequence.

We see Tom Stall progress back into a world of violence for self-preservation and his own family's protection. In another violent sequence, Tom is forced to reveal his original identity to his family when scorned rival from the past Carl Fogarty (Ed Harris) relentlessly pursues Tom at his home. Again, in a matter of seconds, Tom hits one thug in the throat, breaks his arm and ruthlessly pushes the man's nose into his brain four times. He then grabs the man's gun, shoots the second thug and, having been wounded, lies writhing in pain. A close-up shows the first thug convulsing with blood pouring from his nasal cavity where his actual nose is no longer recognizable. The camera pulls away from alternating close-ups between Tom and Carl to a long shot, revealing Tom's son Jack (Ashton Holmes) with the family shot gun standing behind Carl. Jack fires, and as Carl's chest splits open, chunks of his flesh fly onto Tom's chest, causing blood to splatter on his face. Tom grabs the gun once more, but unlike the diner scene, this time he secures the gun in the crotch of pants, sadly reclaiming ownership of violence. He has re-obtained the gun and through this act of violence he secures his perceived masculinity. It is noteworthy that after such violence, he embraces his son with a menacing

expression. The brutality and reality of the violence exhibited in the scene, supplemented by Tom's strange demeanor after obtaining the weapon, suggests that though he has secured his masculinity through the use of violence, Tom's family, along with the viewer, remain unsettled by the act. As Dargis points out, Cronenberg refuses to allow viewers to enjoy the film without paying a price; instead, "The man wants to make us suffer, exquisitely."[10]

In addition to both films' use of violence, a correlation between the character's sexual evolution and their increased aggression further aids in each film's sentiments towards violence as a resolve towards masculinity. As previously noted, in *Wanted*, Wesley is initially represented as sexually incompetent. After becoming a gun-wielding, knife-slinging expert, Wesley finds his stamina and channels his sexual energy towards Fox. After accepting his new life as an assassin, Wesley returns to his old apartment to retrieve the gun he disposed of in his bathroom. By claiming ownership of the violent-inducing phallic symbol, Wesley has officially solved his troubled masculinity and may now imbue upon Fox an erotically charged kiss, sealing his achievement. In *A History of Violence*, we see a far stranger evolution of sexuality in Tom's relationship with his wife. Prior to lashing out, Tom and Edie (Maria Bello) share a playful, intimate role-play scenario in which Edie dons a cheerleading uniform. After Tom's

Fox teaches Wesley a thing or two in *Wanted*.

aggressive side has been unearthed in his attempts to protect himself and his family, he and Edie share a far more violent, aggressive, feral kind of intimacy on the family staircase. In the case of Tom, his increased use of violence and aggression has drastically changed his and Edie's lovemaking. Tom's evolution of sexuality demonstrates how the use of violence can easily spill into the domestic sphere rather than miraculously improving stamina and curing troubled masculinity.

Ultimately, the use of violence in *Wanted* seems to demonstrate to critics one thing very clearly: "There's nothing worse than being a loser. Nothing. Being a killer, being immoral, wreaking havoc on humanity: none of this is worse than having no money, a lousy job and a cheating girlfriend."[11] As Wesley is progressively awarded for his violent behavior, even in the massacres which must have taken hundreds to thousands of innocent lives (i.e. the train derailing), it becomes clear that the film supports the use of violence as a necessary means to eradicate the crisis of masculinity. *A History of Violence*, however, closes with a very different meditation on the subject. After disposing of his revenge-seeking older brother and his many employed thugs, in the harsh reality of daylight Tom takes to a pond on the property. In this place, he symbolically tosses the gun into the water (freeing him from the pressure of the phallic-laden icon) and cleanses himself of the violent acts he has committed. This kind of "baptism" washes away Tom's original sin from his life as Joey, allowing him to go home to his family once again as Tom Stall. This conclusion suggests that while violence temporarily provided safety for Tom and his family, the harsh realities of explicit violence will do nothing but spill into the private

sphere of life-tarnishing not just the self but family.

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THE REAL HOUSEWIVES OF ORANGE COUNTY: PROMOTING IDEOLOGY ONE BIMBO AT A TIME
Allison Stubbmann

Introduction

"It's not about how much money you have, it's about how good you look spending it." If you are included in the two million viewers (on average) who watched season five of *The Real Housewives of Orange County* (Bravo, 2009), this probably sounds familiar.[1] For everyone else, this is one housewife's voice-over that is played during the introduction of the show before each episode. To me, it sums up the show. The ideology promoted in *The Real Housewives of Orange County* is one of beauty, affluence, and materialism. The women admittedly highlight or color their hair, get frequent spray tans, and regularly indulge in other beauty treatments, as the show reveals. Each drives a luxury vehicle, lives in an oversized home, and spends frivolously on designer fashion whenever possible. If the producers were trying to effectively portray lives of Orange County housewives, they failed.

The intention here, however, is not to criticize *The Real Housewives* for its misrepresentation of life in Orange County, but instead to examine the ideological implications of such misrepresentation. By exploring the representation of women on *The Real Housewives*, this essay attempts to ideologically unmask the show.

Making Meaning of *The Real Housewives*

Croteau and Hoynes' *Media/Society* dedicates an entire chapter to the importance of media messages, claiming that audiences do not "passively receive prefabricated messages," but instead construct meaning from these messages.[2] According to them, media images do not simply reflect the world, they re-present it; instead of reproducing the "reality" of the world "out there," the media engage in practices that define reality.[3] According to sociologist Stuart Hall, as cited in this book, the two are very different. "Representation," he writes, "is a very different notion from that of reflection. It implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping; not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labor of making things mean."[4] Simply put, media messages matter.

French literary theorist Roland Barthes found semiotics, the study of signs, to be useful in explaining how society uses pieces of cultural material to assert its values upon others. In the case of *The Real Housewives*, we can use Barthes' three orders of signification,

Fig. 1. Cast from left to right: Lynne, Alexis, Vicki, Gretchen, and Tamra.

or levels of meaning, to study how its creators use imagery to promote false ideologies, or "myths," upon others. The first order of signification describes the denotative meaning—the most obvious, explicit interpretations. In film terms, this first order or meaning would refer to what is on the screen, that is, "the mechanical (re)production of an image."[5] The second order of signification describes the connotative meaning, which is informed by the culture and historical context of the image. The connotative meaning is less explicit and entails more complex interpretations than that of the sign's denotative meaning. A third order — myth — is produced when the first and second orders of signification combine. On this level of meaning, the sign, or image, reflects, "major culturally-variable concepts underpinning a particular worldview" — such as masculinity, femininity, freedom, individualism, objectivism and so on.[6] Cinema scholar Susan Hayward offers a useful example of the three orders of signification in relation to a photograph of Marilyn Monroe:

> *At the denotative level this is a photograph of the movie star Marilyn Monroe. At a connotative level we associate this photograph with Marilyn Monroe's star qualities of glamour, sexuality, beauty…but also with her depression, drug-taking and untimely death if it is one of her last photographs. At a mythic level we understand this sign as activating the myth of Hollywood: the dream factory that produces glamour in the form of the stars it constructs,*

but also the dream machine that can crush them - all with a view to profit and expediency.[7]

We can apply that knowledge to uncover the ideologies promoted in *The Real Housewives* by looking at an image of its most recent 2009 cast (Fig. 1). At the denotative level, this is an image of five thin, Caucasian women — four blondes and one brunette — situated in front of a beautifully landscaped pool, decorated with massive water fountains and lush greenery. The women are wearing high-heeled shoes and cocktail dresses—three of which are pink, one purple, and one white. At the connotative level, we assess this as a photograph of the cast of *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, a contemporary reality television show, and perhaps, as ideology would want us to believe, consider the women to be attractive. At a mythic level, this image activates the myth of beauty as well as the myth of femininity.

Why is it that even though the women are thinner than the average woman of their age, have bigger breasts than appropriately proportional to their size, and are altered in nearly every way from head to toe (hair, skin tone, make-up, etc.), we consider them attractive? The answer is ideology. Borrowing from Marx and Engels, cultural studies scholar Douglas Kellner notes that ideology is characterized as "the ideas of the ruling class which achieved dominance in a specific historical era."[8] He paraphrases Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology* in attempts to explain the concept of ideology: "[it] was primarily denunciatory and was used to attack ideas which legitimated ruling class hegemony, which disguised particular interests as general ones, which mystified or covered over class rule, and which this served the interests of class domination."[9] So, in this specific historical era, who is to blame for disguising particular interests as general public interests? The media.

The media is one of the main producers of ideology regarding women and beauty, among many others. Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, asserts in a report on harmful cultural practices that: "The beauty myth that a thin female physique is the only accepted shape is imposed on women by the media via magazines, advertising and television."[10] Furthermore, she states that the recent boom in cosmetic surgery can be attributed to media as well.[11] The women of *Real Housewives* season five must have viewed an exceeding amount of television because all five have had Botox facial surgery done, and all but Gretchen have breast implants. Of the sixteen women total to be on *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, only two say they have not had plastic surgery.[12] According to James D. Halloran, television may "provide models for identification, confer status upon people and behavior, spell out norms, define new situations, provide stereotypes, set frameworks

of anticipation and indicate levels of acceptability, tolerance and approval."[13] In summation, it is evident that television fabricates and shapes ideology.

Now that we have established why we consider these women, who are so masked by make-up and padded with plastic, "attractive," we can discuss how they maintain their status on this pedestal we have placed them. Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist writing in the 1920s and 1930s, conceived of the analytical tool of hegemony. Gramsci believed that the "notion of hegemony connects questions of culture, power, and ideology."[14] This understanding of hegemony suggests that the ruling groups can maintain their power through coercion, consent, or a combination of the two.[15] In the case of *The Real Housewives*, it is twofold—the women are coerced by the ideologies and myths of beauty that are ingrained in western culture and media, but also try to maintain the ruling power by inflicting coercion on their own bodies and selves by repeatedly undergoing cosmetic surgery.

In one episode from season five, Lynne and her 19-year-old daughter go under the knife together for some "mother-daughter bonding." According to Lynne's plastic surgeon Dr. Milind Ambe, Lynne had "an endoscopic brow lift and a lower face and neck lift."[16] Her daughter, Raquel, wanted breast implants and a nose job, but Ambe thought she was "too young" for the implants and went through with

the nose job only.[17] The important question here is not "Why didn't Dr. Ambe approve Raquel for the boob job?" but rather, why is it that a 19-year-old girl, whose nose is seemingly perfect (see Fig. 2), feels the need to go under the knife, endure the pain, and submit to the risks of getting a nose job? Put simply, she has been coerced by media in an effective status quo effort of maintaining hegemony. The hegemonic structure causing Raquel to undergo self-inflicted coercion is one formed by the lived and internalized ideological beliefs pertaining to beauty and idealizations of the feminine form.

According to plastic surgeon Dr. Ambe, breast implants in young women are "a big problem nationally," and younger and younger women are interested in breast augmentations "because of what they see in the media."[18] Feminist philosopher Susan Bartky coined the term "fashion-beauty complex" to describe this relationship between the media and women. The fashion-beauty complex describes the way "marketing, in tandem with industry and the media, motivate women to try to remedy their disappointment in their looks and instills in women a sense of their own deficiencies."[19] It promotes itself to women as seeking to "glorify the female body and to provide opportunities for narcissistic indulgence," but in fact its aim is to "depreciate [the] woman's body and deal a blow to her narcissism" so that she will

buy more products. The result is that a woman feels constantly deficient and that her body requires "either alteration or else heroic measures merely to conserve it."[20] In other words, media in Western culture is constantly pressing the idea that something is wrong with us by showering us with beauty product advertisements, weight loss remedy suggestions, or other means of devaluation. Raquel has been coerced by the fashion-beauty complex and feels that it is necessary to change her nose, which appeared to be perfectly fine pre-surgery. The way this episode is so cavalierly presented and the way it exaggerates Raquel's post-surgery happiness, suggests to its viewers that cosmetic surgery will fill a void in your life and boost your confidence. This episode of *The Real Housewives* underscores the mendacity of the fashion-beauty complex, and furthermore, proves it as a vicious cycle. For example, young women watching may think that if she got a nose job, she too would be happy, but the sad truth of the fashion-beauty complex is that the media is geared towards never letting them truly feel adequate, satisfied, and consequently, happy.

Similarly, is the case of 32-year-old Alexis, the new OC housewife, whose "devotion" to her husband has led her to multiple surgeries (the most obvious being her breast augmentation). At the beginning of each episode, Alexis is introduced with a series of shots that explicate her sexual objectification (see Fig. 3) while her voice-over plays simultaneously: "Am I high-maintenance? Of course I am! Just look at me." Furthermore, her cast bio on Bravo.com reads: "Keeping up appearances is important to Alexis, who devotes two to three hours each day to personal maintenance including working out, waxing, tanning, manicures and various other beauty treatment."[21] Out of the five women on the show, Alexis surely maintains the most ideological outlook toward femininity and marriage. According to Douglas Kellner's *Ideology and Media Culture: Critical Methods*, one of the ideological constructs for a woman is being submissive.[22] Although Alexis is not submissive with other women, she regularly makes remarks that allude to her subservience within her marriage. More than once in season five, Alexis talks about maintaining her body and her image not for herself, but for her husband. Sheila Jeffreys' book, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*, provides a possible explanation for Alexis's behavior: "The idea of 'beauty' as something that women should embody for men's sexual excitement, either naturally or by artifice, is deeply ingrained in Western culture."[23] She supports her claim with the example of the corset, which has for so many centuries been used as "an instrument for shaping the female anatomy to emphasize the breasts" and blames it for possibly "[giving] way to breast implants."[24] She suggests that women create "beauty" through "clothing which

Fig. 2 Raquel's nose, pre-surgery.

should show large areas of their bodies for male excitement, through skirts, figure-hugging clothing, through makeup, hairstyles, depilations, prominent display of secondary sexual characteristics or accentuating them by surgery and through 'feminine' body language."[25] Alexis, who has had multiple surgical procedures, is a quintessential example of what Jeffreys is talking about (see Fig. 3 for a visual example). Alexis has been subjected to both the beauty myth as well as the highly ideological view of the ideal wife. So, in attempts to maintain hegemony and "stay in power," she devotes most of her time to creating and maintaining what she believes to be a perfect body and face, all for the pleasure of her husband.

But why is Alexis's perspective on beauty and view of being a wife so distorted? Why is she willing to undergo the pain and torment of surgical procedures to please her husband? Jeffreys suggests that media is to blame: "Ideologies of beauty and fashion such as those circulated through popular culture do subordinate women, however passionately those women may adhere to them and cut up their bodies in response."[26] So, Alexis endures self-inflicted coercion (surgery) as a way of maintaining her position in the "ruling group."

Even though some feminist theorists consider the ability to get cosmetic surgery as an extension of practicing "agency" and argue that the "victim" has "consent" because it is their choice to undergo the procedure, Jeffreys strongly disputes these claims: "The defense of the 'consent' of the victim is being employed in such dubious circumstances that the whole notion of consent must be thrown into doubt."[27] In other words, it only appears as consent because

it is her choice, but because her "choice" has been influenced by a society with such strong ideologies about the importance of beauty, it is not right to suggest that her choice is entirely her own. Furthermore, it only appears that these women have agency because "no exercise of obvious force was required to make [them] engage in [such] beauty practices."[28]

Regardless, misleading ideologies regarding women and wealth as being portrayed by *The Real Housewives* effectively persuade the minds of young women. In support of this alarming claim is the 1997 study conducted by psychologist and social scientists Thomas C. O'Guinn and L.J. Shrum that found "heavy exposure to the consumption-rich portrayals of television programming [to be] significantly associated with beliefs about what other consumers have and do."[29] In other words, consumers use information from television to construct perceptions of social reality. O'Guinn and Shrum found that those who watched more television tended to believe luxury products and services to be more commonplace than they actually are. According to O'Guinn and Shrum, people "rely heavily on perceptions of their social environment in the formation, maintenance, and mediation of impressions, attitudes, and behaviors."[30] So, viewers of *The Real Housewives* may rely heavily on the ideologies that are being promoted in the show and are therefore at risk of becoming the next Lynne, Raquel, or Alexis, fighting to maintain hegemony through self-inflicted coercion.

Maintaining Hegemony through Consent

Douglas Kellner writes "[w]hen individuals learn to perceive how media culture transmits oppressive representations of class, race, gender, and sexuality that influence thought and behavior, they are able to develop critical distance from the works of media culture and thus gain power over their culture."[31] By "getting members of the society to see specific ideologies as 'the way things are,'" media culture establishes hegemony.[32] In order to restrict individuals from perceiving these ideologies, media culture exercises consent as a way of maintaining its power.

Specifically, the producers of *The Real Housewives* maintain their power by consensually depicting the housewives' acts of self-inflicted coercion. They have no problem showing the women undergoing surgery to become what they consider "more beautiful", or spending $1,200 on a leather jacket to boast their affluent lifestyle (as Lynne did in episode 12). In fact, Bravo and the show's producers seem to emphasize such events. In portraying these events as normal, they send the wrong messages to their viewers and influence them to believe that undergoing complicated surgical processes and pain to become more attractive is okay. Self-inflicted coercion

Fig. 3. Alexis out on the town with husband Jim and couple Gretchen Rossi and Slade Smiley. Her outfit choice and body language are suggestive of her dedication to please her husband (by sexually objectifying herself), and thus overall ideological view of beauty.

is not the only disagreeable result of promoting a patriarchal ideology of consumerism. According to O'Guinn and Shrum, "representations of social reality frame and situate human behavior, including consumer behavior."[33]

To encourage viewers to adopt the ideologies presented, Bravo ran a "Live Like a Housewife" sweepstakes which offered prizes including Manolo Blahnik shoes, a Dolce & Gabbana dress, a Tiffany bracelet and limo service for a weekend. The network also offered some mall shoppers manicures, pedicures and jewel-encrusted 'Housewives' slippers.[34] Together, the name of the sweepstakes and the prizes up for grabs imply that all housewives wear $500 Manolo heels, equally expensive designer dresses and jewelry, and are chauffeured around in a limousine on a regular basis. In short, the sweepstakes supports the ideology constructed around the housewives by awarding prizes that encourage commodity fetishism, that is to say, an overweening preoccupation with the status material possessions afford to their owners, of superficiality to the highest degree. According to Croteau and Hoynes, "our culture of consumption…is intimately connected to advertising, which helped create it and continues, in new forms, to sustain consumerism as a central part of contemporary American ideology."[35] Thus, through consent, Bravo articulates hegemony by presenting a complex idea of the life of a housewife, effectively maintaining its plastic-

like image, and foregrounding an ideology of consumption via its sweepstake promotions.

Conclusion

The ideology promoted by *The Real Housewives of Orange County* is inarguably misrepresentative of women, particularly housewives in Orange County, California. In analyzing the explicit and implicit messages of the show's images by looking at its orders of signification, we have uncovered the myths that it promotes. It is undeniable that *The Real Housewives* suggests wrong ideas, or harmful and misleading ideologies, about women (of beauty and wealth) to its viewers. The strongest, most culturally-ingrained ideology promoted by the show is maintained through hegemony.

Within the show itself, the women maintain dominance, or hegemony, through self-inflicted coercion (plastic surgery) and the producers of the show maintain hegemony by nonchalantly presenting evidence of this, implying their "consent." The producers' consent is further implied by the show's advertising — which encourages its viewers to do the same as the housewives — in order to help the ruling power stay in power — and thus reproduce these governing ideas. So, next time you are flipping through the channels and find yourself immersed into the world of five "beautiful" young women with breasts the size of their heads, I beg you to ask yourself: Is this really reality, or have I just fallen victim to the media's trap?

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ALMODÓVAR & THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY: A SHIFT IN SPANISH NATIONAL CINEMA AFTER FRANCO

Melissa Perez

Yo era realmente un exilado. Nunca terminé de entender por que…los buenos eran los malos y los malos eran los buenos.

—Carlos Saura[1]

Antonia's daughter: Aren't you a nun?
Yolanda: No, I'm a whore.

—Pedro Almodóvar[2]

Cinema in Spain under Fascist dictator Francisco Franco was heavily restricted. From 1936 to 1975, Generalissimo Francisco Franco ruled Spain with authoritarian power that kept people with untraditional lifestyle neglected and marginalized. One group marginalized during this period was that of queer people. Franco enforced conservative and Catholic ideals by creating laws that would ban and taboo queerness. An analysis of Pedro Almodóvar's films *Entre tinieblas* (1983) and *Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!!* (1984), reveals that queer culture, previously oppressed and excluded, was moving out of darkness to form part of a liberating counterculture movement. The films deconstruct existing patriarchal ideologies of a repressive, fascist, conservative, and fragmented Spain.

Almodóvar's predecessors had already begun to effect this transition. Producing under Franco, filmmakers such as Luis Buñuel, Luis Garcia Berlanga, and Carlos Saura paved the way to Almodóvar's aesthetic developments in the representation of subaltern communities historically denied agency by the ruling class. By creating unconventional films, filmmakers under Franco's regime used allegorical and subtle meanings that opposed the authoritarian government.[3] In *Viridiana* (1961), Luis Buñuel reinscribed the neorealist canon to critique Francoism while eliding censorship. Film scholar Virginia Higginbotham describes Buñuel's work most concisely:

A lyrical quality never achieved by neorealism. This lyrical, metaphorical character, often vague because it conveyed inner desires surrealists considered to be the driving force of human behavior, that the young directors of the New Spanish Cinema found might be the key to subverting censorship.[4]

Buñuel understood how deeply censored neorealist works had been and he shared this concern with his contemporaries. I assert that Buñuel bridged the gap from post-Franco order to the

Still from *Entre tinieblas* (Almodóvar, 1983).

counterculture movement led by Almodóvar. The controversial Viridiana was censored and ordered to be destroyed because of its direct attack on the Catholic Church and the regime's conservative ideals. Buñuel's critical films were not successfully exhibited in Spain under Franco's repressive rule. However, his films, along with those of other filmmakers, expanded the space for a critical perspective to what became "La Movida." Gema Pérez-Sánchez states that "these young artists and intellectuals propelled what was later to be known as 'La movida madrilena' (the Madrilenian Movement)," the cultural movement which filmmaker Almodóvar exemplified and catapulted within his films.[5] The movement's emergence, led by Almodóvar's first short film *Film Politico* (1974) and first Super-8 feature length film *Folle, Folle, Fólleme, Tim* (1978)

coincided with Buñuel's final film *The Obscure Object of Desire* (1977). Buñuel's film contributed to explosive counterculture ideals, long repressed and hidden during Franco's regime. Almodóvar's new approach influenced many future filmmakers who would also connect the fissures between a repressed cinema and the unabashed Almodóvar approach to illuminate the existence of "queerness" in Spain. Higginbotham points out that Carlos Saura, another influential filmmaker under Franco, "learned to convey reality indirectly so as to discredit the distortions of the Franco Myth."[6] Filmmakers like Saura and Buñuel provided the needed push by the underrepresented and marginalized to begin to speak out against the imposed silence and obscurity. This is exemplified in Saura's *Cria Cuervos* (1961), a story about Ana, a little girl infected and numbed

by her mother's suffering under her dictatorial father's behavior. Ana is desensitized by her father's treatment of her mother in the same way that the Spanish community was numbed by Franco's treatment. Ana represents and symbolizes the newfound Spanish motivation to defeat Francoist traditions by visually expressing an incompatibility between Ana and her despotic father.

With his religious and political views, Franco put Spain under laws consistent with his faith. One of his rules revolved around the defense of Catholicism and the family. In fact, Franco made Catholicism the official religion and enforced Catholic customs onto appointed officials. In 1954, politician Dr. Manuel Azaña Díaz enacted the Ley de Vagos y Maleantes, a vagrancy act written by Franco Judge Antonio Sabatera Tomas, which made homosexuality, prostitution and pedophilia illegal. In *Queer Transitions in Contemporary Culture*, Gema Pérez-Sánchez, identifies "the psycho-medial constructions of homosexuality contained in Francoist judge Antonio Sabater's homophobic [law] clearly codif[ies] homosexuals as transgressing gender roles and posing a threat to the heterosexual family."[7] Furthermore, she examines how "homosexuality became a site of crisis and disruption of the regime" after La Ley de Peligrosidad y Rehabilitaion Social (Law of Social Danger and Rehabilitation) is enacted.[8] As homosexuality became

criminalized during the regime, gay activists were pushing harder to prompt social change within the nation. Under this context it became increasingly difficult to exist and this helped propel queer artists to create socially innovative and conscious works of art.

According to film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry, the cinema as an apparatus or technology has an ideological effect upon the spectator which serves to undermine or push ideas into the individuals thought processes. Francisco Franco understood this idea and employed cinema as a tool to forward his political agenda. Higginbotham examines Franco's use of the cinema and finds it largely propagandistic functioning as a way to gain approval of his military dictatorship.[9] Through the aesthetics and visual strategies of fascist propaganda, Franco exerted coercive power over his citizen's to accept his authoritative rule through mass media onslaught. Films under Franco were structured through strict censorship guidelines and bans that were enforced by the Junta Superior De Censura—a five man committee of censors that kept certain films with oppositional ideologies from being made and exhibited. Writing about Italian Marxist and social theorist Antonio Gramsci, Susan Hayward describes Gramsci's concept of hegemony as an analytical device that helps us understand the social consent of unequal class relations made by dominant ideology: that is the ideology of a primarily

white, middle-class, male social structure.[10] Franco is able to use a specific articulation of hegemonic power to undermine the subaltern groups and cultures by representing a single and homogenous national identity. That is the identity of a heterosexual, Fascist, conservative, Catholic, and "essentially" Spanish national identity. What does this do to those who do not identify with any of these categories? There is a suffocation of those homosexual, anti-facist, liberal identities created that exclude many identities and affiliations by positioning particular types of people as marginal and meriting little to no recognition. As a lesbian/gay audience or even as a straight audience, we find pleasure in watching people because of our natural tendency to relate and recognize ourselves in them. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan exemplifies this suffocation of invisibility with his theory of the mirror stage of misrecognition— we tend to misrecognize ourselves within the characters and if there is a lack of representation the misrecognition can easily fool the viewer.[11] Almodóvar fights this misrepresentation and misrecognition by creating real and multidimensional characters, those that closely approximate the multifaceted nature of Spain's national identity. For example, the Mother Superior in *Entre tinieblas* is a cocaine addict who is openly in love with Yolanda, the "whore" who seeks shelter in the convent after escaping from the police investigating her boyfriend's accidental death from a heroin overdose. Although her desires are not satisfied, this character is an indispensable representation for the lesbian community because it provides a sense of validated existence. Laura Mulvey, delves into this point further by saying that, "The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect." [12] Members of the Spanish gay community were understandably prone to isolation, which resulted from their inability to "recognize" themselves in others due to the silence imposed by Franco's regime. If a person cannot relate to people around them, a sense of paranoia involving seclusion or social isolation can emerge. This paranoia stems from the feeling that you are the only one suffering. Thus, when something negative occurs, it quickly transforms into an obsession. Because of the strict censorship applied to the cinema in Spain, films containing LGBTQ plots could not be distributed or produced because of the "inappropriate content." I contend that censorship and forced portrayals, in many films, past and present, contributed to the dominant ideology of heterosexual love and acceptability of alternative sexualities. It also contributed to the closeted and starving scopophilic human nature—that is the need to identify with images through voyeurism—that advanced "La Movida Madrilena" in Spain.

The filmic language adopted

by Pedro Almodóvar, the leader of this movement, is one that must be examined in dialogue with its historical context. The images—use of color, sexual representations, and character development embraced by Almodóvar form the syntax for a cinema of opposition that assembles a discourse that comments on the deep oppression that was felt by the subaltern individual. Almodóvar subverts Franco's homophobic principles of the Spanish cinema created under censorship guidelines by showcasing deviant characters with categorically unfriendly identities that would have been unacceptable under Franco's rule. Almodóvar's emergence symbolizes a Spanish national identity "coming out" from the claustrophobic embrace of the fascist state. His success in the industry in this context says much about the transformation of Spain in the aftermath of the Spanish State (1939-1975). The post-Franco was a return to a diverse Spanish identity, which included rebellious and socially subversive social acts such as drug use, sodomy, murder, and an overall new freedom that railed against established traditional and conservative social practices exemplified in *Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!!* In this film, the family consists of a mother addicted to sleeping pills who kills her husband, a son who was openly having sex with older men, and a second son who was using his savings to buy drugs, as well as a grandmother who found her "only happiness" in a hibernating lizard found on her walk back home from the grocery store. The demarcation and shift of a heteronormative Spain under fascist rule to an abrupt identity change of drug-induced nuns and homosexuals under democratic rule, is seen through the deconstruction of the dual perspectives among homosexuality and religion. In *Qué he hecho yo* a young boy who is sleeping with men is naturalized by the filmic language as he openly describes to his mother his adoption experience with a pedophilic dentist (whom he is sleeping and sharing a life with), "at first it was fun, but I am too young to be tied down." The mother also serves as a tool to normalize the homosexual by unintentionally accepting her gay son. Almodóvar makes this character heterosexually relatable so that we see her treat her son as if he was not sleeping with him, she even validates him as not being gay at all. She sees nothing wrong with her son's way of being and is not something that she had to work to become accustomed to. Almodóvar creates a world where being homosexual is as normal as being heterosexual—a world where there is no distinction between sexual orientations. In this film, Almodóvar makes the queer visible and normative. Making homosexuality decodable is exactly what La Movida Madrilena is all about, new approaches to being deviant— through the underscoring of homosexual presence by diagnosing a heterosocial lens that affects society. Almodóvar steers his viewer away from creating a

Nun doing a line of cocaine in Almodóvar's *Entre tinieblas*.

binary between the homosexual and heterosexual. Almodóvar and La Movida strive to make so-called deviant acts no longer abnormal.

A major aspect of La Movida is that it includes an openly gay community. According to Almodóvar, as cited by Pérez-Sánchez, the participants had "no memory…in relation to the immediate Francoist past."[13] The transition to democracy created a context for queer grassroots to leave behind the physically abusive repressive state apparatuses (traumatic, and thus psychologically limiting) such as the police and laws that were used against alternative sexual expressions. La Movida ignored old tendencies to follow the prescriptions of ideological state apparatuses, those that emotionally coerced Spanish citizens to feel ashamed of their sexual identities.[14] Almodóvar effectively creates this space by making visible characters that Franco's regime would have

viewed as repugnant, such as the drug-addicted nuns in *Entre tinieblas* (*Dark Habits*) or the palpable homoeroticism in *Qué he hecho yo*. His use of characters advances the idea that everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and gender are normal and thus their inclusion is not shocking. He discusses this strategy in an interview in the book *Almodóvar on Almodóvar*, where the question of surprising the audience is taken up.. "In general [he] does not think about whether [his] films are going to shock or not."[15] He simply wants to portray a reality that was never discussed, one involving sexual freedom and desire as it relates to all people regardless of political or religious affiliation. It is Almodóvar's way of getting back at the past and making that which often goes unnoticed not only visible but finally normalized. The heteronormativity that once existed during Franco—that is

"those punitive rules (social, familial, and legal) that force us to conform to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity," have now transitioned to a more egalitarian and homosexual reality that will in due time become subsumed as part of Spain's national identity.[16] He works to create homonormativity—that is the normalization of the homosexual—not to be confused with Lisa Duggan's interpretation of "the new homonormativity…a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them"[17] Almodóvar challenges Spain's oppressive modes of thinking and pushes the Spanish citizen to interrogate their past under an authoritarian and ideologically repressive regime.

Spanish cinema censored under Franco was very structured, inorganic in its techniques, and weak in its character development as a result of the stripping of energy and vitality by laws to keep Spain's socio-ideological program in line. Later, Almodóvar found inspiration from this coercive reality through imagery and character identity. In a society afflicted by repression, the marginalized were finally able to emerge through the representational machine of cinema. Post-Franco cinema served to historically represent national identity within the Spanish Madrilenian movement. The queer community was finally able to transition from an oppressed paradigm to one centered on queer culture and historical reinterpretation. Almodóvar champions the marginalized and critiques the history of the state by normalizing the homosexual in Spain, a once hyper-homophobic nation with a dual-pronged and totalizing Catholic-Fascist onslaught of repression.

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VIEWS FROM THE OTHER SIDE

(RE)PRESENTATIONS OF AFRICA(NS) IN CHRIS MARKER'S SANS SOLEIL

Jayson Lantz

Both the institution of cinema and the technology that facilitated its crystallization arose entirely under the influence of Western culture. It is therefore no surprise that cinema's relationship with Africa has, historically, been plagued by reductionist representations of alterity. As Hollywood grew to dominate worldwide cinematic production, these representations became nearly uniform in their reductionism, a fact which early African cinema explicitly confronted in the 1960s and 70s. The difference between depictions of Africa in Hollywood and African cinemas is essentially a question of *representation* versus *presentation*. Africa's initial relationship with the film medium was one of *representation*—Africa as a construction of the Western mind and the Western medium. As Africans gained access to means of cinematic production, they were able to film Africa through African eyes, enabling a *presentation* of Africa by Africans, rather than a *representation* of Africa by Westerners.

However, in approaching the topic of Africa in film solely through this binary opposition, one risks overlooking subtleties and outliers in the relationship between Africa and Western cinema. These complexities are most evident in the connections between African and French cinemas. As Olivier Barlet points out in his book *African Cinemas: Decolonizing the Gaze*, following the colonial era, the French government was in fact the primary funding agent for much of African cinematic production.[1] In addition to this economic and material support, French filmmakers served a pedagogical role as well, a fact wholly evident in the somewhat problematic figure (and cinema) of Jean Rouch, whose ethnographic films of *cinéma vérité* remained wholly within the realm of representation. The complexity added to this discussion of Africa by films by Jean Rouch is further complicated by his contemporary: Chris Marker.

Sans Soleil, a docu-fiction film produced by Marker in 1983, is an incredibly dense, digressive and cerebral cinematic exploration of the non-western Other, offers an intriguing counterpoint to the ethnographic voyeurism of Rouch's African films. While it is arguable whether the depictions of Africa in this film succeed in *presenting* Africa and its citizens rather than *representing* them, the modes by which Marker attempts (and explores) this *presentation* (e.g. through mockery of conventional cinema's ban of the returned gaze; the equalizing digitization of "the

(Re)presenting the Africa(ns) via the image.

Zone"[2]) manage to unveil and underscore certain aspects of (re) presentation, and thereby facilitate certain insights into the nature of cinema/the image and its imagery as a complete system of sociocultural and political signification.

As mentioned above, the complex and turbulent relationship between the government of France and those of its former colonies during the early days of post-colonialism fed an equally complex and paradoxical relationship between French and African cinemas. In 1963, under the guidance of René Debrix, the French Ministry of Cooperation began providing financial and material support for African filmmakers in hopes of helping "Africans to regain their cultural identity" as well as saving "film culture by restoring the 'enchantment, magic and poetry' the West had lost."[3] This support, however, did not just facilitate cinematic productions by Africans, but in fact was conceptually important to the cinematic work(s) produced by Africans.

A figure of French cinema who clearly illustrates these complexities and interconnections is Jean Rouch, whose work with Africans (in collaborative and pedagogical contexts) in the 1950s influenced the French government's decision to support French cinema. His work largely consists of ethnographic films made following World War II in hopes of respectfully documenting and thus preserving the traditions of African culture.[4] Scholar Olivier Barlet offers a clear and insightful analysis of this sort of filmmaking, saying: "Although sensationalism is still present, the emotion grows, rather, out of respect and involvement. Rouch's (filmmaking style) possesses an attentive gaze, in which the spectator/filmmaker participates

in what he is observing."[5] Further considering the gaze of Rouch's hand-held 16mm camera, and drawing on Miguel Benasayag, Barlet goes on to say that "[i]t was not a question of looking [*regarder*], but of saying 'Ça me regarde!': 'That's my business!'" Rouch's work, however, in aspiring to and in fact asserting authenticity—*cinéma vérité*—has been met with criticisms claiming that it is teeming with paternalism, superiority, and exteriority. While Barlet does not fully subscribe to the claims, he does acknowledge that these criticisms underscore the "external nature of Rouch's approach: he has never stepped over the line and relinquished control; he has never gone over to the other side of the camera and let himself be carried along in the destabilizing rituals he was filming."[6] In effect, while Rouch's cinema may not be exploitative, its presumptions of authenticity, signaled by the camera's integration into African culture, coupled with the "external nature of Rouch's approach," manifests itself in the triumph of representation (and a subtle Eurocentrism) over presentation.

The present essay, will not explore the ways in which African filmmakers reacted against representation by attempting to "decolonize the gaze," as Olivier Barlet does so well, but instead will examine another French filmmaker's attempt to break down the wall between presentation and representation.

Chris Marker, a French writer,

photographer, filmmaker, and contemporary of Jean Rouch, serves as a lucid counterpoint in contemplating the politics of representation in Rouch's work and, more generally, in all cinematic representations of Africa. While often lumped together with Rouch's *cinéma vérité* movement, Chris Marker was quick to rename this genre as "ciné, ma vérité" (cinema, my truth), suggesting the inextricable link between the subjectivity of the filmmaker(s) and the text of the film itself.[7] Additionally, together with Alain Resnais, Marker produced another film with Africa as its subject matter—*Les Statues meurent aussi* (1953). Along with *Africa 50*, this film, which, as Olivier Barlet puts it, "committed the offence of showing how colonial business was killing native art," was one of only two films to be banned under the Laval decree of 1934; its exhibition was prohibited in France between 1953 and 1963, and uncensored versions of the film were not available until 1968. Having asserted Chris Marker's difference in approach in comparison with Jean Rouch as well as his anti-colonialist stance, let us now move to *Sans Soleil*, a docu-fiction produced by Marker in 1986 that takes the form of a wandering and cerebral travelogue through the non-western Other, primarily by visiting Japan and Guinea-Bissau.

Sans Soleil (*Sunless*) is far too complex to be summarized in a few couple short paragraphs, but for the purposes of this paper,

the following brief biography of Marker and synopsis of his film is offered.

Marker was born Christian François Bouche-Villeneuve in Neuilly-sur-Seine, a bourgeois neighborhood bordering on the periphery of Paris, in July 1921. After studying philosophy and participating in the French Resistance (*le Maquis*) during WWII, he became involved with a group of Left Bank Parisian intellectuals and artists — including Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda, Jacques Demy, J.P. Melville, and Alain Robbe-Grillet, among others — and began writing essays, producing films, and publishing photographs. Marker's work includes a novel, travel guides, essays, reviews, photo-texts, a CD-ROM, a political cartoon, and a virtual museum, just to name a few; additionally, his cinematic works are incredibly diverse, ranging from a 28-minute post-apocalyptic "*photo-roman*" composed almost entirely of still photographs (*La Jetée*) to a 140-minute *cinéma vérité* ("*ciné ma vérité*") political documentary on societal happiness and the French reaction to the Algerian War (*Le Joli Mai)*; from a documentary about Parisian street art and politics (Chats Perchés/ The Case of the Grinning Cat) to films documenting French workers' social strifes of the late 1960s made in collaboration with the workers themselves and Marker, in an advisory position (e.g. *À bientôt j'espère*).

The thematic lynchpins of *Sans Soleil*, Marker's experimental docu-fiction travelogue which recounts the travels of a filmmaker through space, time, and memory, are firmly anchored by the concepts of alterity, of the documentary image, of the *regard* (the look), and of the active construction of memory. These themes are focalized through the travels of a fictional cameraman, Sandor Krasna, and recounted in a sort of once-removed epistolary narration, where an unnamed woman recounts Krasna's letters, constantly reminding the spectator of the alterity of these experiences with the simple phrase "He wrote (me)…" In many ways, this film is about (the experience of a Westerner) coming to terms with the changing paradigms and radical difference which results from living in a globalized society: "He used to write me from Africa. He contrasted African time to European time, and also to Asian time. He said that in the 19th century mankind had come to terms with space, and that the great question of the 20th was the coexistence of different concepts of time. By the way, did you know that there are emus in the Île de France?"[8]

In exploring the implications of a cinematic process of coming-to-terms for the (re)presentation(s) of Africa(ns), several segments of the film prove to be noteworthy. The first of these segments "take place" in Japan and Africa and deal with a sense of equality of regard; the third takes place in the digital realm of "The Zone."[9]

The first sequence concerns the

fictional filmmaker's problem of "how to film the women of Bissau"; the film raises this question in a bar in Japan and some 28 minutes before the narrator utters these words. This bar is, according to the narrator, "the kind of place that allows people to stare at each other with equality." This statement is underscored when the image freezes on a middle-aged Japanese man who stares defiantly at the camera. From the bar, the film cuts to "the Jetty on Fogo, in the Cape Verde islands," where the narrator aligns himself with the people on the jetty ("They are a people of wanderers, of navigators, of world travelers.") while also declaring them to be "a people of nothing, a people of emptiness." Beneath and alongside this commentary, the spectator is presented with an ever-tightening series of close-ups of people on the dock; the first of the camera's subjects refuse to look at the camera, but as the faces multiply, nervous and suspicious glances into the camera grow more and more frequent. While these glances turn to gazes, however, the suspicion and reluctance persist, with the result that the close-ups are plagued with nearly violent (and surely violating) alterity. At this point, as the commentary asks rhetorically, "Frankly, have you ever heard of anything stupider than to say to people as they teach in film schools, not to look at the camera?" Retreating from the hostility of the unequal/unwanted gaze toward the camera, the film reverts to recording public spectacle (a parade where

people's faces are obscured by either white powder or elaborate masks) before cutting to an image of extraterrestrial spectacle and digressing (as is Marker's style), only to again take up this question twenty-two minutes later.

Thirty-two minutes into *Sans Soleil*, as the spectator watches the beginning of a Japanese doll-burning ceremony, she suddenly sees a Western woman, standing several inches taller than the others in the frame, looking inquisitively but confidently into the camera. As she looks away, the film cuts to a close-up of an exquisite Japanese doll, which, while stunning in the piercing nature of its eyes, the viewer knows will soon be reduced to ash. The beauty and fragility of this doll echoes as the film cuts to a young African girl looking shyly but curiously at the camera. This openness of regard is revealed to be momentary as the camera pans only to show older children carefully avoiding glancing in the camera's direction. As the camera cuts to a long shot of a group of workers, some appear to look menacingly at the camera while others avoid meeting its gaze. As the camera approaches closer, in a hand-held shot of a crowd of faces waiting in a food line, the glances again multiply but remain nervous and guarded. It is at this point that the spectator hears the commentary from which the present essay takes its title:[1]

> *My personal problem is more specific: how to film the ladies*

Digitally manipulated image of the African from *Sans Soleil*

of Bissau? Apparently, the magical function of the eye was working against me there. It was in the marketplaces of Bissau and Cape Verde that I could stare at them again with equality: I see her, she saw me, she knows that I see her, she drops me her glance, but just at an angle where it is still possible to act as though it was not addressed to me, and at the end the real glance, straightforward, that lasted a twenty-fourth of a second, the length of a film frame.[11]

Accompanying the first two sentences of this commentary are shots of women actively avoiding the camera's gaze as though it were toxic. With the third sentence comes the meeting of the camera's mechanical eye and the organic ones of an African woman. As the commentary narrates the seduction and melodrama of glances, the spectator sees this woman only in fragments, as passers-by obscure the frame of the zoom close-up. When she finally gives her "real glance" to the camera, while it lasts but "the length of a film frame," it is followed in quick succession by four other regards toward the camera — of African women, each aimed directly at the camera in confident acknowledgement. As André Habib points out in a recent article, this act of montage does more than just attempt to prolong the "real glance" through multiplicity: "Each time this gaze meets that of the camera, the medium does not disappear, but manifests itself: at the same time as that which it shows, it shows itself, exposing itself as device."[12] According to Habib, it is in this act of montage that the real meeting (*rencontre*) is produced; this "examination of the gaze of the camera itself (mise

à l'examen du regard du caméra lui-même)" is thus that which enables the "equality of regard." Taking up our terms of presentation and representation, this sequence surely complicates the concept of representation in revealing itself as such for the very purpose of "filming the women of Bissau," of presenting this actual encounter with real African women.

In considering cinematic depictions of Africa and Africans, one risks entrapment in the dichotomous opposition between Western cinema, which *represents* Africa(ns) and African cinema, which *presents* Africa(ns). This opposition is particularly complicated because of the strong ties (economic and otherwise) between emerging African cinema and its French colonial antecedent. These ties are manifested in the figure of Jean Rouch, the French documentarian who worked with Africans in both collaborative and pedagogical contexts, but who has also been widely criticized for making presumptuous claims of authenticity. Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* illustrates a striking counterpoint to the ethnographic voyeurism of Rouch's *cinéma vérité*. Marker's film makes no claims of *representation*/authenticity, Sandor Krasna's encounter with the women of Bissau does furnish a *presentation* of the Westerner's encounter with the African Other, employing cinema's Otherness to suggest that of the fictional cameraman (and by proxy, the author).

Cinema's Otherness, or more generally, that of the nature of the image, is explored once again in the film's final moments, when the spectator meets the gaze of our woman from the market at Bissau; this time, however, she is in "the Zone." This term is used (by another fictional-filmmaker-within-the-film/Marker proxy, Hayao Yamaneko) to describe images that have been manipulated by means of a video synthesizer. Here is a passage from the film's commentary on he importance of the "Zone":

> *My pal Hayao Yamaneko has found a solution: if the images of the present don't change, then change the images of the past. He showed me the clashes of the sixties treated by his synthesizer: pictures that are less deceptive he says—with the conviction of a fanatic—than those you see on television. At least they proclaim themselves to be what they are: images, not the portable and compact form of an already inaccessible reality. Hayao calls his machine's world the 'Zone,' an homage to Tarkovsky.[13]*

It is thus only in manipulation, in falsification, of the filmic image that a sense of truth is revealed: not the truth of ("an already inaccessible") reality, but rather a truth of the *image*. In effect, it is this admission of the presence of a present image that *Sans Soleil* explores, sidesteps,

and then uses to overtake the issue of (re)presentation in that it revels in the loss of authoritative presence through digital manipulation. As montage had revealed itself in Bissau in order to prolong the "true glance", here, in the Zone, the evident digital manipulation rejects any possible claims to truth or presentation — replacing "cinéma vérité" with "ciné ma vérité" — and thus facilitates celebration of the Otherness of the image (and, by proxy, as always in cinema, the Otherness of Africa). It is no surprise then the final image of the film is the woman from the market who played the game of glances, her glance suspended — captured only in displacement — in the "Zone": "He writes that he can now summon up the look on the face of the market lady of Praia that had lasted only the length of a film frame."[14]

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3 Ibid., 25.

4 Ibid., 5-6.

5 Ibid., 6.

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7 Lupton, Catherine. "Chris Marker: Memory's Apostle," 2007, June, 25 2010—March, 5 2010, <http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/498>, Accessed May 28, 2010.

8 It must be said that this is a specifically Western experience of alterity not just because the film was made by a Western filmmaker or because this particular Western filmmaker has a particularly subjective approach to filmmaking, but rather that this idea of the West

as central point is supported by the text as well: "My constant comings and goings are not a search for contrasts; they are a journey to the two extreme poles of survival."

9 Before examining these sequences, it is useful to note the reason the film gives for using Guinea-Bissau (and nearby islands) as the as the film's representation of Africa: "Why should so small a country—and one so poor—interest the world? They did what they could, they freed themselves, they chased out the Portuguese. They traumatized the Portuguese army to such an extent that it gave rise to a movement that overthrew the dictatorship, and led one for a moment to believe in a new revolution in Europe." In effect, by this description, one could argue that Krasna/Marker considers Guinea-Bissau to be a particularly illustrative microcosm of postcolonial Africa.

10 The original name of this essay was "Comment filmer les dames de Bissau?" or (Re)presentation of Africa(ns) in Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*

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THE (FUTILE?) SEARCH FOR MUTUAL DEPENDENCE IN THE FREE MARKET

Jack Cowden

"Far from being completed, the reevaluation of the film cultures of the socialist era has not even begun; and far from being pitiful genre-film imitations or nostalgic efforts to revive modernist oppositional art cinema, postsocialist film cultures offer unique opportunities to study the role that visual media play in a monumental cultural shift of global significance."[1]

In the introduction to his book *Closely Watched Films*, Antonin Liehm describes 1960s Czech cinema as 'Atlantis' — that mythical island whose exquisite beauty and splendor were swallowed up by the sea and lost forever. This era of filmmaking and the directors whose works created this stunning island are properly referred to as the Czech New Wave; its collective innovations, insights, and influence are universally recognized and the poetry and beauty of its form and content are widely admired. Such high distinction was the result not only of the work and virtuosity of the filmmakers themselves, but also of the Czechoslovakian cultural climate of the period. Peter Hames reflects on the sociopolitical context that gave birth to this era by stating, "It was not pure romanticism that prompted Lindsay Anderson to say that the conditions under which films were made in Czechoslovakia 'had every chance of becoming the best in the world.'"[2]

Czech film in the 1990s has not earned such majestic praise; on the contrary, it has often been viewed with disdain or disappointment. Anikó Imre explains that the "unspoken consensus" about these films is that there is little substance to them worth talking about — that they have "become regarded as a near-indistinguishable part of the global flow of entertainment."[3] Though Imre argues against such dismissive generalizations by championing "postsocialist film cultures'" relevance as the product of a newly globalizing community, there is no denying that such widespread claims of "blandness" do have a foundation in the general character of a large number of the films produced during this period. This characteristically 'ordinary' fare is thought to be caused by a 'producer's cinema' resulting from the sudden and drastic changes within the industry as a result of the transition from communism to open market capitalism after the "Velvet Revolution" of 1989, which saw state funding for film all but disappear. A lack of urgent themes is attributed to the absence of a political opposition as well as the saturation of Western culture and consumerism. As Stanislava

Still from *Closely Watched Trains*.

Pradna puts it: "The commercial trend has come to the forefront, with its conjunctural emphasis on the fashionable as well as its economic pragmatism."[4] Furthermore, much of this disapproval seems to be accompanied by nostalgia for Czech film's 'Atlantis': "one cannot help but feel that the 1960s New Wave would have come up with films on the collective experience that were much more critical and analytical."[5]

In order to evaluate some of the above ideas, specifically the widespread accusations against post-Velvet Revolution cinema as mediocre and lacking in an artistic merit and socially conscious purpose, while keeping with the prevalent critical trend of using the Czech New Wave as a reference point, this essay will compare the opinions, inspirations, and styles of Jirí Menzel, one of the New Wave's most noted and accomplished directors, and Jan Sverak, the most

commercially successful Czech director since the revolution, with special attention to their films *Closely Watched Trains* (1966) and *Kolya* (1996). Next, this essay will explore the causes of this perceived inadequacy at a level deeper than the opposition of state socialism and open market capitalism, including a consideration of the long-held Eastern European tradition that defined the role of the 'cultural intellectual' — a label that certainly included filmmakers — to be "a spokesman for a societal cause."[6] Closely related are considerations of the effects of a 'normalization' of the 'aura' surrounding the New Wave, and the (disappearing) notion of nationalism.

In undertaking a comparison of Menzel and Sverak, it is important to keep in mind that they share many of the prevailing ideas about both the New Wave and the Czech cinema of the 1990s. Menzel

summarizes the notion of the fertile filmmaking landscape of the 1960s quite succinctly:

"On the one side, there was an ideological ease and plenty of topics for films, but on the other side there wasn't total freedom, so there was a stimulus for creativity to break the ideological barrier. On the other hand there was an economical irresponsibility here. Nobody was responsible for anything… the whole cultural atmosphere was ideal for filmmaking."[7]

Sverak voices a similar view of the period: "[Contemporary Czech filmmakers] are pretty much jealous of the time they lived in… It was the time period that allowed them all to bloom."[8]

With respect to Czech film in the 1990s, Menzel and Sverak express a common view, both in regards to the lack of a compelling theme or vision and concerning the regrettable consequences of film's post-revolution financial situation. Menzel bemoans the idea that, "Now, of course there is nothing to resist… And morality suffers… That shift away from humanity is not purposeful, but is simply *profitable*."[9] When asked how difficult it was to push a script through the bureaucracy in the 1960s, he says that it was easier than in the 1990s: "Now you have to beg potential investors and talk to many people… You can have a great idea but you must have the ability to convince investors

that you are the only one who can make this great film and make a lot of money."[10] Sverak compares Czech film with a homeless person: "It doesn't have an identity. It doesn't know where it is going and what to do."[11] He also suggests that financial requirements drive filmmakers to work in television and on commercials and that "you lose the necessary scope for feature films. Great ideas fade out… Sure making feature films makes you an 'artist,' but the bread and butter are in commercials."[12]

These opinions point toward the basis for the prevalent critique of the period. When filmmakers express these beliefs — and the majority of them do — then of course a critical assessment of cinema will latch onto these opinions, making a comparison to the seminal and allegedly ideal period in Czech cinema's history seem almost inevitable.

Turning toward the subject matter that this industry landscape seems to encourage, Peter Hames remarks that, "In a country where the state no longer supports cinema in any direct or substantive way, it is inevitable that the new films pursue their audience with greater enthusiasm than some of their predecessors. The emphasis on narrative accessibility, popular actors, and plenty of humor are the inevitable ingredients of box office success — but so also is a need to flatter the public."[13] The newly established financing methods of the 1990s, along with the simultaneous need to compete at the box office

with popular Hollywood fare at home and internationally, meant that films became increasingly commercial — simplified in either a sentimental, historical, or action-oriented way in order to entertain — and in many ways were forced to imitate successful Hollywood film genres and styles. This is all too apparent in comparing each of Menzel and Sverak's most internationally acclaimed film work.

Both *Kolya* and *Closely Watched Trains* won the Academy Award for best foreign film the year of its release. While Menzel rightfully points out that "they probably shouldn't call the Oscar an award for the best foreign film of the year, but rather for the foreign film best liked in America that year"[14] it does indicate each films' international impact and in some ways justifies their comparison as two films that represent Czech cinema on a global scale. Their responses to the question of how the award affected their careers also makes the sociopolitical contexts quite apparent: Menzel answered, "It didn't at all, because Russian tanks rolled in a couple months after I received the award,"[15] while Sverak said, "There was a big media circus. I couldn't go anywhere because I was like a rockstar."[16]

Regarding *Kolya*, Petra Dominkova states that, "Sverak touches on a few issues connected with contemporary reality: the presence of Soviet soldiers in the Czech Republic, the humiliation of people who were not members of the Communist Party, the 'Velvet Revolution,' 'changing coats,' and so on."[17] Each situation within this short list seems ripe for meaningful reflection or poignant representation as moments salient to Czech history and experience. Yet as Imre believes — and Dominkova agrees — they are presented within "an easily digestible formula that employs humor and nostalgia."[18] These crucial issues become little more than a backdrop for the overtly sentimental story of an old Czech cellist, Louka, who manages to get stuck with Kolya, an adorable five-year old Russian boy, when his wife flees the country just days after their marriage which had been arranged for political and financial reasons. Needless to say, Louka and Kolya end up bonding. In one of the many scenes that illustrate how this film is simply sentimental entertainment streamlined for box office success, Louka and Kolya have to leave their apartment for the countryside after a Czech social worker has told them someone from the Soviet embassy will be coming by to pick up the boy. Louka grabs a couple of suitcases and the film cuts to his car speeding along a country road at dusk, accompanied by an orchestral score that could have been dictated by George Lucas for either *Star Wars* or *Indiana Jones*. They barely make it under the falling barricades and perilously cross the train track just in front of the train — even though no one is following them. While this brief description leaves out any discussion of the film's 'technical perfectionism' or

'visual sophistication,' the point is that Sverak "does not attempt any deeper reflection or more complex articulations of his themes and does not venture to explore any unplumbed depths".[19]

Closely Watched Trains is more complex. The film is set during the German occupation and in Menzel's characteristic style—derived from the French New Wave — combines "very specific and keen observations of real people, average people, with the ironic illumination of their predicaments created by the absurdity of social oppression."[20] The film's protagonist, Milos Hrma — perhaps one of the most innocent and unassuming characters in the whole of cinema — is not concerned with the Germans at all. Instead, he would rather focus on losing his virginity and "avoid[ing] hard work, while others have to slave and slave and slave…"[21] In one surreal sequence — another characteristic of Menzel's work — Milos is left standing all alone on a train platform, as all others have fled at the news that a German train will arrive. As the train pulls up a shot shows two dead bodies lying side by side and we see the bottom of the boots of one and the top of the hat of the other—Milos remains virtually expressionless. Two SS officers, "beautiful as gods," as the script describes them, stand beside the still expressionless Milos and prod him onto the train with their pistols. As the train leaves the station Milos is standing with several SS officers, hands still raised, and a "jolly tune starts up."

"We see laid out in front of us all the beauty of the world as Milos has known it, the beauty of the world to which he is saying goodbye."[22] He is saved only as the SS officer notices the scars on his wrists; he steps down from the cab, as if "descending into a swimming pool." The train leaves, and the beauty of the landscape surrounds him like water. As Peter Hames notes, "The attack on ideological dogmatism, bureaucracy, and anachronistic moral values undoubtedly strikes wider targets than the period of Nazi occupation."[23] This type of allegorical or indirect approach to a theme is a definitive element of the Czech New Wave. As Catherine Portuges says, "For native audiences disillusioned by the double life of private reality and public propaganda, the work of filmmakers such as… Jiri Menzel constituted a site of vital political engagement." She goes on to identify this aspect of the New Wave as one of its differentiating aspects as well, since now, "such stylistic subversion is no longer required or even desired by audiences."[24]

While it is true that no one film or director can even begin to encompass all the themes and tendencies of any group or movement, these two films and their directors do offer pertinent examples of some of the major characteristics of each period — especially those that many critics claim are direct results of either the limiting and creatively debilitating atmosphere of 'market censorship' or the fertile and

Still from *Kolya*.

creatively stimulating atmosphere of Czech reform leading to the Prague spring of 1968. While these claims are legitimate, as the comparisons above attempt to illustrate, they also seem somewhat lacking; particularly in their refusal to further explore the shift in the role and aims of the producers of 'culture' as something more than just the result of economic and industrial transformations caused by capitalism. How each government approaches the explicit or implicit messages it sends to cultural producers is of importance as well.

In returning to the New Wave as the model for the production of socially aware and stimulating films, it is important to note the filmmaker'ss role as artist and intellectual in socialist and communist societies as dictated by political ideology. David Paul, writing in 1983, notes that

"Communist doctrine has made his role explicit and sought to specify the nature of the artist's social responsibility in definite terms. In response, the contemporary artist has answered the challenge, just as his ancestors did, and fashioned for himself a role coloured by a deep social commitment."[25] This ideal of social commitment undoubtedly played some role in the inspirations and aims of the New Wave filmmakers; a comparison of this idea with a statement made by then Czech prime minister Vaclav Klaus in 1995 illustrates how dramatically different the messages were that each political system sent to its cultural producers. Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Klaus said: "Preaching morality is an individual task for those who feel entitled to do so. Such activity deserves our admiration, but cannot be a definitional feature of any

society and, therefore, it cannot be part of a transformation vision." Not only does Klaus' conception of the Czech Republic's "transformation vision" not involve "preaching morality," but this vision will only go so far as to respect those individuals inclined to do so — not encourage, not assist, but merely admire — without question, a far cry from the country's previous policies under democratic socialism or communism.

In that same speech Klaus also speaks of joining the European Union as a central part of his "transformation vision" and of the *definite* end of the communist regime, or "unfortunate experience" as he calls it. This complete dismissal of all non-democratic history accompanied by tunnel vision towards international acceptance and synthesis is in conflict with the tendency to remember a past culture lost or marginalized under 'normalization' and recall an idea of nationality that was a vital catalyst in cultural production. By contrast, a longing for the New Wave endures in contemporary film.

After the Prague Spring, "the policies of 'normalization' that followed the invasion led to exile, silence, or accommodation."[26] Some artists, writers, and intellectuals left the country never to return (Milos Forman), many works were banned, censorship became much more strict (Forman's *The Fireman's Ball* [1967]) Menzel's *Larks on a String* [1969]), and some eventually returned to their

craft only after rescinding past beliefs or accommodating the Soviets (Liehm described Menzel as an "ostentatiously uncommitted artistic personality").[27] In Peter Hames' article, "Czechoslovakia: After the Spring," written just prior to the Velvet Revolution, Peter Hames partially explains the critical tendency in the 1990s to write about the New Wave with such passionate nostalgia: "[New Wave films] have been successfully marginalized and only a select few are revived with any regularity."[28] Going through such a long period — roughly 20 years — without being able to experience such a rich film tradition would necessarily make anyone's love for those films greater. Their freedom, accompanied by some films never previously released, became all the more momentous: 'Atlantis' was finally returned to solid ground!

Writing near the peak of the Czechoslovak Reform Movement, Antonin Liehm wrote:

"Czechoslovak culture played the important role it did only because of the imminent collapse of economic structures and because of the support cultural critics received from their economist colleagues. Failure to see this *mutual dependence* would lead to a foolish idealization of the might and power of culture and to a distortion of the honorable role it actually played… furthermore, the influence of nationality must also be considered" (emphasis added).[29]

Vaclav Klaus's speech quoted above that appear to impede the

cultivation of nationality, or at least to focus efforts elsewhere. It certainly seems to be a dismissal of one of the major pieces involved in creating the atmosphere of reform that was so conducive to significant cultural creation. In fact, his entire speech, and perhaps the capitalist open market system as a whole, seems to dismiss the idea of mutual dependence advocated by Liehm speaks of in the above excerpt. Instead Klaus favors 'singular reliance' and unimpeded competition.

Just as the Czech New Wave's "development was intimately bound up with the sociopolitical changes that took place in the country during the 1960s,"[30] so too was Czech film of the 1990s. Liehm suggests that the sociopolitical changes of the 60s were fueled by "the voice of the Czechoslovak cultural intelligentsia" which was granted an audience due to the country's economic collapse. Anikó Imre asserts that, "the energy released by the fall of the wall became transformed into the celebration of the victory of capitalism, which rendered superfluous a sustained engagement with the socialist past and the postsocialist present."[31] And, further, that the "discourses of market and democracy quickly emerged as the "master narratives." It seems that the 'market' and 'democracy' are rather drastically less inclined to see the need for 'mutual dependence' than the 'Czechoslovak cultural intelligentsia' were; and that this reality renders the sustained engagement of contemporary Czech cinema and the glory of 'Atlantis', indeed, 'superfluous.' Hopefully, it will take something less severe than imminent economic collapse for the Czech cultural intelligentsia to gain an audience next time around. And, hopefully, they will still be waiting to take the stage.

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THE ACOUSTICS OF IDEOLOGY: SONIC EXPERIMENTATION IN GODARD'S BRITISH SOUNDS

Jorge Cuellar

At no point in time, no matter how utopian, will anyone win the masses over to a higher art; they can be won over only to one that is nearer to them. And the difficulty consists precisely in finding a form for art such that, with the best conscience in the world, one could hold that it is a higher art. This will never happen with most of what is propagated by the avant-garde of the bourgeoisie.

—Walter Benjamin [1]

The question of hegemony is always the question of a new cultural order…To construct a new cultural order, you need not to reflect on an already collective will, but to fashion a new one, to inaugurate a new historic project.

—Stuart Hall [2]

Biosonar mechanisms as found in dolphins, bats and rats help animals understand their position in their ecosystem relative to physical objects, thus serving the larger function of survival. Similarly, filmgoers are located and repositioned by cinema via film's sonic composition. In many instances, film sound functions as a kind of echolocation in which the formal elements and aesthetics of cinema actively massage spectators into particular modes of thinking — this may take shape as identity, ideology, politics or, in the Gramscian sense, the shaping of an individual's "conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life."[3] In some films, as I will argue, sound is used dialectically to create, destroy and establish specific parameters within the mise-en-scène to comment on embedded social, cultural or political realities. Though relegated largely to the realm of the subconscious while viewing a film, a film's soundtrack gradually shapes our understanding of both the narratives and environments we inhabit. Audiovisual media or, for film theorist Michel Chion, audio-*logo*-visual media, especially films, create relevant connections to spectators that link their socio-historical experience to those predicated by onscreen phenomena.[4] I aim to explore the acoustics of meaning as produced by the multiple soundscapes in the untraditional and experimental documentary film *British Sounds* (1970) by director Jean-Luc Godard and the Dziga-Vertov Group.

Walter Benjamin's preoccupation with reaching the masses through art

Representing sound by providing a textual referent in the image.

becomes a central concern for Jean-Luc Godard and his Dziga-Vertov Group in *British Sounds*. The film attempts to discard the bourgeois notion of high art — in other words, the Western fixation on visual art — by placing importance on sound as meaning-maker *par excellence*. Godard wants to understand the science of the image; how it is constructed and how it disseminates information. The narrator in the film says, "There's a science of the image. Let's begin to build it. Here are a few pointers: materialism, dialectics; documentary, fiction; wars of nationalism, people's war…" In tracing the archaeology of the image through a Marxist class analysis, he problematizes the ideology of the image as a symbol for capitalist values and world views. In thinking about the economy of the spectacle, in this case of the film, *British Sounds* purports a fundamental reconsideration of the way in which the film should function to more effectively address the proletarian classes and challenge the dogmas of the bourgeoisie. Bordering on propaganda, *British Sounds* expounds a particular set

of ideologies, primarily of the Marxist-Leninist flavor, that present a cogent argument to expose some ingrained economic, social, cultural and aesthetic inequities. While never appearing fanatical, the film remains composed as it creates and destroys relationships between sound and image to communicate the severe socioeconomic realities resultant to the careless culmination of centuries of bourgeois politics. *British Sounds* is Godard's explanation of the experience of the ruling class' pervasive, permanent propaganda campaign aimed not only — or even primarily at rational persuasion, but rather at unquestioned, unconscious acceptance and reinforcement of the existing social system and the values which are useful to that system.

British Sounds, also known by its more fitting American name, *See You at Mao*, is a film that aims to complicate some fundamental capitalist assumptions — both theoretical and aesthetic — that continue to dominate cultural production. Sound in film is used to punctuate emotion, highlight action and express the subtleties of a particular event or idea. Exemplified

in the films by Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov, such as *Kino-Eye* (1924), *Enthusiasm* (1931) and *Three Songs for Lenin* (1934), in his films, Vertov exploits sound for the national, political and ideological cohesion of the working classes — the advancement and engenderment of the Soviet socialist programme. The films of Vertov address the unequal access to and distribution of material and cultural resources by commenting on the hierarchies of legitimacy and status accorded to those differences. Employing the aesthetic of sound for particular ideological function puts Vertov at the forefront in examining how ideological formation is experienced by acoustic emphasis on images of the life in the Soviet Union. This "rendering" of life highlights particular aspects of workers' lives to serve the aim of inspiration and empowerment through experiments in audio. Vertov's pioneering filmmaking style, with focus on an experimental use of sound is an effort to grasp history in the midst of process, change, contradiction and conflict; to understand the dialectics of history and the importance of the current historical moment. The images on-screen of people working, marching, busying about the city and countryside are images that present a routine unexciting lifestyle that only with added sound are given a fuller dimension and rhythm for the chief concern of persuading viewers to rethink personal interaction with his/her world. As its spiritual successor, Godard's *British Sounds* aims to comment on the cultural-historical

moment through its engaging and largely experimental use of sound — by a particular use of tempo, voiceover narration and field noise that complicates experience through theoretical and ideological tension. In the film, ideology, to be effective, must also be affective (in other words, aesthetic).[5]

As with the films of Vertov, *British Sounds* aims to explore a proletarian self-consciousness to increase the awareness of the structural stimuli that shape and obfuscate power inequalities. Being arguably its only concern, the film gives this Marxist position a symbolic and ideological primacy through a direct presentation and clear articulation of some fundamental points regarding the centrality of work and "struggle." The focal point of Godard's audiovisual essay is to illustrate a Marxist-Leninist conception of the world — a kind of common sense — that activates spectators through an incisive and poignant critique on the relations of human beings to each other, labor, and patterns of consumption. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would agree, common sense, and thus hegemony, is maintained through what he terms the "field of power," a political force that is able to wield power over different social fields and various species of capital. He notes,

> *Domination is not the direct and simple action exercised by a set of agents ("the dominant class") invested with powers of coercion. Rather, it is the indirect*

effect of a complex set of actions engendered within the network of intersecting constraints with each of the dominants, thus dominated by the structure of the field through which domination is exerted, endures on behalf of all the others.[6]

Moreover, Gramsci's notion of common sense operates as a means for the dominant culture to produce and limit its own forms of counter-culture. For Godard's *British Sounds*, then, the aesthetic force (the soundtrack) is a facet of the field of power forwarded by Bourdieu. In the film, field noise (for Chion, ambient or territory noise) becomes definitive to the understanding of the film's multifaceted thesis. Field noise refers to the ambient sounds that exist in the mise-en-scene that create the atmosphere or "sound bed" on which the narrator's voice rests. The tempo of the film, synchronized with the words of the narrator, is many times undermined by inflections or sound spikes that originate from the environment. For example the group of assembly line workers counterpointed by a persistent and piercing drilling noise. The single-shot that traverses the length of the auto assembly line exemplifies this pounding stasis, as the sound of the drilling noise that never goes away. In this scene the sound is ever-present, it envelops the worker and through them, the spectator as well. In terms of ideology, the referent for the bourgeois class, that is, their technology of production is being announced forcefully, enveloping the

"voice" of the workers. Concerning this, Marx and Engels would mark this as constituting alienation, the process in which industrial (or assembly line) production leads to the estrangement of the worker with oneself, with others and with the products they create.[7] Sonically, it can be said that the spectator is alienated by the sharp and uncomfortable sounds emanating from the factory machinery.

The employment of sound in this manner is of serious theoretical concern. While in narrative cinema, sound is mostly used as an appendage (as ornate; a feminine quality which we will return to later in this essay) of the story, in this example, sound itself comprises the narrative (the object of the film, male). Sound becomes, in this sense, leads the image forward. However, this is not Godard's chief concern. Godard's concern stems specifically from his conception that cinema can change the world and can be an important asset to the development and longevity of a socialist, decidedly Marxist-Leninist, revolution (in this general understanding of sound and aesthetic function, Godard misses many key issues). In its uncompromising use of sound, Godard places audio as the most important purveyor of the revolution. In the framework of the Dziga-Vertov Group, the revolution will be not be televised, but rather, will be broadcast and heard. The monomania of sound in *See You at Mao* (*British Sounds*) is of interest since, for Godard, sound is arguably the only aesthetic that refuses to be
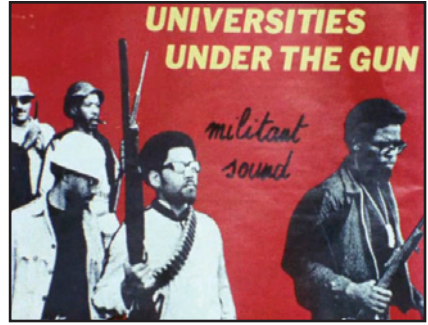
Sound has always been considered an appendage to the image.

ignored and can penetrate all physical spaces. As such, he juxtaposes the overwhelming Marxist position in the film with a segment of a man (perhaps a news reporter) speaking directly into the camera explaining his hatred of the working class, the rebellious youth and people of color. In a reflexive manner, Godard mediates on what Raymond Williams described as bourgeois aesthetics; that is, the traditional notion of the aesthetic, one that is concerned with the "beautiful and sublime" becomes irrelevant; Godard removes the art object from its relations of production in order to force a reading of class warfare as a "timeless," ahistorical understanding of discontent, grief and malign influence.[8]

The film juxtaposes image and sound in an interesting way as to highlight the importance of sonic elements as a significant environmental factor in the understanding of one's worlds. For instance, the film plays with the volume of the environment and the voice of the narrator. There are points in the film where the narrator

is describing the 'enslavement of the worker to the bourgeois manufacturer,' which is muffled through the sonic pollution created by the machines. There is a moment where a loud and disconcerting screeching noise emanates from the diegesis, perhaps as an alert of some kind to make the workers aware of the clock and their productivity. The sound itself, though one can deduce that it is coming from a drill, unmistakably resembles the screaming of a person in extreme pain. This anthropomorphism of the machine belittles the worker; the machine is, in this sonic hierarchy, proclaiming its presence in the world, challenging even the voice of the almighty narrator. As Jean-Louis Comolli writes, "…cinema — the historically constitutable cinematic statements — functions with in a set of apparatuses of representation at work in society…participating in the movement of the whole, the systems of the delegation of power (political representation), the ceaseless working-up of social imaginaries (historical, ideological representations) and a large part, even,

of the modes of relational behavior (balances of power, confrontations, maneuvers of seduction, strategies of defense, marking of differences or affiliations).»[9] In light of this passage, Godard's intent becomes clear: he seeks to complicate traditional (capitalist) soundspace and composition with a new, alternative (Marxist) sound perspective.

The people presented at the beginning of the film in the automobile factory represent the plight of the proletariat. The polluted sonic environments the workers inhabit signify a collective blasé attitude towards their class experience. Thus, Godard's focus on the loud machine noises is an aural prescription that denotes the discontentment of the working class. The sounds force the spectator to acknowledge his/her discomfort as caused by the piercing intrusiveness of the drill sound — in this way, Godard ensures that the bourgeois spectator is shaken up and made to understand the hardship endured by industrial laborers. Importantly, Godard's camera mimics the movement of the assembly line: he takes us through the facility by following and allowing us to see the various stages in the automobile-making process. In this journey, we encounter different people working on small pieces of the eventual final product. This fragmented process parallels the fragmentation of the worker as well; the worker is disassembled and put together like the parts of a car. The filmmaker wants the audience to be cognizant of this structural inequality caused by capital. Godard suggests that sound in this environment functions as a form of oppression; the worker is enslaved to the machine and is regulated by the pervasive sounds of both the clock (a machine denoting time, another form of bourgeois oppression) and the necessary actions of the laborer for the maintenance of the machines. The paradox of the factory worker is one of alienation and ambivalence — the worker becomes completely divorced from his/her essential economic function. This daily sonic experience can be understood as psychologically manipulative, normalizing of certain sets of social relations justified as being "just the way things are." In discussing the torturous experience of the worker in his sonic environment, Godard comments, "The workers have to listen to that sound all day, every day, for weeks, months, and years, but bourgeois audiences can't stand to listen to it for more than a few seconds."[10] Thus, this constant barrage of the senses forces the spectator to focus on the only thing with discernable patterns — the narrator reading quotes from Marx — to counteract the distancing and aggravating experience of the environment's noise.

The Marxist sound perspective Godard suggests in the film results from the oppressive aural experience integrants of the working class everyday. Godard is advocating a *democratic organization of sound* that gives attention and importance to ideas and human beings rather

than the traditional objects, machines and other stand-ins for bourgeois oppression characteristic of Hollywood production. In *British Sounds*, Godard makes an effort to present ideas at their most expressive via the soundtrack and not the image. The history of filmmaking has given primacy to the image and the eye, which for Godard is not the true way to incite revolutionary change. For the filmmaker, this can only be achieved through a cinema of sound, of ideas — through the single always-active channel we cannot turn off. The ear is, for Godard, a receptor for *pravda*, truth that never turns off. As such, Godard uses only a few inserts to directly visualize meaning, through the use of text written on paper, which emphasize a theme, a concept or use clever wordplay to draw attention to the film' core argument. Through these methods, the film's articulation of its Marxist objective is achieved almost exclusively through visual words (text in scene) and sounds. For example, there is a particular image midway through the film which shows the word "sound" surrounded by "capital" is a metaphorical representation of the images that disseminate capitalist rhetoric and values through, as shown in the image, their omnipresence. Alternately, this image can be read to be representative of the film itself. The sound (or central message) of the film is clouded by our false readings or judgments on it, largely rooted in the contradictory cloudiness of capitalist ideology. In the beginning sequence, the tracking shot in the automobile factory (which lasts a whole 10 minutes) purposely contains little compositional dynamism as to bore the spectator and, by default, force an attentive listening of the soundtrack.

If, as Slavoj Žižek claims, "the very logic of legitimizing the relation of domination must remain concealed if it is to be effective," then the work of Godard in *British Sounds* aims specifically to reveal and destroy the dominant paradigm established by the capitalist world system.[11] By making visible what is normally invisible, Godard foregrounds ideology through the aesthetics of the soundtrack to expose the true motives of those who facilitate the propagation of capitalist goals. Ideology serves as an index of different historical situations that are inscribed into its object; ideological thought, which frames the filmic content, is itself part of the content. The film attempts to clarify the notion of "proletarian ideology" in order to make sense of the "distortion" of proletarian consciousness under the pressure of bourgeois ideology, and reach a very "subjective" conclusion of proletarian empowerment stemming from the driving forces that incite revolutionary activity (for Godard and the Dziga-Vertov Group, these are, in film, largely a question of aesthetic and structure). The endless tracking shot at the film's beginning, reminiscent of *Weekend* (1967), creates a minimal aesthetic; in this way, Godard reduces the image down to the bare necessities, to its component parts, and draws more

attention to the sound as the aesthetic (ideological) vehicle of choice. Each of the shots in the film is constrained to a very limited style, kept to an absolute minimum. The dullness and lack of movement in the visuals pushes the emphasis of the film onto the soundtrack.

Ideology, in the film, is presented variably, from its uninhibited narrated form via the automobile factory sequence, as well as though the third sequence in the film that presents us with a talking-head ideologue, a news reporter speaking on behalf of the interests of the business-owning class. The "ideology of the aesthetic," as Terry Eagleton writes, is an art that is politically engaged, as the symptom of what Williams called the "the divided consciousness of art and society."[12] This young reporter presents a forceful argument against the empowerment of the labor class. The film is playing around with different ideas of ideology, in debunking the assumption by business owners, that there is a clear difference between social experiences dependent on the economic development of individuals who are arrested at the level of common sense; a false sense of comfort for the status quo. As a mechanism of ideology, the newspaper man is attempting "to modify the average opinion of a particular society, criticizing, suggesting, admonishing, modernizing, introducing new clichés."[13] As Gramsci notes, these people who represent the interests of an economic bourgeoisie "must not appear to be fanatical or exceedingly partisan: they must position themselves within the field of 'common sense,' distancing themselves from it just enough to permit mocking smile, but not contempt or arrogant superiority."[14] Sound, then, in this particular sequence is used by Godard sarcastically, to show an extremity of the bourgeoisie, when in fact is normalized hate speech, in contrast, is framed by Godard as an incisive and structural critique of a rhetoric that is weak, crazed, and filled with an abhorrent malice. However, uninhibited, the labor boss is able to go on his diatribe and express himself without reserve, unlike workers who in this sense are limited in their "free speech." By contrast, workers are unable to *voice* their grievances. Going back to the scene in the automobile factory, the workers never speak — they look at each other and at their work and workspace, but never voice a concern or discontent. The privileged news anchor, however, as a liaison of the economic elite, because of the access to broadcast technology such as radio/television, is without hesitation *voicing* his ideas. The bourgeois speaker, for both Godard and critical spectators, represents the deceit of the image. James Roy MacBean writes,

> If the bourgeois image-makers admitted that the image they present was merely a reflection of their own bourgeois capitalist ideology, this would be to admit the subjective, partisan, arbitrary, and mutable aspects of

that image-and, by extension, of that society. Instead, they seek to inculcate a belief that the image they present is an objective one, that it is not partisan, that it is not arbitrary; that, in fact, it could be no other image precisely because "that's the way things are in reality." The ideological slight of hand that substitutes "reflection of reality" for "reflection of bourgeois capitalism" not only seeks to make bourgeois capitalism disappear as an issue, but also to ensure that bourgeois capitalism will perpetually re-appear in the guise of reality.[15]

This is the ideology behind the voice of capitalism: bigotry. The man speaking directly into a television camera says odious things like, "Workers have come to expect too much: high wages, short hours, the whole lot." Meanwhile, this speech is interrupted by an image of men at work at street construction. The commentator continues, "Youth should be trained to play their part in industry … these academic thugs, window-smashers, policeman-baiters … send [such] offenders to labor camps" insofar as they are assaulting the authority of British institutions. Next, this creepy, disfigured, youngish commentator turns to the Vietnam War, the conduct of which he approves: "Sometimes it is necessary to burn women and children, sometimes to torture people, sometimes to cut people open and slice off their breasts . . . Wars are meant to be won by any means possible." Finally, the anchor

turns his invective toward non-white immigrants: "They live in filth and suck our social services dry." The immaculate interior of a jewelry store interrupts and combines with this nasty speech. The patrons there are white. In this scene, Godard is raising a few questions, primarily the racialization of class stratification and the oppression of laborers and proletarian due to these arbitrary racial categories. A justifying logic, the making of an "other," is important for ideological reproduction and sustainability since having a scapegoat for one's problems maintains this self-fulfilling process. Louis Althusser points to the extremely important economic function of ideology in assuring the re-production of the labor force. Just as factory owners must constantly maintain and replenish their supply of raw materials, machinery and facilities, so must they also maintain and replenish the supply of workers willing and qualified to carry out the work expected of them.[16]

Another example of the subversion of "institutional bourgeois sound" as represented by the news anchor's classist, racist and warmongering speech, his segment is intercut with images of workers laboring at their various jobs in different places. This is paired with an extremely faint sound of someone whispering a call to action—"fight, fight, fight"—the unknown speaker softly exclaims. This hidden sound is almost inaudible; I had to raise the volume and look back at those scenes because the sound is almost below the routinely audible sound
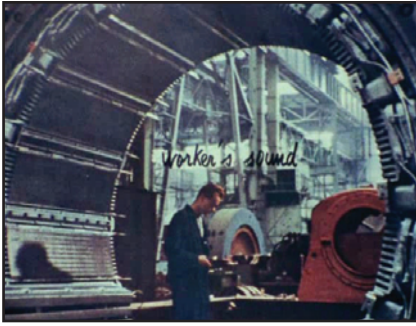
Visualizing the sonic environment of the worker.

for people with "normal" hearing. Here the ideology of the sound is suggestive and subliminal. In its attempt to transform human beings into subjects, the sound leads spectators to see themselves as self-determining agents when they are, in fact, shaped by ideological processes. This hegemonic articulation of ideology is what Godard is attempting to illuminate via film. These conceptions are imposed and absorbed passively from the outside, or from the past, and contribute to people's subordination in what Gramscian scholar David Forgács describes as "making situations of inequality and oppression appear to them as natural and unchangeable.»[17] Thus, Godard questions the function of the dominant ideology in "cementing and unifying," a social formation under the hegemony of a particular class (the bourgeoisie). The film attempts, through visual blurriness and ambiguity, to clarify the ideological connections between state, modern capitalism and social democracy. This objective, while perhaps not wholly successful, is the reason for the sound experimentation of the film.

In the second segment of the film, there is a discussion on sexuality and the position of the female within the revolution. In this part, sound plays an important role, as it is expertly layered (arguably fragmented) to connote the existence of patriarchy and how it can be a limiting and complicating factor in the revolutionary process. A male voice, used to describe a different set of aspects to revolution, is contrasted with a female voice in its preoccupation with emotional and experiential issues, which although important, become overshadowed by the male focus for sweeping political and macroeconomic change. Much like most ideological conceptions, the role of women and the oppression inherent in the male-female relation is disregarded. Though Marxist-Leninist ideology speaks directly to the emancipation of all workers, the condition of woman is largely overlooked and treated as secondary to the primary goal of toppling capitalism. Within a revolutionary process, as in the film, the male

voice is assumed as leading, while the voice of the female becomes inconsequential. This complication, rooted in the patriarchal organization of society, places the woman's voice as an appendage to, superfluously describing in "excess" what man has already articulately defined through an "accurate set of terminologies." For example, the male voice is heard using a more precise language to describe the historical antecedents that gave rise to the current moment in history through a process of "dialecticism." The female voice, however, can be said to interrupt this stream of male intellectualism, abruptly stopping the logic of phallocentrism. This partitioning of the image can be understood through what Michel Chion's calls audio-division; the image of the nude woman is being assembled by the sound itself (the audio constitutes the image). In other words, the objectification of the female form in the frame is a cause of the sound, which is dividing our vision in our experience of the image. Furthermore, the nude woman (the camera is focused on her genital area) serves as a distraction to the words by the female voice-over narration. The fidgeting female image is being made uncomfortable by our gaze, and we are paying little attention to the seriousness of the narrator's words that speak about the abolition of capitalism and the abolition of the (patriarchal) family.

Godard is very much concerned with this careful shaping of the form; as he once said in a 1970 interview regarding *Le Vent d'Est* (*The Wind from the East*) also by the Dziga-Vertov Group, "Form comes from certain social conditions…the struggle between contradictions."[18] These contradictions, from a feminist point of view, are as Althusser points to: a problem originating in a false ideological supposition, one that represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.[19] In the case of women, even the socialist programme of the revolution will not change the ingrained inequality experienced by females. Having the film have this minute ideological critique of itself expresses Godard's understanding of the limits of the utopian project of Marxism, which although has contradictions within itself, is the better alternative to the enervation of the vampiric capitalist machine. Furthermore, the female voice, in the case of *British Sounds*, is connected with the sound of a speaking child. In more instances than with the adult male, a child is being taught historic moments and Marxist ideas; the child is being educated through the same ideology of the film. This aural phenomenon positions the spectator as the child itself, where we are being spoken to and made aware of the inequalities of the world we must work to change. The child repeating key phrases from *The Communist Manifesto* among other important politically left works, is representative of the spectator, who through cue cards and text-in-film is being fed a type of critical vocabulary to better understand the injustices of the

current status quo.

British Sounds explores the importance of ideology as a vehicle for radical transformation. Godard and the Dziga-Vertov Group aim to use sound and shape ideology for some collective utilitarian goal— the abolishment of the class system. For Godard's Marxist analysis to be successful, a subordination of the traditional narrative systems of André Bazin (the idea of film as a window to the world) through discarding the tradition of bourgeois humanist idealism is required. This is achieved through Godard's effective use of narrative intransivity, that through concentrating on a disjunctured allegory of the brutality of class conflict and structural inequality (emphasizing heavily the experience of sexes, the labor boss, and finally the educative aspect of ideology), he can further explain the aesthetic and symbolic life of the worker. *British Sounds* shows all the sounds that make up the experience of the working class, yet, never present a distinct sound emblematic of oppression. This acousmaton, as Chion terms it, is never made present via the sound.[20] The sound, as latitude and longitudinal lines, approximate and hint at this possibility as a fact of life, yet is never represented on the soundtrack as originating from the diegesis. It is only in the voiceover narration that the viewer is explicitly expressed to the term oppression, via voice — not via a particular sound embedded in the world of the film. This almost trivial fact is important in that it shows that the film is bound by its own medium; Godard may or may not have understood that the film itself cannot be the ultimate motivator of revolutionary effort, but rather, it can only serve to guide and to influence (this is true of any text, as well).

In any case, Godard and the Dziga-Vertov Group's film *British Sounds* is not single-minded. Although it purports an explicitly Marxist-Leninist common sense and assumes a certain knowledge on the functioning of ideology and what Althusser called ideological state apparatuses, it by no means presents ideology as a single, homogenous substance.[21] The film's many sonic nuances, many of which are not mentioned here, are ripe for more thorough analysis. The film in more ways than one replaces the viewer and shifts his/her identity to playing the role of both oppressor and oppressed. In the scenes where there is a narrator monologue about class warfare, struggle, and revolution the spectator is situated as being oppressed—one identifies with this language, as it feels morally sound. Alternatively, when we are presented with the news anchor, we feel oppressed, disgusted and ill. There are varying levels to this experience, yet, the sound is instrumental in the effectiveness of these experiences as the images are largely uneventful, cryptic, and are given life by the voice of the narrator or the acoustics of the space itself. The film is a starting point for the ideological use of sound as a counter-hegemonic tool. As such, Godard's experimentation is valuable in providing a prototype for

the potentiality of sound. It diagnoses and prescribes the inadequacies of the image and suggests an alternate model (more than one) in advancing a sound-centric cinema. As a new way of experiencing film and thus thinking, sound is expressed as the alternative to the rote, image-based capitalist cinema.

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TH3 CULTURES OF T3CHNOLOGY

THE INTERNET HAET MACHINE

Se Young Kang

Famous for combining an unapologetic celebration of nerdy and whimsical elements reminiscent of cubicle daydreams, Randall Munroe's web comic series "xkcd" has become a staple in the average geek's Internet consumption. In a strip titled "Troll Slayer," members from community imageboard website 4chan decide to "troll"—deliberately anger through argumentative and offensive postings — fans of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga (Fig. 1). In response to the attack, Meyer cites 4chan as a popular website for vampires in the next *Twilight* novel, causing the website to be overrun with *Twilight* fans who revel in the site's "dark edginess."

While the humor of this comic strip lies in the impossible absurdity of Meyer utilizing her popular teen novels to wreck the secret pleasure of an exclusive Internet society — an epic act of "trolling" in its own right — the strip in fact addresses a valid anxiety against exposure that is common amongst 4chan users. A complex digital subculture comprised of those Palfrey and Gasser define as "digital natives" — children who have grown up with digital technology and are comfortable fully incorporating digital life and identity with their physical real life selves — 4chan is the hub of Internet insider activity that gives birth to a majority of the notable Internet memes. The users of 4chan have developed a particular taste culture, intended to serve as a method of social demarcation separating privileged insiders from clueless outsiders. Along with these accepted tastes, users of 4chan have assembled a collection of symbols that construct a distinct style and identity in a disjunctive method paralleling the punk movement. Applying cultural theorist Dick Hebdige's study of subcultural style and adapting it for the more recent changes in identity formation caused by digital socialization, 4chan can be described as a subculture taking part in the cycle of meaning making and mainstream incorporation. Popularization publicly acknowledges the subculture's impact and importance while the inevitable appropriation robs its iconography of their subversive meaning. The tension faced by 4chan's subculture in this process will be illustrated by tracing the lifespan of some popular Internet memes through a reflection upon the mainstream discourse surrounding them.

4chan: The Internet Haet Machine

As with all cultural studies, there is a distinct conceptual difference between understanding a culture from within as a participating member as opposed to
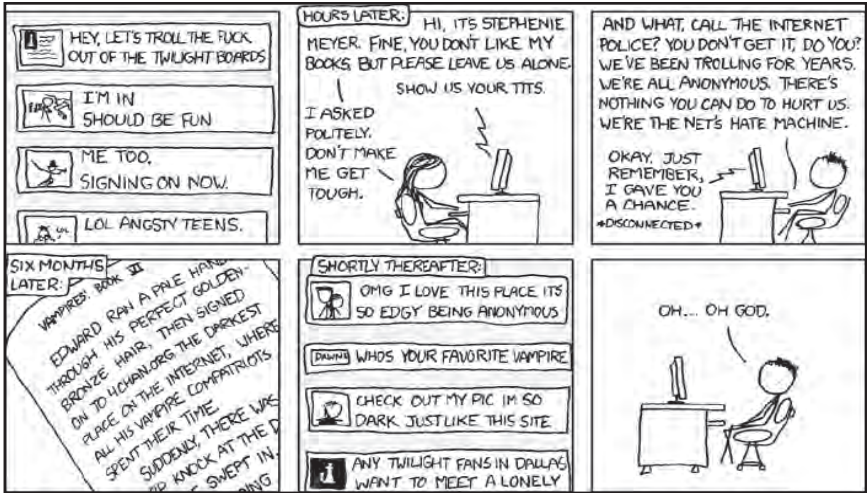
Fig. 1. *xkcd* comic strip poking fun at *Twilight*.

the alienating gaze of an outsider. As an active member of 4chan, I will engage with this academic effort from an insider's point of view. As an anonymous online community with few logged posts and no reliable method of fact-checking, it is difficult to analyze 4chan in quantitative terms. The insights into 4chan's contents found in this essay are based on my personal experiences as a participant over the past 4 years along with a group of real life friends who engaged with the website in varying degrees. Also, EncyclopediaDramatica.com will serve as a reference for quotes concerning various memes. While this source does not concern itself with reliable citations and elaborate systems of review, making it a poor candidate for academic reference, it is a collective wiki whose contributors overlap with the 4chan audience. Therefore, Encyclopedia Dramatica serves as a valuable and

rare log of the 4chan community's prankster ethos and an online space of self-definition and constant re-definition.

4chan is a collection of thematic image boards that require no registration for participation. Its existence was inspired by an older Japanese text-based board named "ni channeru" from which 4chan inherited its emphasis on anonymity, lack of censorship (self or authoritatively enforced), and fast-paced collaborative conversation. The individual boards vary greatly in theme, from hobbies and interests (anime, video games, fashion), pornography (hardcore, hentai, yaoi) and collection of resources (high resolution, wallpapers, requests). However, the most popular board, named /b/, has no theme at all. The content on /b/ generally revolves around the obscene, humorous and shocking. A post typically consists of a

picture and a text description, with each additional comment in the post's thread "bumping" the post to the top of the page. In this way, a theoretical democratic system is established where the topics with greatest community interest will be highlighted. Yet practices such as spamming, where one user repeatedly and quickly posts many short posts in order to simulate wide interest or jeopardize the front page through sheer quantity, can effectively undermine these democratic ideals.

According to *Dictionary.com,* a meme is a "cultural item that is transmitted by repetition in a manner analogous to the biological transmission of genes."[1] An Internet meme is often humorous in nature and is usually found in the form of a picture or video accompanied by a short catchphrase. Memes often cross-reference each other and/or refer to specific Internet communities, making their complex network of connections and meanings hard to decipher if one is not already an invested participant in online culture. Many memes originate from 4chan then spread virally to more mainstream and widely visited outlets such as YouTube, Digg, and Reddit, infecting the mainstream audience with its charming idiosyncrasies. Rickroll, LOLcat, the O RLY owl, and "So i herd u liek mudkipz" are some of the popular memes that have gained public notoriety.

Nigras and Anons: Two Memes

The first meme I will discuss in this essay is Pool's Closed, a mass scale prank on the *Habbo Hotel* community. *Habbo Hotel* is a social networking site for teens in which users navigate in real time through an explorable world with customizable humanoid avatars. In this world the avatars interact with each other through text chatting and games, mimicking social interactions in real life. This interface, resembling the popular game *Sims*, allows for effortless participation even by digital newcomers who may struggle with a heavily text and code-based system. With Pool's Closed, users of /b/ organized a critical mass presence on *Habbo Hotel* with identical avatars dubbed "nigras" at designated times, each user positioning their avatar in line with the others in order to build human fences that blocked access to pools in *Habbo Hotel*'s virtual world (Fig. 2). This shared "nigra" avatar is an African-American male dressed in a formal blue suit and sporting a large afro hairdo. Instances of this large-scale prank are labeled as "Great Habbo Raidsm" referencing video game culture of organized player group attacks against a common computer controlled enemy (such as those in the wildly popular *World of Warcraft*).

The second meme I'd like to address is Anonymous, the collective identity claimed by users of 4chan (Fig. 3). The moniker "Anonymous" refers to the default label that is attached to each post on 4chan when the user does not

choose to fill out the optional "name" field in the post submission form. Anonymous as a somewhat cohesive entity is constantly evolving through the participation of 4chan members in various pranks under the collective label and the creation of its mythology through websites such as Encyclopedia Dramatica. At the moment, there exists an accepted set of rules or edicts for the members of Anonymous evolving around the ideas of group identity, digital anonymity, exclusivity, and nerd culture. Rules such as "Anonymous is everyone", "Anonymous is everywhere", and "Anonymous has neither leaders nor anyone with any higher stature" illustrate an emphasis in the abandonment of individual identity for the sake of a collective existence.[2] Rules such as "Anonymous has no weakness or flaw" and "Anonymous works as one, because none of us are as cruel as all of us" praise the wisdom and strength that can be created by incorporating individual contributions into an organic whole. This could be seen as an instance of "collective intelligence" which French philosopher Pierre Lévy defines as the combining of humanity's knowledge to cooperatively pursue technological projects whose progress would benefit human kind as a whole.[3] Lévy's optimistic visions of "collective intelligence" assume positive natural impulses towards increased quality of life for all and are supported by projects such as Wikipedia. However, Anonymous

does not harness its members' contributions for a "greater good." Anonymous claims to have no agenda, yet there is an established list of "targets," comprised of mainstream entities such as the Church of Scientology and Emo rock music listeners that are seen as offensive or antithetical to the Anonymous belief system. Public harassment and ridicule of these targets is encouraged and enjoyed by the community, the resulting humor being labeled "lulz" which is a derivative of the Internet acronym "lol" or "laughing out loud." Neatly summed up by the rule "Anonymous is proof that humanity as a whole is absolutely insane," the actions of Anonymous support a cynical view of "collective intelligence" as an ineffectual entity too mired in inconsequential pop cultural obsessions to fulfill the teleological dreams of Lévy.

Boys in Suits: The Meaning of Well-Fitted Menswear

The images used in Pool's Closed and Anonymous differ from the traditional avatar creation process prominent in most forums. Instead of being tailored for the individual player, they are a set combination of symbols whose origins of establishment have been lost due to the lack of fastidious documentation. However, because of the difficulties of maintaining cohesion in a group whose members are all anonymous, the images take on the role of avatar, modified to speak to identity-play as a shared

experience amongst a group rather than individual experimentations with the digital self. In "Aspects of the Self," Sherry Turkle explores Multi-User Dungeon gaming as a space in which its users can work out real life challenges by fashioning avatars that are an extension and expression of their current and ideal selves.[4] While 4chan is not a video gaming site, its antics and pranks can serve the same function of a game by presenting instances of interaction with different characters so that the user may explore a wide range of possible reactions. Through the group avatars offered in Pool's Closed and Anonymous, the participant slips into different identities to interact with various "targets" in engagements.

Combining Turkle's approach to digital identity construction with Dick Hebdige's idea of "style as bricolage,"[5] the stylistic flourishes that make up the avatar of Pool's Closed and Anonymous can be seen as a subversive appropriation of symbols that pulls each item out of its traditional context to present a lifestyle statement by their refashioned use. Themes of traditional authority, recalling governments, spies, and upper class values, are prominently displayed in both Pool's Closed and Anonymous. Black tailored suits, often used in mainstream old media to indicate maturity and masculinity—the suit has created many memorable looks in films such as Ian Fleming's *James Bond 007*, *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972), *Ocean's Eleven* (Soderbergh, 2001), and *The*

Matrix's (Wachowski Bros., 1999) Agent Smith — are used in both avatars.

The black suit speaks to a generational anxiety over the power of governmental authority and surveillance. The economic structuring of Internet technology requires that the user purchase access through private companies. Digital signals can easily be intercepted, read, and logged, especially for those users who are not proficient in encryption. Even while integrating the digital into real life to a greater degree than any previous generation, the "Digital Natives'" concerns regarding surveillance can be seen in the apprehensive discourse concerning Google which proclaims its data tracking practices are "illegal" and constitute "spyware."[6] Many of the "targets" derided by Anonymous are authoritative government organizations implicit in forms of surveillance and regulation such as the Central Intelligence Agency, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Communications Commission, etc. Along with speaking out against the establishment, Anonymous claims the identity of its real life members as middle class and vulgar, the antithesis of government workers' exclusivity and socio-political clout. The entry for Anonymous on Encyclopedia Dramatica states:

Anonymous can be anyone from well-meaning college kids with highly idiosyncratic senses of

Fig. 2 NegativeNigra's raid of *Habbo Hotel*.

humor trying to save people from Scientology, to devious nihilist hackers, to clever nerds, to thirteen year old boys who speak entirely in 'in-jokes' on an endless quest for porn, to 16 year old girls posting pictures of their B-cups because they think they look good, to potential rapists browsing through MySpace to find some well established young ladies of which to make the acquaintance of.[7]

This common and crude self-definition illustrates the community's regard for the empowering of everyday individuals over the extravagant privilege of authoritative structures. By using the iconography of

authority to craft the identity of a group that speaks out against the establishment, 4chan users ironically appropriate the suit, practicing bricolage in a subversive communal stylistic formulation.

In addition, by using these seriously dressed avatars in juvenile pranks meant to anger other Internet populations, 4chan users mock their emotional investment in an Internet fight — the suit becomes a mockery of its traditional meaning. This sarcastic ridicule of seriousness is continued in Anonymous' rules, such as "Anonymous only undertakes Serious Business." In this context, the phrasing "Serious Business" refers to an Internet meme that proclaims, "[t]he Internet is Serious

Business." This meme is used to mock Internet users who show foul-mouthed over-investment in events or debates that happen on the Internet. Said in a sarcastic tone to those who take online arguments too far or take offense at humorous jokes at their expense, the statement's implied meaning is the direct opposite of its stated meaning, the Internet is in fact not serious business but a lighthearted and ultimately inconsequential experience.

The 4chan users' extensive engagement with Internet affairs and the quantity of time spent taking part in the 4chan community speaks to a personal investment in the digital world. However, accompanied by this fervent sarcastic disavowal of the Internet's importance parallels communications scholar Mark Andrejevic's analysis of "snarkastic" fans of television in "iMedia." Andrejevic states that the obsessive nature of fandom consequently leads to a love/hate engagement with the worshiped material, for the original creation can never live up to the fanatical expectations of the fan.[8] Thus, a critical attitude, a combination of snark and sarcasm, develops as a way to express creative superiority over the media producers while masking the fact that as consumers, the users remain powerless and beholden to the production process. Similarly, by spreading obscure memes and taking part in pranks, 4chan users express creative superiority over creators and moderators of established mainstream sites while remaining dependent on them to create spaces of discussion and interaction with their targeted "newbie" users.

Racist Hackers on Steroids: The Fear-mongering Press

Understanding the humor of 4chan's memes and pranks require an insider knowledge of various Internet trends, making the users' actions prime breeding ground for public misinterpretation. In the same way that Hebdige chronicles a process of incorporation as the mainstream's strategy of disabling the subversive power of subcultural style, widespread viral popularity of 4chan memes often undergo a loss or distortion of their original meaning in the process.

At the height of its popularity, the Pool's Closed meme crossed into real life, as fans posted print outs of the avatar with the caption "Pool's Closed" at various public pools. In one such instance, a Caucasian grandmother named Mary Alice Altorfer in New Braunfels, Texas took the graphic to be a personal racist attack targeting her half-Black grandchildren. In addition to contacting the police in attempts to track down and punish the poster, Altorfer sought mainstream news coverage. The segment aired by San Antonio News' KENS 5 network is oblivious to the meme's origins, treating the printout as having aggressively racist intent and portraying Altorfer as a courageous and defiant figure protecting her vulnerable grandchildren. Altorfer
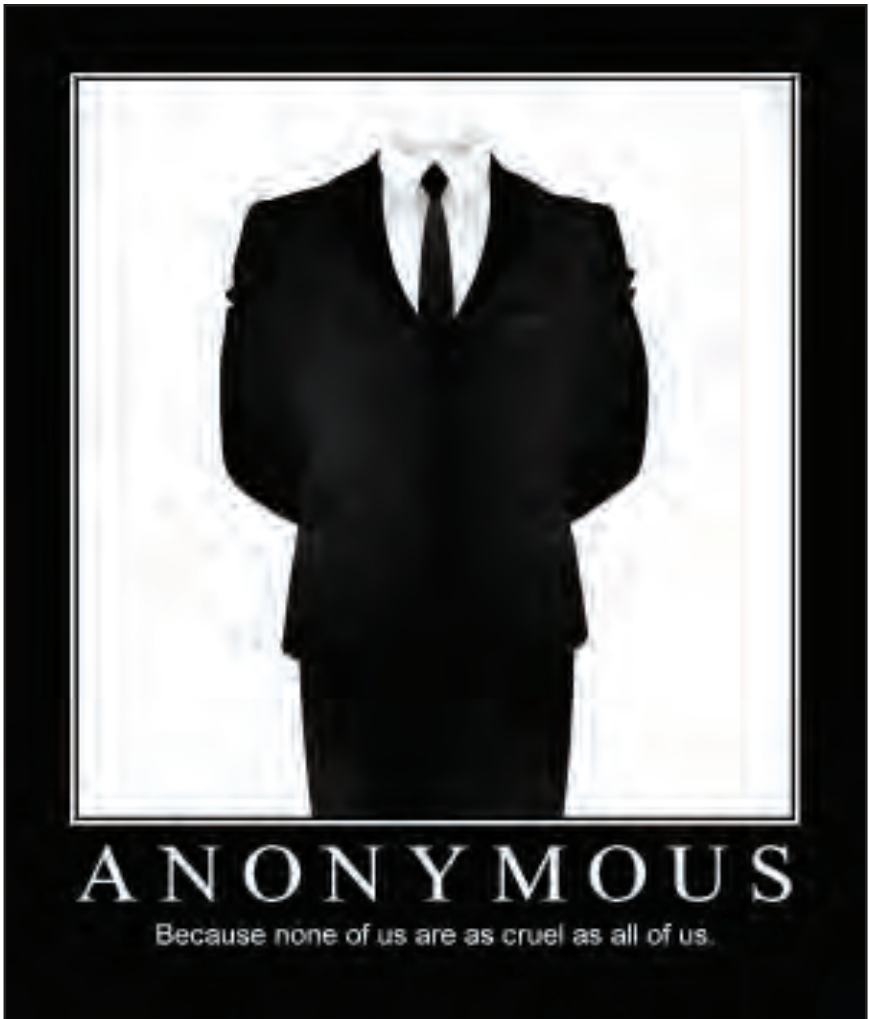
Fig. 3. The mythical collective identity of 4chan, "Anonymous."

is heavily mocked among those who are aware of the meme's origins, with her occupation as Homeowners Association President cementing her status as a symbol of ignorant authority that 4chan users despise. Instead of increasing awareness of modern racism, Altorfer's efforts merely invited backlash from the Internet community, as further memes incorporating personal insults were posted in response to her outrage (Fig. 4).

Anonymous has received similarly misinterpreted coverage, as victims of 4chan's "trolling" attacks take part in mainstream news exposés. FOX 11's investigative piece greatly caricatures 4chan and

Fig. 4. An Internet mocking Mary Alice Altorfer's absurdity.

its users, disregarding all humor and prankster aesthetic from their shenanigans and distilling only maliciousness. The users are cited as "hackers on steroids," which has its basis on the small hacker presence on 4chan but is ultimately laughable since the majority of users do not even have entry level hacking skills. 4chan's pranks are labeled as "disrupt[ion] of innocent people's lives" as the users "destroy" and "attack" like an "Internet hate machine," a label that has since been mockingly embraced by members of 4chan as "Internet haet machine."[9] 4chan is further depicted as illogical and unpredictable by the "normal" population, dispatching random attacks that "[leave] victims wondering, why is this happening to me?" The intense aggression and negativity implied by the report's diction positions 4chan users as unassailable criminals while the "victims" are depicted as harmless and righteous. This extreme binary is inaccurate since many of the "victims" become targeted through their own foolish actions, often racist, sexist, or ignorant announcements that catch 4chan's attention through the "victim's" assertion. For example, the "victim" featured in FOX 11's news report, Alex Wuori, earned 4chan's wrath when he attempted to harness the collective efforts of its users to harass a 16-year-old girl who rejected his affections. Hardly an inculpable target, Wuori's willing distortion of the facts is a self-serving effort to gain fame (however fleeting) by participating in the mainstream misapplication of Internet memes.

In both cases, the distortion of the memes in mainstream media discourse can be seen as "commercial exploitation," as outlined by Hebdige in his chapter

"Two Forms of Incorporation."[10] By sensationalizing the danger posed by 4chan, the news report becomes more likely to sustain the interest of the viewers that in turn gathers additional advertising revenue for the network. In essence, the meme becomes an informational commodity, separated from their original context and packaged for commercial consumption. This process parallels big fashion houses' butchering of punk aesthetic through mass production of its stylistic elements and its promotion through "comprehensible" marketing.[11]

Oldfags vs Newfags: How to Survive the Mainstream

Facing increasing mainstream exposure, two differing schools of thought have formed regarding proper 4channer's behavior. Those who distinguish themselves as "oldfags," a label given to users who have been frequenting 4chan for many years and lament the recent decrease in secrecy who prefer to keep all mentions of 4chan's existence away from the mainstream. Newer users of 4chan are deemed "newfags" and are identified by their lack of knowledge about old memes and acceptance of public exposure through high-profile cause-oriented group activity. The tension between these two factions is rooted in the different stages of subcultural incorporation. Seen as a subculture with a consciously crafted style, 4chan's memes become cultural artifacts, the enjoyment of which serve as signals of cultural membership. The most popular jokes on 4chan revolve around base, taboo materials such as child pornography, rape, and blatant racism. However, similarly to Rikard Treiber's study of male subculture as being defined by ironic and campy appreciation of "low class" and "bad taste" items, the popularity of these vulgar topics does not equate a straightforward enjoyment. Instead, the ability to casually talk about such disgusting topics serves as a demonstration of the insider fanatic "snarkastic" attitude that refuses to take the Internet seriously, and a jaded illustration of experience that is respectable in its inability to be shocked or scandalized. Thus, pedobear — a pedophile cartoon bear who is inserted into mainstream media items to suggest inappropriate and subversive sexualization of images — is one of the most widely used memes (Fig. 1.5), while extreme racist slurs are used without reservation.

These controversial memes are not and cannot be incorporated by the mainstream, and it is only the relatively harmless and cute memes that find true crossover appeal. Despite the mainstream's inability to truly understand and appreciate 4chan's culture, "newfags" welcome this opening of discourse because it cements their status as producers of folk culture, the leaders and trendsetters of a budding frontier. The bastardization of the meme's original meanings,

Fig. 5. Pedobear visits the *PowerPuff Girls*.

while annoying to the possessive right that the cultural insiders, also serves to further cement 4chan users' superiority of knowledge. "Oldfags" are stuck in the initial subcultural development stage, completely resenting incorporation while "newfags" embrace the cycle of adaptation. In my experience, many "oldfags" have become frustrated with the inevitable changes, leaving the community in search of the next obscure elite online subculture. As such, the cycle of incorporation as chronicled by Hebdige nears completion, signaling the end of one era and the birth of another.

Conclusion

As a digital subculture, 4chan uses memes to express a unique style that serves to distinguish knowledgeable insiders from oblivious outsiders. These memes are often in "poor taste" and the ability to navigate the fine line of ironically enjoying such base criminal ideas is seen as a necessary skill for partaking in this marginal culture. The memes Pool's Closed and Anonymous illustrate style's role in forming a group avatar, as symbols such as suits are appropriated from mainstream culture in order to juxtapose an edgy counter-identity. Despite these measures of group entrance regulation, the mainstream nonetheless incorporates this subculture, distorting its meanings in the process. A fresh digital evolution of youth subculture, 4chan proves that the Internet is a rich feeding ground for legitimate cultural study that has its roots in physical life interactions.

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TELEVISION FANS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Elyse Hollander

Television fans over the last decade have progressively reshaped their image from the obsessive loners of half-baked fan clubs to intricate online communities compiled of aficionado activists. This transformation of the television fanatic was fostered by the media convergence between television and Web 2.0, an innovation that runs on open source software. This software, which is used to build interactive sites like YouTube, Wikipedia, and all blog programming, has uncovered an untapped market of sophisticated fans devoted to programs that make them think, and that inspire meaningful exchanges in online discussions.

This television-Internet convergence has also enabled fans with the ability to effectively organize as resisters and shapers of commercial television narratives, challenging the "hypodermic needle" theory of passive audience consumption.[1] This new perception on fandom pathology has allowed media corporations to recognize online fan communities as a distinguished body of active narrative navigators and producers. This significant change has altered the modern fan into a vital component of the production process of television. This "participatory culture," as coined in Henry Jenkins' ethnographic book *Textual Poachers*, is described as an empowered fan community of highly interactive producers collaborating together on the Internet.[2] In Jenkins' book, fans are glorified as digital crusaders that challenge traditional perceptions of academia, professionalism, and the current studio economic model. By decentralizing production and placing it in the hands of the adoring masses, it *seems* that television in the digital era has opened an equal dialogue with its consumers. This dynamic relationship between fans and television producers, however, is not so clear cut. As online fan communities have increased, so has the interest of the media industry in harnessing this pool of creative labor for the sole purpose of making money. This operation runs on the contradiction of fans generating online content for the sole purpose of affecting what is played over the traditional television airways. This Faustian bargain which runs under the illusion of a "global village"[3] is still in fact controlled by a concentration of a few major television corporations, but under the guise of the new online community. While the television-internet convergence has shifted fan interactions and perceptions, the way in which we pay and acknowledge this new creative production has not. This in turn creates subtle disenfranchisement of fans as a payable creative power, raising issues about ownership, which challenges the very legitimacy of Henry Jenkins' vision of a utopian "participatory culture."

Web 2.0 and keywords in a cloud system of data organization.

Shifting Definition and Receptions of Fandom

The pathological connotations associated with fandom has remained a stigma since the creation of the Hollywood star system in the early 1900s. Yet, as entertainment has evolved, so have the perceptions of fandom. The power of a fan is first acknowledged with the invention of the Hollywood star system in the 1920s and the creation of celebrity fan clubs. Major Hollywood studios marketed entire films off their star's on and off screen persona, drawing in public curiosity through scandals and romantic entanglements. Fans which fixated around the manufactured celebrity quickly became defined solely as a response to the star system, and thus as passive observers vicariously living through mass media. Joli Jenson in her article, "Fandom as Pathology" acknowledges that since the creation of this star system, fandom is seen "as excessive, bordering on deranged, behavior."[4] Jenson goes on to suggest that there are two types of fans — "the obsessed individual and the hysterical crowd" [5] These images of fandom, which are drastically different from the "empowered aficionado" bloggers described today, significantly mark the shifting power of fandom before and after the digital revolution. Fandom in the 20th century is often associated with a type of social dysfunction because of the implied displacement of identity onto the celebrity or the growth of a cult fixation and establishment of artificial social relationships. Jenson argues, however, that these academic descriptions of fandom are overdramatic representations that do not necessarily describe fan interactions, but are

a way of establishing cultural hierarchies — "us" versus "them" relationships.[6] The objects of desire and the modes of enactment are the cultural separators that engender fan hierarchies, associating cool and detached emotion with classical high brow appreciation and hysterical emotion with low brow appreciation. That is, a fan of a television show like *Star Trek* is described in these fanatic pathological terms, where as a scholar of Hemingway is deemed an expert or aficionado. However, with the invention of open source software on the web, fans are not only generating new content, but also rewriting traditional notions of fandom itself.

The Shift to the Aficionado

MySpace, Wikis, YouTube, and blogs, all allow fans to create online communities that challenge academia's hold on fan discourse because the fan culture itself is building new vernacular while reworking the narrative texts of their favorite television shows. By reclaiming the power of self-definition and becoming their own authorities of their favorite shows, fans are demonstrating a new collective, interactive, and real-time exchange of ideas that shake the traditional foundations of fan identity. Paul Booth in "Rereading Fandom: MySpace Character Personas and Narrative Identity," explores how fans are also no longer "poaching texts,"[7] that is, struggling to define their fan community within the context of an already established narrative, but rather they are "ripping and shredding texts, combing them and reworking

them to create something entirely different."[8] Meaning is not taken but formed by the fan community. It is this shift from fans being perceived as scavengers, passive consumers, and obsessive loners to these aggressive producers that destabilizes old consumer-producer relationships. While the extent in which fans have come to use the communal software on sites like Wikipedia, MySpace, and YouTube could have not been accurately predicted, the very creation of these sites highlight the limitations and inaccessibility of previous television-fan relationship.

Web 2.0: YouTube, "Broadcast Yourself"

YouTube's 2005 launch and the creation of similar communal hosting sites, validated the birth of a new fan, and a new digital economy possible because of the maturation of the infrastructure of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 was first introduced by Tim O'Reilly at the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference in 2004. Web 2.0 does not imply an updated or technical specification to the previous version of the Internet, but rather it refers to the cumulative changes in ways software developers and end-users use the web. In Web 2.0, web applications facilitated interactive information sharing, inter-operate-ability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. Web 2.0 allows its users to interact with other users or to change the website content, in contrast to non-interactive websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them.

The resulting ease of posting, finding, watching, and sharing videos, along with the incorporation of webcams and basic editing tools like iMovie, have facilitated an eruption of user-generated media."[9]

YouTube, a social video website, most encapsulates the new power and possibilities of Web 2.0 for television fans. YouTube allows users to upload, view, and share video clips, combining the isolated experience of television watching with the highly interactive nature of the Internet. YouTube uses Adobe Flash to serve its content, which includes clips from films and television programs, music videos, and homemade videos. Video feeds of YouTube videos can also be easily embedded on blogs and other websites creating a system of free sharing and virtual promotion. YouTube's launch and resulting popularity illuminates three important trends that were occurring in the media industry and fan markets in the early 2000s. First, YouTube's launch raised awareness of the growing trend of media concentration, as a handful of multinational media conglomerates increasingly and consistently dominate all areas of the media industry. Second, YouTube offered a service that directly challenged classic modes of production, distribution and the concentration of media ownership. Finally, the very popularity of YouTube signaled an important shift in fan and television interactions, as fans increasingly used the site to produce video mash-ups — the splicing of several television episodes to create a new narrative, or video diary like commentary on their favorite television shows. YouTube has not only offered fans a way of broadcasting their ideas about their favorite television shows to other fans, but a way to broadcast themselves back at the television.

Open Source Software

The new dialogue between fans and the subsequent generation of fan communities online is made possible through the use of free and open-source software that YouTube, MySpace, Wikipedia, and blogs use. Yochai Benkler distinguishes in his essay, "Peer Production and Sharing," that this new software is based on the shared effort of a "nonproprietary model"– one that depends on many individuals contributing to a common project without any one person or entity asserting rights over another to exclude them from the production or from the resulting project.[10] This open-source software which is used on fan sites such as *Lostpedia[11]*, blogs like TelevisionWithoutPity. com, and hosting sites like YouTube, enables fans from across the globe to establish virtual fan communities or "global villages" that work together in generating new content. The type of peer production Benkler describes is best exemplified through the website Wikipedia, where users can edit and add pages to the site. Intertextual linking allows users to connect information from one page to another, creating a never-ending linking system of interchangeable information. It is through this new global digital community of interaction that fans are transformed

into activists, aficionados, and a greater "participatory culture."

The Collective Intelligence of a Participatory Culture

This merger between the Internet and the television has allowed television fans to interact on the Internet as French cyberspace theorist Pierre Lévy describes as one "collective intelligence."[12] This "collective intelligence" that television fans partake in is described as large-scale information gathering and processing activities that have emerged specifically in web communities. On the Internet, he argues, people harness their individual expertise towards shared goals and objectives, working as one collective and productive body.[13] This theory of a "collective intelligence" is expanded in Henry Jenkins' essay, "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education in the 21st Century." In his essay he describes a "participatory culture" as a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also "where members believe that their contributions matter and where members feel some degree of social connection with one another.[14] Forms of participatory culture include:

Affiliations:
Memberships, formal and informal, in online communities centered around various forms of media, such as Friendster, Facebook, message boards, metagaming, game clans, or MySpace).

Expressions:
Producing new creative forms, such as digital sampling, skinning and modding, fan videomaking, fan fiction writing, zines, mash-ups).

Collaborative Problem-solving:
Working together in teams, formal and informal, to complete tasks and develop new knowledge (such as through Wikipedia, alternative reality gaming, spoiling).

Circulations:
Shaping the flow of media (such as podcasting, blogging).

This "participatory culture" is a projected utopian image upon online television fans, as they embody most of the characteristics outlined by Jenkins. But the interactive "free for all" digital frontier didn't remain that free for long.

Corporate Reaction: Hulu

This development of a "participatory culture" highlights that media convergence is more than just a technological shift or an opportunity to watch more commercial television, but rather it alters the relationship between existing technologies,

As described by McLuhan's notion of the "global village," the Internet facilitates connection and collaboration

industries, markets, genres, and audience interactions. The importance of this alteration is best demonstrated by the reaction against it – Hulu. Hulu is the corporate attempt at subtly joining and fighting the new growing participatory culture. While Hulu shares a similar style to YouTube, this television-internet convergence website attempts to deflate the influence of fan generated content. By broadcasting popular television shows from several big networks (NBC, ABC and FOX) on one site, Hulu mimics the collage aesthetics and global-any time accessibility of an online fan community, but prohibits fan interactions like message boards and response videos– the very things that define fan communities. Hulu goes even further by reinforcing old television standards by limiting a user's viewing time through ad placements. While television networks adapt to this changing television paradigm online, fans are a step ahead, generating their own narratives to their favorite television shows.

Fan-Generated Content

Fans are generating their own content in response to their favorite television programs. It has been suggested that audience activity occurs when fans move from the role of consumer to that of producer.[15] The production and consumption of fan fiction is another popular activity for

keeping a program alive and fresh. Fans borrow characters and settings from current and past TV series and create their own plot lines and story narratives. This bricolage has been seen in other cases as a rebellion against the system. Fans who, because of their economic status, have no power over television content, meet their needs by manufacturing their own fantasies.[16] In a study of online fan interaction, Victor Costello in "Cultural Outlaws" reported a pattern within fan-generated content. Fans were reported to take popular characters and create narratives where they became homosexual, females moved from the background into dominant roles, and the histories and futures of characters from long-dead series were extended.[17] This type of fan fiction is privately and publicly shared by its creators, but critiqued and modified collectively by the community.

This type of fan production has not only empowered fans as producers but in the process of creation they have also altered traditional narrative structure. In "Narractivity and the Narrative Database," Paul Booth explores fan-generated content and online fan communities in relation to the structure of traditional television narrative. Booth argues that in the presence of wikis, the audience's relationship with narrative content and structure is altered by the interactive capabilities of the Web 2.0's open source software.[18] This new collective and interactive narrative construction and deconstruction is termed by Booth as "Narractivity."[19] Fan-created wikis for serialized and complex shows like

Lost and *Heroes* offer more than just show information, but act as a beehive of creative narrative construction.

On Lostpedia, for example, each episode and narrative element from ABC's Lost has its own wiki-page, and users can hypertextually flip across the pages' links in any order. Characters have their own individual pages, as do situations, themes, motifs, and other story information. Any fan, through hypertextual connections, can link any two pieces of information. These hypertextual connections form not just through the audience's reconstruction of the story, but also through a reconstruction of the discourse.[20] The fan audience re-writes this narrative, but the connection itself becomes a re-reading of *Lost* the TV show. If any particular connection does not already exist on screen, or appears for the first time in an episode, fans can re-write that connection, re-read that discourse, and re-produce that story, through a process of narractivity.[21] Fans can construct and deconstruct the narrative. Unlike before, fans can collectively outline the shows canon: the characters, technologies, backstories, and other essential components. Yet more importantly, fans can also rewrite these elements by speculating what is to come, changing the course of the show, through an "imaginative discourse."[22] This "imaginative discourse" is also known on the web as "spoilers," where fans predict the outcome of the shows plot before it happens, or even have insider information to future episodes. The combination of fan theories and the global outreach

of the fan online communities puts a newfound pressure on television writers and producers to produce intellectually stimulating shows, and also guard their work from being leaked. Furthermore, show writers on *Lost*, whose plots get intricate and confusing, often turn to fan sites for future plot ideas and storylines.

While fan-generated content can affect a show's story structure, the ultimate power of Internet fandom is in controlling the actual life and death of a series. For fans of a show, that power is usually in the hands of a network executive or, and for a syndicated series, a production company. However, online fans believe they can prevent the cancellation of a program or even resurrect it after the decision has been made to end it. In the world before the Internet, dedicated fans had organized mail campaigns and known some success, but online fans can move quicker, organize more people, and generally be more effective. The "I'm with CoCo" fan campaign fought to keep Conan O'Brien on the air as the Tonight Show host on NBC when executives wanted to replace him with the lackluster Jay Leno. While the viral campaign didn't prevent Conan O'Brien from losing his timeslot on NBC, he did receive a hefty compensation due to the exponential attention he was receiving from the media and fans. All the attention Conan O'Brien has received from fans and the campaign has also made him a hot ticket for another network, something NBC never expected for the awkward redhead host.

Troubles With Ownership and a Process of Commodification

As the industry relies on the labor of fans to produce and promote the value of its properties with increasing openness, it becomes increasingly difficult to hold in place distinctions between owners and consumers. Furthermore, the dynamic qualities of fan-generated content on fan communities has sparked an increased interest by the media industry in harnessing some of this creative labor for the purpose of making money in promotional ventures.

The use of fan-generated content for the purposes of promotional ventures is a topic ignored in the utopian "participatory culture" view of Henry Jenkins. The commodification of fan-generated content is possible because of a fan's passive toleration of being free laborers and the contradictory satisfaction of generating online content for the sole purpose of being played over the airways. Secondly, the recent corporate takeover of once independently-run fan friendly sites, troubles the creative freedom associated with Jenkins's "participatory culture."

With shows like Lost mimicking YouTube's hosting and iMovie's editing software, they are attracting fans to make free 35 second clips for promotional contests. Fans who enter are provided with the software, the clips, and the music to build the ultimate promotional video for the show's finale. Marketing campaigns that solicit user-generated content offer an instructive contrast to the horizontal creativity of fan producers.

Such user-generated advertising typically features a top-down arrangement that attempts, through its interface and conditions, to contain excessive fan productivity within proprietary commercial spaces.[23] Already in its two weeks of operation, more than 1,000 videos have been uploaded, all working for free. The promotional video contest is also in-conjunction with Kia Motors, who shamelessly promotes their cars on the sites building software. The commercialization of fan production has also increased with Google's purchase of YouTube in 2006. Ad banners are now embedded within fan generated content unlike before, and anything that is uploaded to YouTube is owned by YouTube and its affiliates, allowing them to use their user videos for any type of self promotion.[24] The biggest and less known corporate take over of a fan community occurred on the popular blogging site *Televisionwithoutpity.com*. The dilemma rests in the websites original promise of shared control and the sudden increase in off-loading market research labor onto viewers and users of *Televisionwithoutpity.com*.[25] Sites like *Televisionwithoutpity.com* were set up to fight the consolidation and concentration in the television industry, allowing freedom for uncensored fan discussion. However, the consolidation of/ on network television had leaked over onto new media and the Internet, a consolidation that has increasingly crippled creativity and competition on the Internet. When Televisionwithoutpity.com used to be independently run, users had the freedom to bash popular shows and enter into open dialogue with actual show writers and producers. This all changed when Bravo, a cable channel under the NBC-Universal family, bought the website, seeing the site as a valuable resource for market research. Since the purchase, Bravo has also been limiting and censoring discussion board topics, taking down comments, and promoting only NBC affiliated network shows. This type of interactivity has now come to reposition the power not in the hands of the adoring masses, but back in the hands of the few corporate suits.

So the question arises, "where do we go from here?" If online fan communities are increasingly recognized as a new labor force by big studio executives, how will the Internet remain the democratic digital frontier as envisioned in Henry Jenkins' "participatory culture" or Marshal McLuhan's "global village"? The good news is that there is still hope for the digital frontier to be kept separate from incorporation. Sites like Vimeo offer the same video service as YouTube but prevent businesses and commercial videos from being uploaded to the site. They are strictly for fan-generated content and personal videos. They do not have advertising embedded on their user's videos or on their site, and allow just the same sharing capabilities as YouTube but in higher quality. With sites like *Televisionwithoutpity.com* going corporate, fans need to reclaim fan communities and fan-produced content through more independently run sites. Hosting a website has become cheaper through domain sites

The television series *Lost* has spawned a lot of fan-generated work.

like *Godaddy.com* and open source software which can be downloaded for free over the Internet. The most fundamental flaw in the fan-television-producer relationship, however, is the compensation law for new media content. This payment issue was most heavily explored in the 2007 writer's strike over compensation for webisodes and the residual payment for shows played on Internet video sites like Hulu and YouTube.[26] Participants in online fandom, who are uniquely equipped to realize the web's status as a commercial platform, banded together to support television writers by picketing, educating, and fundraising. As fans are left wondering how they will be contracted and compensated in this new media economy, it is the potential "queerness of convergence itself—transgressing the accepted boundaries of media formations," that fosters the need for these new negotiations and protocols on the part of the industry.[27] While boundaries and economic models are breaking down, so might the barriers and contradictions that are holding back Henry Jenkins' utopian digital world.

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SATELLITE ENTERTAINMENT AND THE EXTENSION OF U.S. CULTURAL BORDERS

Romeo Rubio

Satellite transmissions relay abundant amounts of content to large numbers of people over vast distances. Anyone within a satellite's footprint, that is to say, the ground area covered by a satellite's signals, can access its signal with the proper equipment. These footprints are broad and are often not congruent with national boundaries. As for the content of these transmissions, they vary from satellite to satellite. One notable type of information that is dispersed is entertainment, which includes satellite radio and satellite television. This type of content is inherently cultural since radio and television programs communicate values, attitudes, and tastes. This essay argues that the footprints of American satellite television and radio function to create collective experiences amongst Americans while also indoctrinating American territories and foreign countries (specifically Puerto Rico and Canada). In addition, these nationalistic and imperialistic effects of footprints come with opposition from local-based providers of entertainment and from the Canadian government.

The following analysis is a type of critical inquiry that media scholar Lisa Parks calls "footprint analysis."[1] It is an approach that moves beyond simple examination of the technological aspects of satellites and satellite footprints and questions the complex of satellite culture. As Parks explains, it is a model that "explores how satellites function as part of the structure and culture of the modern world"[2] through examining the dynamics among local, national, and transnational relations. Thus what comes under investigation are not the entertainment satellites' technological owners but the (cultural) power structures it works for and within.

Satellite Radio as Shared National Experience and Local Ear-Sore

The expansive reach of the satellite signals by companies like Sirius XM makes it a telecommunications medium at a national level. As the Sirius website makes clear, it provides programming "from coast-to-coast in the United States."[3] There are channels hosted by Howard Stern, Martha Stewart, and Oprah Winfrey. Music genres of all types are represented in the array of Sirius XM music channels. There are several national and international news programs on Sirius such as CNN, FOX, and BBC channels. Weather and traffic information is also available but only offered in the 20 busiest metropolitan
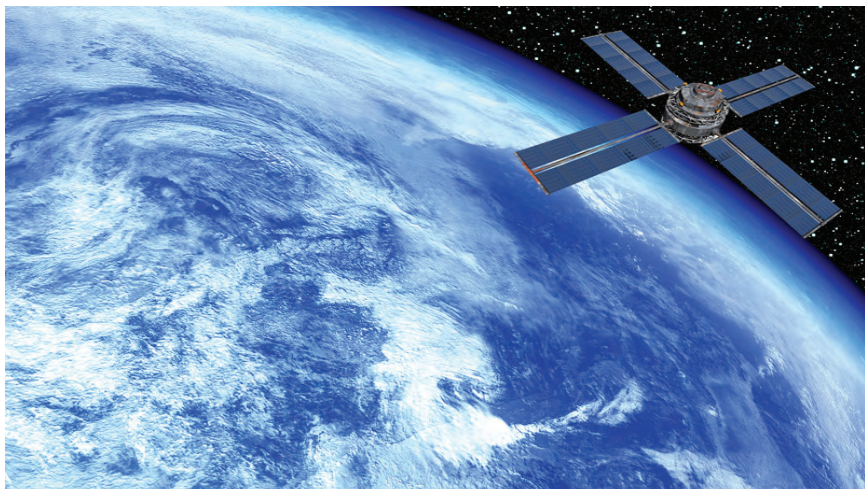
The satellite terrain has become the new battlefield for the culture wars.

areas.[4] This differs vastly from traditional AM and FM terrestrial radio which has a comparatively limited range and locale-specific programming. Unlike local radio, satellite radio fails to provide a "connection between people and their communities," which is the biggest objection of satellite radio critics.[5] Satellite radio's distribution is more comparable to Indonesia's national government television station Televisi Republik Indonesia, which is broadcast across the country. This type of distribution "forg[es] and strengthen[s] national unity through shared cultural experience."[6] What this does, in turn, is remove the necessity for syndication of shows like National Public Radio (NPR) as everything being broadcast via Sirius is the same for every listener, wherever in the country they may be. Thus, satellite radio is a platform in which collective national identity can be cultivated. Listeners from around the nation can simultaneously raise their eyebrows at Howard Stern's controversial commentary on current events or dance to the newest pop sensation.

The September 2009 Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) approval of Sirius XM's entrance into Puerto Rico furthers the idea of satellite radio's ability to create a collective national identity."[7] Although Puerto Rico is an American territory geographically separated from mainland United States, the arrival of Sirius XM, it becomes further tethered and connected to the cultural patterns of the rest of America. They become aware and part of trends and popular culture discourse. Through this common broadcast system emerge shared experiences, albeit acoustic in nature. Sirius XM's presence on the island functions as a type

of cultural incorporation, much like colonizing remote areas and bringing the periphery closer to the core, into the happenings of the mainstream United States.

Although satellite radio's arrival in Puerto Rico has cultural benefits, it has stirred opposition, particularly from local radio stations. The FCC approval document cites a petition filed by the Radio Broadcasters Association of Puerto Rico against Sirius XM. The Association, which "represents approximately 90% of the [local] AM and FM broadcasters in Puerto Rico," argues that the satellite radio company will "directly compete with such broadcasters for listeners in Puerto Rico."[8] The FCC denied this petition on the basis that satellite radio will not compete with the local stations "local programming."[9] In other words, the two have different types of content and thus will not compete in that area. Because the approval of the Sirius XM application and the denial of the Association's petition have occurred quite recently, the economic effects, particularly on competition, cannot be fully assessed and are at best speculative. Nonetheless, the FCC's reasoning to deny the Association's petition seems flawed. It is difficult to coherently listen to two different radio programs at the same time. Although they may have different types of programming, satellite radio would still compete for the ears of Puerto Ricans and hence represent financial competition.

National Identities: Canada and America's Cultural and Economic War

Satellite dispersed entertainment also has transnational implications, particularly in the case of the United States and its northern neighbor, Canada. Although American satellite television providers such as DirecTV and Dish Network focus their satellite transmissions to a uniquely American user base, their satellite footprint spills into other nations. The satellite footprints of both companies cover the continental United States and parts of Mexico, the Caribbean and Canada.[10,11] Service is not provided by these companies in Canada, but a November 2006 Wall Street Journal article estimates that 700,000 people out of a total population of 33 million receive American satellite television. Canadians access United States broadcasts either through illegally distributed equipment or by receiving equipment and paying bills through a United States address; both of which are illegal.[12] To enforce these laws, police do implement raids on satellite equipment distributors.[13]

The tough stance that the Canadian government takes against signal piracy is based on the fear of its cultural consequences. Canadian broadcasters and Canadian cultural nationalists are both "concerned about the broader impact of the gray market on Canada's national identity."[14] Naomi Sakr documents a similar case in France where

satellite broadcasts invasiveness has been viewed as a threat to French national identity. French government officials became alarmed when Arab-speaking households in the country erected satellite dishes, through which they could potentially receive Arab-language broadcasts. Sakr explains that this was viewed as detrimental to "the country's policy of cultural assimilation."[15] Sakr's observation displays a governmental fear of Arab immigrants' use of satellite television to maintain Arab cultural ties, which in turn directly lessen the likelihood of their full adoption of French culture. In Canada, the fear stems from the belief that foreign programs would adversely effect citizens' cultural purity and authenticity. Moreover, the feat is that viewers of illegal American satellite television will start to become more American than Canadian; as one Canadian broadcasting advocacy group states, these viewers "'have electronically migrated to the U.S."[16] Thus the footprint of DirecTV and Dish Network also represent the extension of America's cultural boundaries into the Canadian nation-state.

The expansion of American satellite television footprints into its northern neighbor also siphons capital into the United States and away from the economy of Canada. This movement of money occurs in two ways. First, the illegal reception of American transmissions lowers the number of subscribers to Canadian cable and satellite television.[17] Canadians are less likely to seek the services of Canadian companies if they already pay for an American broadcast through false American addresses or receive free television through signal descrambling equipment. Secondly, the restrictions that Canada puts on United States satellite television are made to ensure a "viable market for homegrown writers and actors."[18] If Canada becomes unable to maintain an industry in which their homegrown actors can find work, then it would make it more likely that talent would migrate out of the country. Also, the lack of talent would make it that much harder for Canadian programs to succeed and compete with American shows. This movement of capital from Canada to the United States reflects what Saskia Sassen touches on in her analysis of "economic citizenship" within a global (American) economy.[19] Capital flow between borders weakens the connection and accountability between government and individual. Individual Canadian's economic ties with their nation thus become weakened as capital is transferred to the United States. Essentially, the presence of United States television signals in Canada loosens Canada's grip on its citizens both culturally and economically.

Unlike satellite television, there are two Canadian satellite radio companies that provide legal service through the footprint signal of American satellites; but like satellite television, it is a site

of struggle for cultural identity. The companies, Sirius Canada and Canadian Satellite Radio use their American affiliates' (Sirius and XM Radio) satellite transmissions but are majority-owned by Canadian-based companies. This is because "Canadian laws ban foreign ownership of broadcasters," according to a 2007 Wall Street Journal article by Ian Austen.[20] Furthermore, the article notes that the acceptance of Canadian Satellite radio through American satellites come with certain content-controlling requirements: each group has to "provide at least eight Canadian channels, two of them in French."[21] It is evident that the Canadian government wants to minimize the American influence and control of these satellite radio companies. This is accomplished through forced Canadian ownership and a necessary inclusion of Canadian content. In particular, the requirement of two French language channels for each satellite radio service is a powerful avenue through which "authentic" Canadian culture can be instilled in its listeners. Much like in Amir Hassanpour's examination of Kurdish television channel MED-TV, the company uses language in addition to televisual components to provide "a powerful vehicle for creating national culture and identity."[22] Language plays a vital role in recreating ties among a Kurdish diaspora. In Canada, French language radio channels offer listeners a culturally specific product, one which is placed in opposition to American English-language programming. Linguistic difference is emphasized as a way of promoting the ideal of a proliferation of Canadian culture in the wake of enormous American influence. It is important to note that although there is the presence of Canadian content, the majority of satellite radio channels from both Sirius Canada and Canadian Satellite Radio still originate from their American counterparts.

Conclusion

This preceding footprint analysis illustrates the profound cultural and socio-economic effects caused by American satellite-transmitted entertainment to our close neighbors. Canada and Puerto Rico. The wide reach of satellite transmissions implicate people on a local, national and transnational level. Satellite radio becomes a national experience as it blankets the United States with a shared cultural and informational discourse—many times unwanted in the places that they bleed into as is exemplified by Puerto Rico. Satellite radio commodities extend America's influence into like Canada and function as a cultural and economic incursion into the country. Satellite footprints and their examination provide an interesting and complex illustration of the relation of cultural phenomena to the geopolitics of broadcasting.

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