

THE
Boothe
PRIZE ESSAYS

2008

School of
Humanities and Sciences

Office of the Vice Provost for
Undergraduate Education

Introduction to the Humanities Program

Program in Writing
and Rhetoric

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NOMINEES 2007–2008

PWR Nominees

Jacob Boehm
 James Christopher Bohnhoff
 Philip Bulterys
 Daniel Capo
 Clara Caruthers
 Roseann Cima
 Alexander Connolly
 Folake Dosu
 Daniel Gratch
 Elspeth Green
 Kerstin Grune
 Anand Habib
 Kolby Hanson
 Graham August Herli
 Aliso Holiday
 Sally Hunson
 Kip M. Hustace
 Aaron Kalb
 Arunima Kohli
 James Patrick Kozey
 Jessica Lee
 Catherine Lowell
 Laura Mapes
 Kirk Morrow
 Sandy Nader
 Michelle Neely
 Matt Norcia
 David Parker
 Blake Parkinson
 Vasant Ramachandran
 Jason Riggs
 Johnathan N. Rothfels
 Melissa Runsten
 Rob Ryan
 Jerry Shang
 Varun Sivaram
 Cybelle Smith
 Emilyn Smith
 Liesl Spitz
 Emily Stark
 Jireh Tan
 Sarah Toukan
 Erick Tran
 Weiqi Samantha Toh

Karen Warner

Josh Wong

Jennifer Yen

IHUM Finalists

Rachel Becker
 Nathan Blair
 Marcello Mathias Herreshoff
 Elyse Hope
 Rachel Hovde
 Lee Ching Hua
 Khan Le
 Cooper Lloyd
 Tom McLaughlin
 Rebekah Moreale
 Sandy Nader
 Lara Stiris
 Sopic Theis
 Mililani Trask-Batti
 Stefan Wager
 Trent Walker
 Jeff Wear
 Eric Younge

IHUM Nominees

Jonathon Anderson
 Aysha Bagshi
 Atalya Ben Haim
 Rosalind Fay Boone
 Stephanie Caro
 Carl Case
 Elizabeth Chidyausihu
 Marcus Cordero
 Benjamin DeStein
 Raisa Epistola
 Elissa Freedman
 Andrea Freund
 Jessica Galant
 Sarah Grandin
 Aidain Gerke
 Joe Gittinger
 Joseph Golden
 Libby Greismann
 James Hancock
 Andy Hanneman
 Jane Heyes

Liliana Chan Hou

Rachel Hovde

Joanna Ingebritten

Olivia Jackson

Leah Karlins

Chris Kucharczyk

Michael Lee

Otto Manfred Leinsdorf

Yu Xian Lim

Hannah Lynch

Abrey Mann

Kathish Manthiram

Mirage Marrow

Samantha McGirr

Fermin Mendoza

Lo Min Ming

Tim Moon

Katherine Huong Nguyen

An Le Nguyen

Sarrah Nomanbhoy

Allison Rhines

Jason Riggs

Nick Riva

Kelly Schultz

Jamie Tam

Anna Thompson

David Tobin

Emma Webster

Mellisa Wei

Seth Winger

Josh Michael Wong

Elizabeth Yang

Matthew Yankowitz

Chris Young

Joanna Xu

FOREWORD

THANKS TO THE GENEROSITY of the late D. Power Boothe Jr., his wife Catie, and their son Barry, the Boothe Prizes recognize and reward outstanding expository, argumentative, and research-based writing of first-year students in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) and the Introduction to the Humanities Program (IHUM). Each quarter superior student work from courses in both programs is nominated and submitted to Boothe Prize committee judges. Winning papers are then collected for publication, and Boothe Prizes are awarded at a celebratory ceremony each spring in honor of these talented student writers and their instructors. As this collection of essays from spring and autumn 2007 and winter 2008 indicates, the selection process is no easy task at any of the judging stages. The essays represent the broad range and reach of many of Stanford's first-year writers; they often are remarkable in their analytic power and sophisticated rhetorical skills, as well as their personal engagement with a topic or text. Their papers additionally reveal the varying kinds of research opportunities available to Stanford's first-year students, and the quality of work students are able to do in a short period of time, usually on fairly unfamiliar material, all the while managing the difficult work of their other courses. We take particular pleasure, then, in honoring these superior young scholars. Our special thanks go to the Boothe family for their support and encouragement of Stanford's first-year PWR and IHUM students in offering the Boothe Prizes and making possible the publication of these essays. We also thank the Boothe Prize Selection Committees for PWR and IHUM and the Project Committee, a collaborative venture among faculty and staff from both PWR and IHUM who planned, edited, and produced *The Boothe Prize Essays 2008*. Most of all, our thanks to the many talented first-year writers whose essays were nominated for the Boothe Prize and, especially, to the students and instructors whose exemplary work now takes its place in the intellectual life of Stanford's first-year programs.

—JOHN BRAVMAN

Freeman-Thornton Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

ESSAYS FROM THE
Program in
Writing and Rhetoric

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

*Boothe Prize Winners &
Honorable Mentions*

INTRODUCTION

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

The PWR requirement at Stanford currently consists of two courses. While the second-level PWR 2 course emphasizes oral and multimedia presentations of research, PWR 1, the first-year course in which students write the essays nominated for the Boothe Prize, centers on various forms of analysis and substantial research-based projects. The essays selected as the Winners and Honorable Mentions for the Boothe Prize represent the best of students' work in these areas, and it is our pleasure to share them with the larger Stanford community.

The PWR curriculum aims to lead students toward strong performance in all elements of writing, including crafting a persona that will effectively appeal to a particular audience, developing a compelling argumentative thesis drawing on primary and secondary sources, building cogent proofs with persuasive evidence and reasoning, and writing with power and grace. Each of these essays demonstrates the ways in which PWR courses guide Stanford's first-year students in presenting their ideas with the intellectual rigor and stylistic force expected of university students.

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

—ANDREA A. LUNSFORD

Director, Program in Writing and Rhetoric

—MARVIN DIOGENES

Associate Director, Program in Writing and Rhetoric

SPRING 2007 WINNER

Justin Solomon

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

MANY STUDENTS BEGIN RESEARCH by taking a trip to the library. Justin began his by writing a computer program. He used his program to analyze trends in computer science publishing and produced graphs showing a clear trend toward papers with ever more authors attached to them. Justin argues that this trend, taken together with the lack of a standard for crediting multiple authors, has deleterious consequences for the fair crediting of research. The situation is especially unfair to young academics seeking to establish themselves in the field. In order to elaborate this larger argument, Justin has supported his own statistical work on the computer with deep and broad scholarly research.

Justin's essay is impressive for the clarity with which he defines the problems posed by multiple collaborators and the lack of a consistent method of crediting them. Take this one example from many: "the problem of assigning equal credit can be just as difficult if not more difficult than the problem of differentiating between authors." It is easy to identify rhetorically balanced sentences as one of the hallmarks of good writing. It is much less easy to use them to pivot the reader around a crucial turn in the argument as Justin does so effectively here. Justin's paper is also notable for its judicious use of compelling examples to illustrate the conceptual problems surrounding the attribution of authorship. For example, he employs a first-hand narrative of a collaborative researcher, a campus novel, and the 976 winners of the 1993 Ig Nobel Prize for Literature to illustrate the challenges of fairly representing the contributions of multiple authors.

Justin closes his essay with a list of principles to guide a consistent publishing standard in computer science publishing. His paper makes a significant contribution to his own field of computer science by showing that a problem exists and suggesting general principles to underwrite the solution: a consistent publishing practice for the field. But the thoughtfulness with which he explores the issues involved in this specific case means that his essay also has implications for collaborative work in general, especially in areas where protocols for crediting collaborative research have not yet been fully developed. As many academics in the humanities begin to move toward collaborative research they will have to grapple with the issues Justin raises here.

"Programmers, Professors, and Parasites: Credit and Co-Authorship in Computer Science" itself grew out of a collaborative context. Similar to all

PWR classes my class, “The Rhetoric of Intellectual Property” is in many respects a public domain in which we share ideas on how projects can be improved in class discussions, peer reviews, and conferences. Justin’s essay developed and improved through this process. But no amount of collaborative revision alone could have produced the originality of thought and the clarity of argument that distinguishes Justin’s paper. For this the credit belongs squarely with the author under the title

—JAMES WOOD

Programmers, Professors, and Parasites: Credit and Co-Authorship in Computer Science

Justin Solomon

In November 2002, a team of computer scientists, engineers, and other researchers from IBM and the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory presented a conference paper announcing the development of a record-breaking supercomputer. This supercomputer, dubbed the BlueGene/L, would sport a “target peak processing power” of 360 trillion floating point operations every second (Adiga et al. 1), enough to simulate the complexity of a mouse’s brain (Frye, Ananthanarayanan, and Modha 2). While the potential construction of the BlueGene/L was a major development for the field of supercomputing, the paper announcing its structure unwittingly suggested new industry standards for sharing co-authorship credit in the field

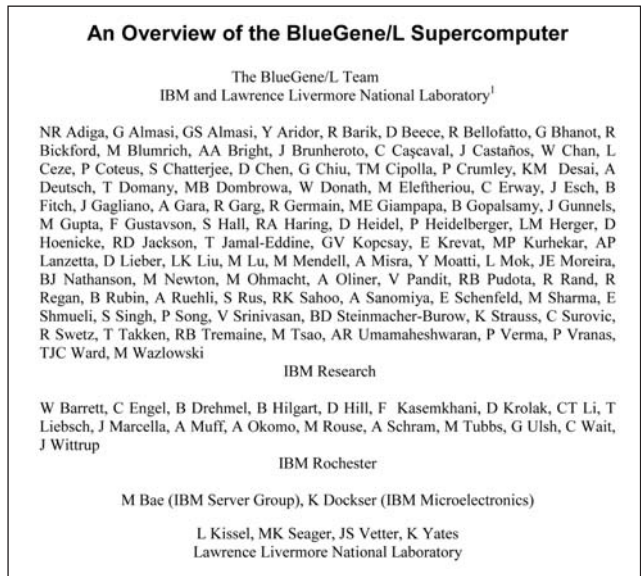


Fig. 1. The author list from the BlueGene/L paper (Adiga et al. 1)

of computer science. The paper spanned twenty-two pages of conference proceedings, sixteen of which contained written text. The authors of the paper, on the other hand, spanned both coasts of the United States, five research labs, and all but four letters of the alphabet. In total, 115 researchers were listed as authors of the paper (see fig. 1)—enough so that had the work been divided evenly each would have contributed about six lines of writing.

As the sheer number of authors on the BlueGene/L paper suggests, the simplest definition of an author by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “[o]ne who sets forth written statements” no longer holds, if it ever did, for computer science research (“author,” def. 3a). Instead, authorship on a computer science paper indicates not that the author made concrete written contributions to the paper itself, but rather that he or she played a substantial role in the development of a larger project. As would be expected, the issue of authorship is a crucial one in computer science since authorship can be the key to promotion, tenure, and prestige for researchers advancing through the ranks of academia. A computer scientist whose name appears on a conference presentation slide or published paper has indicated a certain degree of involvement with publishable research and has proven that his or her work can withstand the pressure of peer review by a community of academics, engineers, and practitioners. Furthermore, in computer science, publication can be an initial stepping stone toward obtaining a patent for marketable products that stem from research results. Thus it comes as no surprise that computer scientists compete for positions on lists of authors for published research papers. This “publish-or-perish” attitude, which is well-known to have existed in the natural and social sciences for some time (Monastersky par. 24), has driven computer science researchers to become more and more prolific writers as well as competitors for increasingly exclusive spots in academic journals and conferences.

This pressure to publish has led to several practical and ethical problems concerning the assignment of academic credit in computer science research reports. When they submit a paper to an academic journal, computer science researchers must decide what degree of contribution is worthy of authorship as opposed to a footnote or mention in an acknowledgments section, the order in which the names of the authors should be presented, and who should be mentioned as the primary contact for further information about the research. They also must decide whether it would be a good service to list interns or less-experienced researchers on the publication to help them establish a place in the research community, and whether senior researchers or *professor emeriti* should be granted honorary authorship despite being no more than nominally associated with a research project. These decisions are espe-

cially important in computer science research, as many developments in computer science can be placed directly on the market with little to no modification. The degree of academic credit that a researcher receives thus can affect not only his or her academic career but also the possibility of entering into business given a lucrative development or product.

If a consistent publishing standard were put into place, these questions could be answered satisfactorily. No such standard, however, has been released by either of the principal organizations governing computer science research and publication, the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). Instead, these organizations have practiced a policy of “salutary neglect” in which there exists an unwritten, informal, and oft-disregarded understanding that authorship of a computer science paper reflects some sort of considerable contribution to the development of the project described by the paper. Consequently, papers published in academic computer science journals exhibit inconsistent patterns in co-authorship and author credit. These patterns represent a hodgepodge of citation procedures from more established fields, particular research groups’ policies, and other informal standards. Using these inconsistent methods, it is difficult if not impossible to produce a list of contributors that satisfies every participant in a research project. For this reason, after publication, the only way to discern researchers’ respective levels of contribution is through guesswork or retrospection on the part of the researchers themselves; these methods cannot easily determine a concrete list of contributions that would be accepted by all authors. Such irregularity has led to confusion over the nature of a particular individual’s contribution to research projects, squabbles over credit, and even legal action in some cases.

Clearly, computer science needs some sort of consistent publishing standard governing attribution of credit in papers, presentations, and other venues for the dissemination of findings. The design of such a standard should rely upon current practices, ethical concerns, legal issues, and successful practices in other fields to produce a reasonable set of rules that gives fair credit to all researchers involved in a particular project. The potential implementation of this policy would make scholarly work in computer science easier to interpret and be more reliable, and would help the field as a rigorous science in which authors are willing to take full responsibility for the accuracy and reliability of their research. Additionally, such attention to author credit and responsibility would help computer science differentiate itself from computer engineering and related fields, in which a publication is more likely to represent the end of a line of inquiry than a step toward solving an open problem.

PAST AND PRESENT PRACTICES

FEW STUDIES HAVE EXAMINED the evolution of credit in computer science research publications as computer science grew from a small subfield of math or electrical engineering to a field unto itself. Given that computer science has developed more rapidly than its peers in the natural sciences, the possibility exists that trends in academic credit and co-authorship in computer science indicate the formation of a unique system that differs significantly from those in other fields. After all, in contrast to protocols for credit in more traditional areas of study, computer science policy as it exists today is mostly the result of no more than forty years of development. Fortunately, the DBLP Computer Science Bibliography database makes its listings of over 885,000 computer science papers available for download and subsequent analysis (*Computer Science Bibliography*). These entries span the history of computer science, going as far back as Church and Turing’s theoretical work in the 1930s on the concept of computability, allowing for large-scale analysis of computer science publishing trends. In all, the DBLP represents about 30% of all computer science literature from a representative set of subfields, journals, and conferences (Petricek et al. 1062).

Statistical analysis of

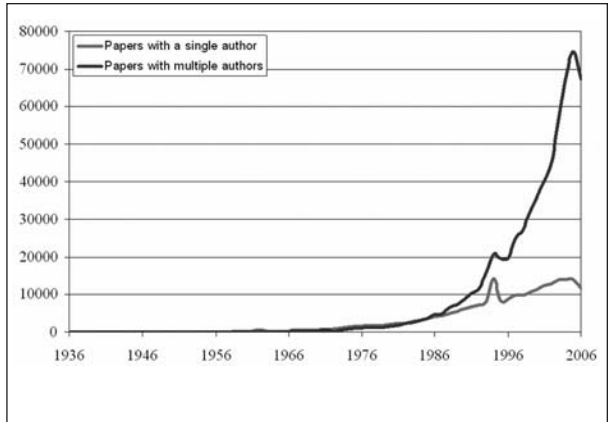


Fig. 2. Trends in single and multiple authorship in computer science papers (data gathered from the DBLP Computer Science Bibliography)

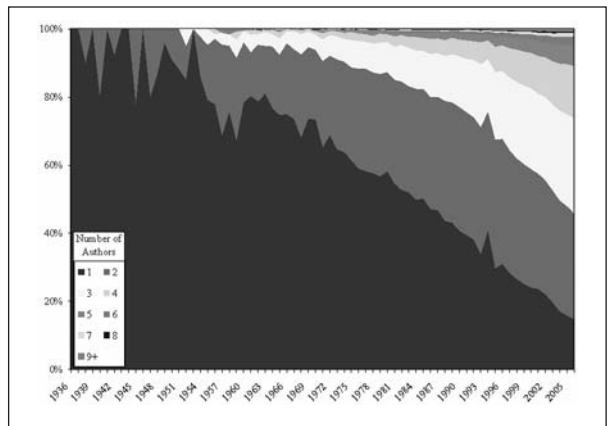


Fig. 3. Trends in single and multiple authorships in computer science papers by percent (data gathered from the DBLP Computer Science Bibliography)

publication records from the DBLP¹ reveals that while certain trends within computer science follow more global trends in scientific publishing, others are unique to computer science itself. As expected, computer science research starting in the 1980s has experienced a steep increase in the number of papers with multiple authors (see fig. 2). This trend is logical given that computer science expanded rapidly in the 1980s due to the invention and eventual ubiquity of the personal computer. As the field became more popular throughout the decade, research groups in computer science grew as well, leading to papers with larger author lists. Furthermore, a similar rise in multiple authorships has been documented extensively within other sciences through the “scientometric” analysis of various databases of scientific publications (Glänzel 464). After all, although the phrase “publish or perish” may have evolved in the 1940s or earlier, the past thirty years have shown the largest amplification of publishing pressure for academic researchers (Garfield 10). In fact, the 1993 Ig Nobel Prize for “improbable research” in literature was awarded to “E. Topol, R. Califf, F. Van de Werf, P.W. Armstrong, and their 972 co-authors, for publishing a medical research paper, which has one hundred times as many authors as pages,” providing an extreme instance of bloat in publication lists for medical papers (Abrahams 202).

In general, team sizes of two to three members have become the most prominent in computer science (see fig. 3). Since current publishing standards are so vague, however, the lack of a method for discerning between contributing authors, assistants, and honorary authors makes it impossible to tell whether these small teams consist primarily of one main author and one to two assistants, one main author and his or her advisors, groups of equally contributing members, or some other combination of various members in the research process. Future research could determine the nature of these relationships through the use of survey data, although secondary contributors to research projects could overestimate their involvement, making the data difficult to interpret. Regardless, the proportion of papers with team sizes larger than two to three members has grown significantly as well, making a standard governing credit for publications by larger-sized teams necessary. Such a standard at least would have made the author list on the BlueGene/L paper much easier to navigate.

Interestingly, the proportion of co-authored computer science papers with author lists in alphabetical order by last name has decreased significantly within the past decade (see fig. 4). In particular, the ratio of alphabetized to non-alphabetized author lists began shrinking rapidly in 1996 from approximately 1:1 to 1:2 within the span of ten years. This pattern is not common to all research areas; in fact, alphabetization rates in “top tier” eco-

nomics journals increased between 1978 and 2000 (Joseph, Laband, and Patil 546). Thus any explanation for this type of trend must be discipline-specific and possibly even sub-discipline-specific. For instance, alphabetized author lists have become more common in agricultural economics but less common

within other subfields of economics (Laband and Tollison 1652). The most basic explanations for such a trend in computer science, however, can be ruled out. Neither the ACM nor the IEEE, the two organizations that govern most publications in computer science, released any sort of instructions concerning author lists for their publications in 1996 or any other nearby years. In addition, there is little evidence showing that any of the principal organizations actively pursuing computer science research at that time put out a similar standard.

On a larger scale, concern about the order in which authors appear on papers has existed in the sciences ever since co-authorship became the norm. Carl Djerassi, a Stanford chemistry professor known for synthesizing the first oral contraceptive, acknowledges this concern in his novel *Cantor's Dilemma*, which describes the efforts of a young female researcher attempting to establish a career in the sciences:

When I was a senior at Brown—and a very ambitious one, almost unpleasantly so—I paid very much attention to where my name would ultimately appear. Of course, I'd never published a paper; I hadn't even decided where to go to graduate school. To my father's shock, I announced one day that I would change my name from Jean Yardley to Jean Ardley. Just like that! [...] I went to the courthouse and did it legally. I told the judge, "It's best to be first, it's been true since prehistoric times" (51).

Statistical evidence suggests that alphabetical order had little effect on a scientist's career near the time the novel was written (Rudd 269). Still, Jean Ardley's attitude, whether or not it reflected Djerassi's personal experience, certainly reflects a widespread concern over academic credit in collaborative works. This concern has led most areas of research with established publish-

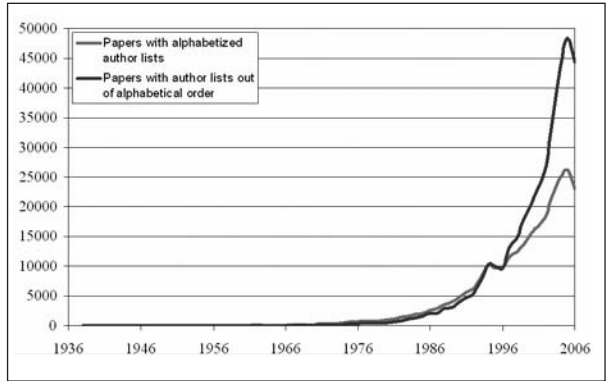


Fig. 4: Trends in author list alphabetization in computer science papers (data gathered from the DBLP Computer Science Bibliography)

ing standards or precedent, notably excluding mathematics, to encourage journals to list authors in order of contribution rather than by last name.

Several factors may have brought about the trend toward non-alphabetized author lists in computer science as opposed to other fields. Mark Mandelbaum, director of the Office of Publications for the Association for Computing Machinery, suggests that the trend may involve the sharp increase in computer science research conferences that occurred in the mid-1990s. In this case, the rise in alphabetization may be the result of a particular conference's policies or the nature of teams submitting to the conference. Conference presenters also could feel the need to list assistants who helped prepare presentations or demonstrations. Then, author lists would go out of alphabetical order if the original authors want to subordinate the amount of credit these assistants would receive. Note that most if not all ACM conferences and journals, however, "accept the order of the listed authors" as it was received on the original manuscript, implying that the trend toward non-alphabetized author lists would be the result of decisions made by individual teams of researchers rather than official policy changes (Mandelbaum). In general, most potential explanations involving the conferences or policies of the ACM and IEEE represent gradual policy changes or small-scale decisions. Although these explanations do not justify the suddenness of the trend away from alphabetization, it remains possible that outside circumstances affected publication trends in computer science.

Other potential explanations for the change in alphabetization rates involve larger assessments of academia as a whole. For instance, in 1995 the National Research Council (NRC) published *Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Continuity and Change*, which ranked graduate computer science (and other) programs using statistical methods. The statistics analyzed included the number of publications by researchers at the various institutions and the number of citations those publications received. The NRC also distributed data accompanying the study concerning the nature, frequency, and authors of the publications used to rate the various institutions (*Research Doctorate Programs*). Analysis of this dataset, however, reveals that the study did not consider all publications equal in the determination of scholarly quality. Specifically, while there is a clear positive correlation between scholarly quality scores for computer science and the number of primary-authored publications within particular computer science departments ($R^2 = 0.4776$)², there is little to no correlation between this score and the number of secondary-authored publications published by faculty in the department ($R^2 = 0.0489$) (see figs. 5 and 6). Although the specific ranking formula is unclear in the Research-Doctorate publication, according to

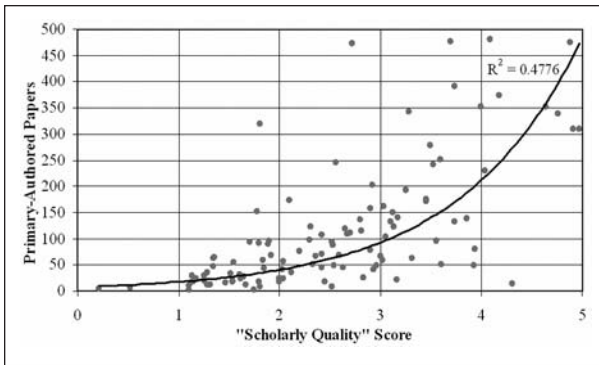


Fig. 5. NRC "Scholarly Quality" scores versus number of primary-authored papers (data gathered from Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Data Set)

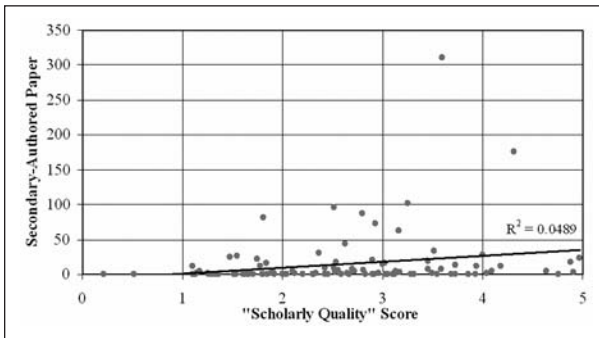


Fig. 6. NRC "Scholarly Quality" scores versus number of secondary-authored papers (data gathered from Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States: Data Set)

Charlotte Kuh, staff officer for the Assessment of Research Doctorate Programs and Deputy Executive Director of the Policy and Global Affairs Division of the National Academies, the 1995 study did indeed give some credit to the schools of the first two authors of each publication (Kuh); evidently, this credit was not sufficient to seriously affect most departments' respective scores.

Regardless of how the scholarly quality scores were computed, these patterns indicate that authorship in computer science was not sufficient to estimate the strength of a particular department. Even

if the NRC study did not consider primary versus secondary authorship statistics in producing their final rankings, the ordered list of departments clearly honored those schools whose professors were concerned about author order in their academic publications. The placement of the study in 1995, near the time when computer science research papers moved toward non-alphabetized author lists, may indicate one of several factors. For instance, it may be the case that the NRC study itself inspired professors at various research institutions to reevaluate their publishing policies and obtain more credit for their work. This possibility is unlikely as it would have to involve a conscientious effort on the part of several professors and their research associates. Still, since the NRC assessment is often considered "the gold standard for anyone...seeking a national, standardized way of measuring the quality of graduate programs in dozens of disciplines" (Lederman par. 2), it could be

the case that school admissions departments or faculty supervisors encouraged professors to pay more attention to their publication practices to raise their school's ranking. It is more likely, however, that the study indicates changing viewpoints on the necessity of author order to gain publication prestige. Whereas the sheer number of publications by a particular professor may have been sufficient to judge the quality of his or her work in earlier decades, by the time the 1995 study was completed, professors at top-ranking institutions were judging each other's work using factors like involvement and contribution rather than just volume.

Without a doubt, the publishing situation in computer science is ripe for change. As co-authorship becomes more common and team sizes grow, publishing houses and organizations of computer scientists no longer can take a *laissez-faire* attitude toward establishing policies for assigning academic credit, determining authorship, and ordering authors. As they stand now, publishing practices not only are inconsistent, they also are changing over time, as indicated by the increasing rates of co-authorship and decreasing rates of alphabetization. This mutability partially invalidates any study, such as that by the NRC, evaluating research productivity based on citation or prolificacy, since it becomes difficult to normalize for changing publication conditions. For instance, any statistics involving author order or honoring only primary authorship are invalidated if the percent of papers with alphabetized author lists changes over time. For a similar reason, current publishing practices make it difficult to discern particular researchers' contributions to a project, because author order has little consistent meaning, and most papers employ no other means of separating the involvement of each author.

CURRENT POSSIBILITIES FOR PUBLISHING

The design of a successful policy for assigning credit in academic computer science work requires the consideration of several somewhat disjointed factors. From an academic perspective, the policy must allow for the acknowledgment of all parties who were involved significantly in a research project to indicate who should be contacted about possible extensions or questions. From a business or patent law perspective, the policy must preserve patentability for the main authors or principal researchers. From an ethical perspective, the policy must honor those researchers whose effort brought about the main developments in the project, rather than those who contributed only monetary means or who gain authorship positions based on past reputations in their respective fields. The consideration of these broad

criteria will lead to an acceptable and realizable standard for academic credit in computer science.

Several of the most important concerns in designing a standard for assigning academic credit in computer science are related directly to similar considerations in other fields. Most prominently, standards for assigning academic credit must devise a system by which the amount of work contributed by each team member can be judged. On the one hand, many co-authorship situations actually amount to more one-sided relationships, in which a researcher includes his or her superiors or assistants as co-authors on academic publications, thus equalizing their contributions in the eyes of many organizations. In this case, some publications attempt to separate the contributions of the various authors by making a note clarifying the specific contributions of each author; this way, those authors whose names appear simply for providing a nurturing environment can be separated from those who made more substantial contributions to the research (see fig. 7).

On the other hand, some co-author groups represent truly symbiotic relationships. In their book (*First Person*)²: *A Study of Co-Authoring in the Academy*, Kami Day and Michele Eodice describe their personal experiences in completing a research project exploring collaboration and co-authorship as fully collaborative partners themselves:

We co-wrote the literature review, a chapter on collaborative dissertations, and part of the design and methodology for both studies; and we became co-researchers in each other's projects—Kami team-taught with Michele during the classroom study, and Michele took part in the interviews for Kami's study. Because we live together, proximity allowed us to participate jointly in all aspects of analyzing our data. We transcribed side by side, listening from time to time to each other's tapes to provide a second interpretation of what we were hearing and to check for accuracy; after one of us had coded a section of transcript, the other often coded it again to test and expand our understanding. And we talked—as we worked, as we cooked, as we ate, as we drove, as we walked (5).

Clearly, Day and Eodice deserved equal standing in any publication resulting from their work. Unfortunately, most published papers imply some sort of

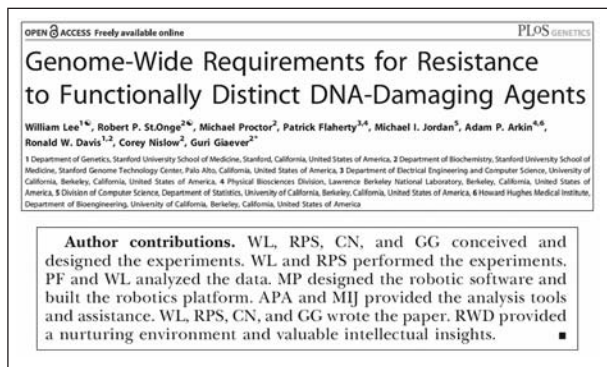


Fig. 7. The title and author contributions section of a genetics paper (Lee et al. 235, 244)

hierarchy between the various authors. For instance, even if Day and Eodice had published several short papers, each representing the “least publishable unit” of research and alternated between primary authorship (Macrina 62), the final list of authors on each paper could be interpreted as indicating each author’s individual contributions to the overall study.

Despite their insistence on balanced collaboration throughout the research process, even Day and Eodice fail to suggest any completely acceptable publishing practices for indicating such a close co-authorship relationship, although they do present some more creative possibilities. For instance, they point to one co-authored thesis in which the two authors wrote their names in a circle to avoid giving one or the other preferential treatment in the author list (see fig. 8). Even this solution, however, fails to give equal credit to both authors. First, reading the “circular author identifier” from left to right still gives Valek higher standing than Knott. Also, many publishing firms may find it unprofessional, difficult to read, or space consuming to write the author list in such a style. From the standpoint of future research, other papers looking to cite this one, as well as databases listing paper titles and authors, will have to give one author preference over the other in storing records or creating bibliographies. Thus the problem of assigning equal credit can be just as difficult if not more difficult than the problem of differentiating between authors.

The question of how authors are listed is doubly important when we consider that the list of authors not only assigns credit but also responsibility. Anybody whose name appears on the author list for a publication or presentation must agree to take responsibility for the work presented therein. For instance, guides for academic authors suggest that several academic presses require authors of papers or books to sign contracts making authors “responsible for reviewing the editing, getting permissions, indexing, and so forth” (Luey 90). In signing such a contract, the co-authors obligate themselves to complete a certain amount of work surrounding the publication itself as opposed to the academic work that went into its conception. More importantly, submissions for publications indicate, formally or informally, to publishers and editors that each of the co-authors agree to the statement, “This is my work and to the best of my knowledge it is correct” (LaFollette 92). When this basic statement breaks down, it becomes nearly impossible to judge who should be held responsible for publishing fraud or mistakes. The peers of Dr. John Darsee, who was caught in 1981 fabricating medical data

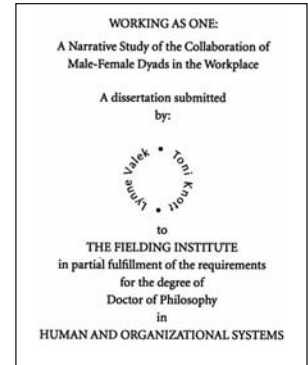


Fig. 8. A creative solution to the credit problem (Day and Eodice 32)

for a Harvard heart study, form one example of this effect. When Darsee's questionable practices came to light, his former colleagues at Emory claimed to have "no responsibility at all for what happened" despite the fact that their names appeared as co-authors on some of Darsee's publications (Broad). As Marcel C. LaFollette states in his book *Stealing into Print: Fraud, Plagiarism, and Misconduct in Scientific Publishing*, "When suspicions of wrongdoing are raised,...coauthors tend to disappear" (102). This disappearing act clearly indicates unhealthy co-author relationships in which the parties did not take equal responsibility for the published work.

Darsee's co-authors also indicate a different type of publication fraud to be avoided in designing a credit policy for any type of work: the inclusion of authors who contributed little to no work toward the published results, as well as the exclusion of authors who completed significant research. Rennie and Flanagan suggest in an American Medical Association paper that there are three general types of questionable authorship caused by publication pressure in academia. These classes are personified by three figures: the guest, whose name appears for honorary rather than intellectual reasons on a list of authors; the ghost, who writes papers that are attributed to more well-known scientists; and the grafter, who appears at the end of a list of authors for making negligible contributions to a project. Rennie and Flanagan acknowledge that research institutions "rely on publications as the coins academics must use to get through the tollgates on their way to academic promotion," providing a believable motivation for the appearance of these characters (469). Although the authors' explanation of the causes of intellectual parasitism is plausible, additional statistics or analysis of promotion policies at research institutions is needed to prove a relationship between publication and success in academia. Fortunately, other researchers have presented surveys of scientists in various fields to examine this relationship. Birnholtz presents a comprehensive study of interviews of researchers in the High Energy Physics (HEP) community; in doing so, he found an interviewee who had "several publications written in Russian, a language he cannot speak or read," and others whose names were on lists of authors that were several hundred lines long (Birnholtz 1761, 1764). This situation may be parallel to the situation in computer science, although HEP projects involve work by large scale teams, while computer science projects usually involve smaller groups of researchers.

While most types of publication fraud remain unpunished unless explicitly revealed, the parasitic publishing relationships suggested by Rennie and Flanagan actually can backfire for the wrongfully listed authors. Rennie and Flanagan mention that in some cases "researchers did not desire authorship so

much when it meant being publicly acknowledged as ‘et al.’ (Rennie and Flanagan 470). In this case, grafters can put their integrity into question, since their peers may recognize a pattern of academic parasitism rather than original work if their name is consistently last on author lists. For instance, in a letter to the MIT community defending the rejection of tenure for a biological engineering professor, reviewers suggested that, “Only three of the six publications list [the professor] as the first or corresponding author..., the status most highly valued for promotion decisions” (Belcher et al. 2). Here, the review board acknowledges that the publish or perish model is insufficient for evaluating professors since they may have committed authorship abuse. Instead, the board relied not only on publication numbers but also on position on author lists for a more accurate portrayal of a researcher’s involvement in a particular project. A more explicit publishing standard would allow for such review boards to have a better idea of a professor’s contribution to projects, thus avoiding the debate over what constitutes significant involvement.

Other factors in designing the academic credit standard must be specific to computer science itself. As mentioned above, patentability and other legal concerns may affect the optimal distribution of credit. While many members of a research project should receive credit for their work, this credit should not preclude the principal researchers’ rights to obtain a patent on any novel, marketable products that come about as a result of the research. Whereas researchers in the natural sciences may need to find a way to fairly credit research assistants, computer science researchers must concern themselves with crediting programmers or interns involved only in implementing aspects of a research project rather than inventing new components. From the publisher’s standpoint, the fast pace of computer science research does not allow for extensive background checking on the part of the publisher. For example, in describing the review process for the major SIGGRAPH computer graphics conference, Jim Kajiya states, “In 10 weeks, SIGGRAPH can do what other major publications take 10 months to do. In a fast moving field like computer graphics, this is crucial” (par. 4). Thus by the time a paper reaches the main part of the review process, its list and ordering of authors should be somehow verified for reliability.

PARALLEL PRACTICES

An exhaustive analysis of parallel publishing practices in other sciences and academic fields deserves a completely separate study. A sample of publishing policies from a wide variety of organizations is given in Table 1 at the end of

this article. The principal missions and publishing policies of these organizations contrast with each other because they reflect different interests in the publishing process. For instance, the American Psychological Association (APA) presents a comprehensive set of guidelines governing the ethics and mechanics of publishing psychology papers. Since the APA is an organization principally composed of scientists and practitioners in psychology, the APA guidelines represent a practical and professional interest in making publication procedures specific and easy to follow. Contrastingly, the “Guidelines on Good Publication Practice” released by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) represents the broader views of a group bound by ideological rather than professional common ground. Even though COPE’s members primarily are from the medical field, their attempts to make the guidelines applicable to a wide variety of fields have led to a broader, philosophical approach to publishing guidelines. Although the COPE guidelines are much more general than the specific details presented in the APA manual, they are able to cover the basics of research, from data analysis and authorship to media relations, in five pages. The remaining standards compared in Table 1 represent interests involved in the publishing process itself, rather than the research or authorship of academic papers. Elsevier represents the viewpoint of a publishing house, whose business is solely in the publication of academic journals and the management of authors and editors. Elsevier’s minimal “Ethical Guidelines for Journal Publication” protect Elsevier’s legal interests in publishing and maintain only basic ethical behavior on the part of its authors. Finally, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) standards represent the point of view of scientific journal editors. Since the editors serve as bridges between researchers or authors and publishing houses, the ICMJE standards are simple and clear, establishing a protocol by which authors can communicate their concerns about credit with publishers. This broad set of standards includes the points of view of authors, special interest groups, publishing houses, and editors.

As would be expected, for the most part these policy statements are very similar. After all, few ethical or professional groups would be willing to endorse openly policies of academic fraud or misplaced credit. At the same time, subtle differences between the various standards mark possible policy choices for a publication standard in computer science. For instance, COPE’s guidelines include a “dealing with misconduct” section that outlines broad punishments for plagiarism and other types of publication fraud, while most other organizations leave the formulation of suitable punishments up to journal editors. Another concern would be the specificity of the publication standard. The APA guidelines span 439 pages, covering specific typographic

issues and authorship situations; the Elsevier guidelines provide a bare bones outline that is sufficient to avoid legal action against the publishing company. Although the computer science guidelines would need to err on the side of specificity to ensure consistency between publications, they also should be short enough that a researcher looking to adopt the policy could read them in a reasonable amount of time. Related to this issue is that of the formality of the guidelines designed for computer science. The guidelines, as in the COPE standard, can be informal about the particular definition of terms such as “authorship,” allowing for a more flexible but less controlled interpretation, or very formal, as in the ICMJE standard, to avoid any ambiguity.

THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING IN COMPUTER SCIENCE

The establishment of any academic credit policy in computer science will require the agreement of the major computer science research organizations, academic institutions, and individual researchers. Given the above analysis of various research organizations’ publishing policies, the current publishing situation in computer science, and successful practices in other fields, however, the following basic set of principles is proposed for any new policy:

- I. Authorship credit should be distributed only to those researchers directly involved with the paper or project in question. Researchers with indirect or minimal involvement may be mentioned in an additional acknowledgments section if necessary. All contributors should appear on a paper; “ghost writing” is an invalid way even for a busy researcher to produce publications.
- II. All authors should be paired with short descriptions of their contributions to the project. These descriptions need not be on the title page but should be apparent to anybody seeking further information about the research presented. This principle extends to the acknowledgments list. In general, any individuals or organizations mentioned by the paper should be identified to avoid honorary authorship and make explicit the division of work leading to the final results.
- III. The list of authors should be divided by level of contribution. Within each division, authors should be ordered by the amount they contributed to the particular paper in question. Truly equal co-authorship relationships should be marked as such, with none of the authors identified as a corresponding author. The lack of a single corresponding author can be addressed by creating a simple email alias that contacts all of the principal authors simultaneously. Those researchers who would be considered inventors should be marked as such for the purposes of verifying future patent applications.
- IV. Upon publication, authors should be required to sign that the work in the paper is at least partially their own and that no other authors should be given credit.

- V. Any and all decisions involving authorship should involve the mutual consent of all authors, which should be established via individual contact.
- VI. Any discovered cases of authorship fraud should be dealt with in much the same way as data fabrication. Once they are caught, authors should be required explain their incorrect practices in a published statement and rectify any disadvantages suffered by parties not receiving appropriate credit.

Of course, a final, more official standard would have to be more careful in defining particular terms, explaining procedures for verifying authorship, and outlining punishments for non-compliance. The definition of standards for measuring various authors' contributions to a research project would be particularly important; the requirement that all authors agree on the final listing, however, will help make this decision consistent. Additionally, procedures would need to be put into place for mediating authorship disputes without discouraging junior authors from confronting their superiors. Even so, the implementation of these six basic principles would lead to a much more consistent and interpretable publishing landscape for computer science. The principles take every precaution to avoid situations in which authors receive insufficient or excessive credit relative to their work on the project presented in a published paper. By requiring that all authors agree on the order and division of their names and that the contributions of each author be outlined specifically, fraudulent authors will be discouraged from wrongfully adding their names to papers. The more comprehensive system in which authors describe their contributions also would allow editors to act as final gatekeepers, calling into question author lists if they are presented in an unreasonable fashion.

As computer science continues to develop rapidly from a small subfield of engineering into a complete science unto itself, the need for a consistent and usable publishing standard governing the assignment of academic credit to all members of a research project will become more and more urgent. As it stands now, computer science publication represents a collection of informal, changing standards that make it difficult to judge specific individuals' contributions or find the responsible team member for academic fraud. This confusing situation makes it nearly impossible to honor individuals' respective contributions to a research project, allowing senior researchers to overshadow less experienced authors and making processes such as applying for patents needlessly convoluted. The implementation of a consistent and clear policy for academic credit will help computer science become a more unified discipline, preparing it to enter the ranks of the traditional sciences as a rigorous and respectable field with a sustainable and fair publishing practice. ◆

NOTES

¹Analyses of the DBLP and NRC *Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States* data were carried out by the author. Programs in C++ were devised for parsing and analyzing the data; for example, the NRC data analysis program is shown in the Appendix. Figures 2–6 were produced using the output of these programs, exported to a spreadsheet application. Occasionally it was not possible to parse the data correctly (due to incorrect formatting or other inconsistencies); these situations were documented (see the Appendix for an example). Instances of this problem were relatively small and should not affect the trends observed in this study.

²The R2 value is the coefficient of determination for a statistical fit line. R2 values close to 1 represent ideal fit lines, while $R^2 \approx 0$ implies little to no correlation between a fit curve and the data. To produce these values, optimal least-squared fit curves were chosen from standard models (exponential, logarithmic, linear) for statistical variation. The curves are imposed on figs. 5 and 6 for inspection. Here we see that primary authorship and computer science scholarly quality are related by a fit line with sufficiently high R2 value to indicate some type of correlation, while the relationship between secondary authorship and scholarly quality is insubstantial.

Table 1. *Publication policies in other fields*

	American Psychological Association	Committee on Publication Ethics	Elsevier	International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
Definition of “author”	“Authorship is reserved for persons who receive primary credit and hold primary responsibility for a published work. Authorship encompasses, therefore, not only those who do the actual writing but also those who have made substantial scientific contributions to a study.” (350)	“There is no universally agreed definition of authorship, although attempts have been made. As a minimum, authors should take responsibility for a particular section of the study.” (sec. 3)	“Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors.”	“Authorship credit should be based on (1) substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; (2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and (3) final approval of the version to be published. Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3.” (II.A.1)

Continues next page

Table 1. Publication policies in other fields—continued

	American Psychological Association	Committee on Publication Ethics	Elsevier	International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
People without publication rights	<p>“Principal authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as Department Chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are appropriately acknowledged, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement.” (395–396)</p>	<p>“If there is no task that can reasonably be attributed to a particular individual, then that individual should not be credited with authorship.” (3.1)</p>	<p>“The corresponding author should ensure that all appropriate co-authors and no inappropriate co-authors are included on the paper, and that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed to its submission for publication.”</p>	<p>“Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, alone, does not justify authorship.” (II.A.1)</p>
Responsibility of authors	<p>“Psychologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have contributed.” (395)</p>	<p>“All authors must take public responsibility for the content of their paper. The multidisciplinary nature of much research can make this difficult, but this can be resolved by the disclosure of individual contributions.” (3.4)</p>	<p>“Authors of reports of original research should present an accurate account of the work performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance. Underlying data should be represented accurately in the paper. A paper should contain sufficient detail and references to permit others to replicate the work. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behavior and are unacceptable.”</p>	<p>“Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.” (II.A.1)</p>

Continues next page

Table 1. *Publication policies in other fields—continued*

	American Psychological Association	Committee on Publication Ethics	Elsevier	International Committee of Medical Journal Editors
Author order	<p>“Authors are responsible for determining authorship and for specifying the order in which two or more authors’ names appear in the byline. The general rule is that the name of the principal contributor should appear first, with subsequent names in order of decreasing contribution. If authors played equal roles in the research and publication of their study, they may wish to note this in the second paragraph of the author note.” (351)</p>	N/A	N/A	<p>“The order of authorship on the byline should be a joint decision of the co authors. Authors should be prepared to explain the order in which authors are listed.” (II.A.1)</p>
Acknowledgments	<p>“Lesser contributions, which do not constitute authorship, may be acknowledged in a note. These contributions may include such supportive functions as designing or building the apparatus, suggesting or advising about the statistical analysis, collecting or entering data, modifying or structuring a computer program, and recruiting participants or obtaining animals. Conducting routine observations or diagnoses for use in studies does not constitute authorship. Combinations of these (and other) tasks, however, may justify authorship.” (350)</p>	<p>“To avoid disputes over attribution of academic credit, it is helpful to decide early on in the planning of a research project who will be credited as authors, as contributors, and who will be acknowledged.” (3.2)</p>	<p>“Where there are others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project, they should be acknowledged or listed as contributors.”</p>	<p>“All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgments section.” (II.A.2)</p>

APPENDIX: C++ CODE USED TO PARSE NRC STUDY DATA

The following short program was used to parse the data accompanying the National Research Council's study, Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States. It is included to make transparent the methods used for data analysis and to enable easier analysis of the NRC data in future studies.

```
#include <iostream>
#include <fstream>
#include <vector>
#include <string>
#include <conio.h>
#include <set>
using namespace std;

int main() {
    // Citation data
    ifstream infile("PUB_CIT.dat",ios::binary|ios::in);
    // List of faculty
    ifstream faclist("FACLIST.dat",ios::binary|ios::in);
    // Output file
    ofstream outfile("pub_cit_analysis2.txt");

    set<string> validnames; // set of names of CS researchers
    string curline;
    int b = 0, cs=0; // b = number of invalid lines; cs = number of CS professors
    while (getline(faclist,curline), !faclist.fail()) {
        // according to NRC standard, all lines in FACLIST.dat should have 63 characters
        if (curline.length() < 63) {
            b++; // invalid line
            continue;
        }

        string facname = curline.substr(0,5); // Name of faculty; NRC 5-character code
        string progcode = curline.substr(60,2); // Program/department code

        if (progcode == "26") { // code 26 = computer science
            validnames.insert(facname);
            cs++;
        }
    }
    cout << b << " bad lines.\n";
    cout << cs << " CS profs.\n";

    // all schools indexed by 3-digit code, so vectors have 1000 elements to cover all codes
    vector<int> primary_authorship(1000); // number of primary-authored papers per school
    vector<int> secondary_authorship(1000); // number of secondary-authored papers per school
    vector<int> single(1000); // number of singly-authored papers per school
    vector<int> multiple(1000); // number of multiple-authored papers per school
    vector<int> total(1000); // total number of papers per school
    string empty="";
```

```

int numlines = 0; // number of lines parsed
int numbad = 0; // number of bad lines
while (getline(infile,curline), !infile.fail()) { // for each publication
    numlines++; // update status
    if (!(numlines%100000)) cout << numlines << endl;
    if (curline.length() < 98) { // invalid line
        numbad++;
        continue;
    }

    if (!invalidnames.count(curline.substr(0,5))) // not a CS publication
        continue;

    char t = curline[14];
    if (t == 'A' || t == 'O' || t == 'S' || t == 'Y')
        continue; // only accept proceedings, journals

    string code;
    code = empty+curline[95]+curline[96]+curline[97];
    int c = (code[0]-'0')*100 + (code[1]-'0')*10 + code[2]-'0';
    if (c >= 1000) { // invalid school code
        cout << "BAD CODE: " << code << endl;
        getch();
        exit(0);
    }

    int numAuthors = curline[11]-'0'; // number of authors (between 0 and 9)
    if (numAuthors == 1) single[c]++;
    else if (numAuthors > 1) multiple[c]++;

    if (curline[9] == 'P') primary_authorship[c]++; // 'P' indicates primary authorship
    else if (curline[9] == 'S') secondary_authorship[c]++;

    total[c]++;
}

for (int i = 0; i < 1000; i++)
    if (total[i]) { // if school published in CS, output data
        outfile << i << ' ';
        outfile << total[i] << ' ';
        outfile << single[i] << ' ' << multiple[i] << ' ';
        outfile << primary_authorship[i] << ' ' << secondary_authorship[i] << ' ';
        outfile << (double)primary_authorship[i] / (primary_authorship[i] +
            secondary_authorship[i]);
        outfile << endl;
    }

```

```

cout << "Data processing is done.\n";
cout << numlines << " lines processed.\n";
cout << numbadd << " bad lines.\n";
getch();
}

```

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SPRING 2007 HONORABLE MENTION

Keith Schwarz

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

KEITH'S ARGUMENT ABOUT EMINENT DOMAIN—the right of the government to take private property for public use—is built on a flash of wonderful insight. But that flash didn't come out of nowhere. While Keith was drawn to the debate over the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Kelo v. City of New London* because he saw eminent domain as representing a "radical departure from the other values expressed in the Constitution," he didn't approach the issue with a clear sense of how it might be resolved, what his own stance might be. His compelling insight that antitrust law might provide a basis for remedying what he calls "Kelo's excess" was the product of his thorough and thoughtful reading of both that case and its significant precedents. But having the insight, he understood, wasn't enough. He needed to persuade his reader that the owner of a home sitting in the middle of a planned urban renewal project could be seen as a monopolist. If he couldn't get his reader to accept that comparison, his argument would fall flat, so he came up with an extended analogy as a way of creating the conceptual links necessary for the reader to see his point of view. For me, this extended, artful argument is what makes this essay stand out. Keith might have argued on purely pragmatic grounds, a case he does ultimately make. But legal arguments, especially arguments around constitutional issues, must be grounded in constitutional principles and backed by precedent. By using his extended analogy to gain his reader's assent to the connection he makes between antitrust law and eminent domain, Keith crafts a highly persuasive argument that reflects the spirit and principles of legal scholarship.

—SHAY BRAWN

Eminent Domain and Antitrust: A Proposal to Remedy *Kelo's* Excess

Keith Schwarz

On June 23, 2005, the United States Supreme Court voted 5-4 to take Wilhelmina Dery's house away. She had lived in her home since her birth in 1918 (*Kelo* 6). In order to restart the local economy, the City of New London deemed it necessary to acquire Dery's home to build a marina, a pharmaceutical research facility, and several retail stores near her property. Her home was not blighted, nor did she live in a slum or crime-ridden area. Rather, she was inconveniently located in the mysteriously labeled "Parcel 4," a plot of land slated for renovation (*Kelo* 5).

Dery and eight others were the first to feel the impacts of the landmark eminent domain case *Kelo v. City of New London*. The New London city government condemned their properties in order to construct, among other things, a three-hundred-million-dollar Pfizer research facility (*Kelo* 4). But the *Kelo* decision had much wider ramifications than simply the loss of Dery's home. Writing in a dissenting opinion, Justice O'Connor noted that the *Kelo* case sets a dangerous precedent—property can be condemned via eminent domain and transferred to new owners provided these new owners create public benefit:

Under the banner of economic development, all private property is now vulnerable to being taken and transferred to another private owner, so long as it might be upgraded—i.e., given to an owner who will use it in a way that the legislature deems more beneficial to the public—in the process (*Kelo* 27).

Compounding this danger, she noted, is the fact that virtually any use of property can be construed to provide public benefit (*Kelo* 34), perhaps through increased tax revenue or the creation of local jobs.

The *Kelo* decision further endangers private property by limiting judicial authority to check legislative power in eminent domain cases. The Fifth Amendment's "Public Use Clause" prevents governments from exercising

eminent domain unless the acquired property is put to “public use” (Fifth Amendment). Courts, therefore, can declare a taking unconstitutional only if the condemnation does not promote public benefit.¹ However, *Kelo* reaffirmed and expanded the 1954 case *Berman v. Parker*, which ruled that in eminent domain suits, courts must defer to local legislatures to determine what constitutes public use (*Kelo* 2). That is, courts cannot contest a taking that a legislature believes is “related to a conceivable public purpose” (*Kelo* 23). This combination allows legislatures to act as both judge and executioner, defining public use as they see fit and exercising eminent domain accordingly. As Justice O’Connor noted, *Kelo* “effectively [deletes] the words ‘for public use’” from the Constitution (*Kelo* 28) and allows legislatures almost full discretion in eminent domain. Justice Thomas agreed that something “has gone seriously awry with” the Court’s “interpretation of the Constitution” (*Kelo* 53).

Understandably, the *Kelo* decision was met with widespread disapproval. The House of Representatives overwhelmingly voted to limit funding to states using eminent domain for economic development (H.R. 4128). Thirteen states immediately proposed laws significantly restricting the power of eminent domain, and ultimately forty state legislatures debated similar statutes (Weinstein 26). An angered Californian even traveled to Weare, New Hampshire, home of Justice David Souter, to propose that the Souter family home be condemned and the “Lost Liberty Hotel” be constructed on the spot (Weinstein 25).

However, had the Court chosen the extreme opposite view—stringently restricting eminent domain power—the result would have been equally unpopular. In many cases unorthodox land transfers may be in the public interest. For example, in the 1984 case *Hawaii Housing Authority v. Midkiff*, the Court permitted the State of Hawaii to break apart a land oligopoly via eminent domain. Because of historical landowning patterns, more than 90%² of privately owned land in Hawaii was controlled by only seventy-two individuals (Hawaii 232). As a result, “a sufficiently large number of persons” declared that they were “willing but unable to buy lots at fair prices” (*Hawaii* 242) and the state recognized the need to redistribute land titles. In order to minimize federal tax costs to the seventy-two land owners, the state decided to use eminent domain to acquire and redistribute their property (*Hawaii* 233). Although the transfer directly moved land from one set of owners to another, seemingly straining the definition of “public use,” the state rapidly and dramatically corrected the “malfunctioning” land market (*Hawaii* 242). Had the Court ruled in *Kelo* to greatly restrict eminent domain power, governmental authority to remedy problems such as those in the *Midkiff* case

would have been seriously jeopardized.

With *Kelo* the Supreme Court missed a valuable opportunity to develop a middle ground view of judicial authority in eminent domain. The national uproar against the *Kelo* decision suggests that Americans are not ready to accept judicial lenience in eminent domain, and established jurisprudence dictates that strict limitations on eminent domain may do more harm than good. To combat *Kelo*'s excesses without overly limiting eminent domain power, we need to develop a flexible, robust metric by which courts can determine the legality of government takings. To provide such a metric, I propose that we turn to antitrust law.

At first glance, antitrust law and eminent domain have little in common. After all, the government uses antitrust power to prevent monopolists from running competition into the ground, while legislatures acquire property via eminent domain to promote public welfare. But despite these apparent differences, the powers of eminent domain and antitrust are rather similar. In both cases the government manipulates private property—whether a homeowner's dwelling or a shareholder's corporation—to promote general welfare. And many landmark eminent domain cases, such as *Midkiff*, blur the boundary between eminent domain and antitrust.

However, the greatest similarity between antitrust and eminent domain is their shared basis in case law. Although antitrust and eminent domain powers allow the government to directly control private property, the explicit restrictions on these powers are minimal. The Fifth Amendment's limitations on eminent domain state, in their entirety, that "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation" (Fifth Amendment). Similarly, the Sherman Antitrust Act consists of seven sections, each no more than a paragraph long, of which only the first three enumerate illegal activities (Sherman Act). Consequently, most limitations on the two powers have been decided by the courts. But while the Justice Department's antitrust authority is limited by the "rule of reason," to which I will return below, post-*Kelo* courts lack a viable mechanism for determining the legality of proposed takings. It may behoove us to consider eminent domain as an economic tool akin to antitrust power. From there, we may apply the jurisprudence of antitrust to eminent domain, creating the legal guidelines so needed after the *Kelo* decision.

How does eminent domain function as an economic tool? To answer this question, let us first consider the workings of antitrust power. According to John Shenefield, former attorney general of the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department, and Irwin Stelzer of Harvard University, the overarching purpose of the antitrust acts is to preserve competition (1). Market

economies tend to maximize quality and savings with a minimum of regulation, but when “competition extinguishes itself” the government must step in to redistribute market power (7). Essentially, antitrust law ensures businesses minimal barriers to market entry by eliminating anticompetitive practices. Eminent domain for economic development acts similarly to promote competition by controlling blight. “Blight,” as described by G. E. Breger, economist at the University of Southern California, is that which “all [people] find manifestly offensive in the city” (371). Blighted slums spawn diseases, pose fire hazards, and foster crime. Because they are highly undesirable locations, blighted areas frequently lack vigorous economies. Moreover, blighted plots of land are commonly haphazardly shaped and often impossible to develop. Since the 1954 *Berman v. Parker* case, local governments have aggressively acquired these blighted areas (*Kelo* 57), redeveloped them, and turned them over to private industry. Thus, while antitrust aims to restart businesses that are willing but unable to build, eminent domain aims to restart businesses that are both unwilling and unable to build.

However, one might argue that eminent domain and antitrust are inherently different because monopolists actively scheme to control markets while eminent domain holdouts simply protect their properties. I disagree and instead contend that both the monopolist and the eminent domain holdout actively harm the general public. To illustrate why, consider an analogy of two gatekeepers. Imagine, if you will, a market surrounded by enormous stone walls with but a single gate. This gate is staffed by a guard, Good Gatekeeper, who faithfully protects the market. She charges a fee to enter, but uses this fee to maintain the condition of the walls that protect the market from outside invaders. Were Good Gatekeeper to reduce her fees, a few more people might be able enter the market, but the subsequent deterioration of the market walls would expose it to wandering villains and bandits. Far from the market protected by Good Gatekeeper lies another market under the iron fist of Bad Gatekeeper. As with Good Gatekeeper, Bad Gatekeeper controls the only gate to his market, and will permit people to enter only if they pay a substantial fee. Unlike Good Gatekeeper, though, Bad Gatekeeper pockets this fee and gives no thought to maintaining the city walls; consequently, the enclosure is home to outlaws and thieves. Many people are outright unable to enter the market because Bad Gatekeeper’s fees are extraordinarily high, and visitors rarely return since the market is no longer desirable. Let us now say that both Good Gatekeeper and Bad Gatekeeper protect markets in the realm of The Monarch. The Monarch has absolute authority over the subjects of the realm but is a compassionate sovereign who acts in the interests of the people. Once The Monarch receives word of Bad Gatekeeper’s actions, The

Monarch will issue a royal decree forever banishing Bad Gatekeeper and instating a newly trained Good Gatekeeper in his place.

Most people would agree that Bad Gatekeeper is in the wrong and ought to be driven from the realm. But what are the salient features of his actions that would lead us to conclude this? First, unlike Good Gatekeeper, Bad Gatekeeper charges a fee unrelated to the market he guards. Both Good and Bad Gatekeeper are obligated to defend their markets, but Bad Gatekeeper shirks this responsibility and charges the fee solely for his own enrichment. Second, Bad Gatekeeper bars the only practical access to the market. Bad Gatekeeper's market is far from Good Gatekeeper's, and even though people are disgusted by Bad Gatekeeper's greed they cannot instead travel to Good Gatekeeper's market. While it is possible that if people were truly willing to enter Bad Gatekeeper's market they could just scale the stone walls, it is unreasonable to assume that such an action is a viable alternative to paying the fee. Third and finally, Bad Gatekeeper adversely affects the market because he refuses to pay upkeep on the city walls. As evident from Good Gatekeeper's actions, there is nothing inherently wrong with charging a fee, but Bad Gatekeeper misappropriates the money and consequently damages the walled market. While there may be other important aspects of this scenario, I will primarily consider these three points because they are of most consequence to our discussion of eminent domain and antitrust.

We can easily see that a monopolist is a Bad Gatekeeper because the monopolist parallels these three Bad Gatekeeper criteria. First, the monopolist's price is independent of the quality of his service because he charges high prices solely for profit, rather than to improve his product. Second, the monopolist compels buyers to begrudgingly pay high prices because buyers may have no substitute for the monopolized goods. For example, if the silicon microprocessor industry were monopolized, computer manufacturers would have little choice but to buy expensive chips. Finally, the monopolist damages the market, since without competition he has little incentive to manufacture high-quality goods. The horrors found in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, such as "potted ham" made from "waste ends of smoked beef [...] tripe, [...] [and] the hard cartilaginous gullets of beef," testify to the abysmal quality of certain monopolized products (Sinclair). Monopolists thus satisfy the three aforementioned criteria and are Bad Gatekeepers. Just as The Monarch banished Bad Gatekeeper from the realm, through antitrust law the federal government prosecutes monopolists and breaks apart monopolies.

Let us now consider eminent domain in the context of Good and Bad Gatekeeper. Suppose a city government decides to comprehensively redevelop its slums. Initially, the city approaches property owners in this blighted

zone and asks to purchase their properties. While many owners voluntarily sell, one owner, Owner, will sell his property only at a high price the city refuses to pay. Let us further suppose that the city plans to construct a condominium complex on Owner's land. Because Owner refuses to sell his property, the city cannot construct the condominiums and consequently the entire development plan will suffer. Is Owner a Bad Gatekeeper?

Recall that Owner is a Bad Gatekeeper if he meets all three of the Bad Gatekeeper criteria. Does Owner satisfy the criterion of charging needlessly high prices? Clearly Owner charges a high price, but is it irrelevant, as was Bad Gatekeeper's fee? To answer this question we first need to determine what the market in the Gatekeeper analogy corresponds to in Owner's world. When the city approaches Owner to purchase his land, it wants to acquire his property not for the property in itself, but as a means to successfully implement the redevelopment plan. In this sense, the walled market in the Gatekeeper analogy corresponds not to Owner's property but to the ability to redevelop the city. But Owner bases his price on his perceived property value, not in anticipation of the city's development plan. More importantly, though, no matter what price the city agrees upon for Owner's property, the redevelopment plan will proceed in the same fashion. After all, whether Owner charges ten-thousand or ten-million dollars for his property, the city plans to build exactly the same condominium complex on the land. Thus Owner's price is akin to Bad Gatekeeper's fee since it is independent of the success of the development plan.

Does Owner also meet the criterion of lack of alternatives? As mentioned earlier, Owner's property sits in a blighted area. According to Breger, blight often results from obsolescence of existing infrastructure or a disparity between the services provided by an area and the services demanded in the surrounding area (375). Consequently, the only feasible means for correcting blight is often a sweeping overhaul of the entire area (Public Use 1423). When Owner refuses to sell his property, he halts the overhaul process because his property is incompatible with the city planners' new design. It may be impossible for the city to continue the redevelopment effort by building around Owner's property because often lots are of "unsatisfactory shapes or sizes" (Public Use 1423). The city must therefore either acquiesce to Owner's high price or abandon its redevelopment project, thus facing a gate similar to Bad Gatekeeper's.

Does Owner satisfy the final criterion, decay of the market? As mentioned above, the market corresponds to the city's ability to redevelop the blighted area. As Bad Gatekeeper's refusal to maintain the market walls led to their decay, Owner's refusal to sell in accordance with the city's development

plan leads to the plan's failure. Thus all the criteria are met, and by refusing to sell his property Owner becomes a Bad Gatekeeper. As The Monarch drove Bad Gatekeeper from his gate, the city is empowered to compel Owner to sell at a reasonable price via eminent domain.

There is one crucial aspect of Bad Gatekeeper I have ignored so far—that Bad Gatekeeper actively harms the walled market; that is, Bad Gatekeeper's effects on the market result from conscious action rather than incidental effect. Clearly Owner, the Bad Gatekeeper, actively interferes in the economy through anticompetitive business strategies. Less obviously but more importantly, Owner, the Bad Gatekeeper, also actively injures the surrounding area. His refusal to sell directly impedes his community's development and as a result maintains the status quo of economic paralysis and blight. True, Owner does not consciously want to harm his neighbors, but such is the direct consequence of his actions. To argue that Owner merely defends his property is to ignore the situation leading the city to compel Owner to surrender it, and to claim that Owner's property does not directly harm the surrounding area is to ignore the massive opportunity costs the community incurs as a result of Owner's refusal.

Let us depart from the hypothetical world of Bad Gatekeeper and enter the concrete realm of antitrust jurisprudence. As I mentioned above, the actual language of the antitrust acts is quite vague. In fact, as Shenefield and Stelzer argue, the antitrust acts' inherent ambiguities could be used to prosecute virtually any buyer or seller regardless of intent:

Read literally, the words of Section 1 [of the Sherman Act] would prohibit all contracts or any collective action that had the incidental effect of restraining trade regardless of the effect on competition or economic welfare. After all, every sales contract removes one buyer and one seller from the market for the duration of the contract, and to that extent restrains trade (15).

But the breadth of the Sherman Act, they argue, was deliberate; Congress intended for the scope of the Sherman Act “to be developed and applied by the courts” (14). In 1911 the Supreme Court did just that in the landmark antitrust case *Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey v. United States*. In the *Standard Oil* case, the Court developed what would become known as the “rule of reason.” Writing in the majority of *Standard Oil*, Justice Edward Douglass White stated that the “rule of reason” restricts antitrust power only to actions that clearly run contrary to the spirit of the antitrust acts: the rule of reason is “the plain duty to enforce the prohibitions of the [Sherman Act] and thus the public policy *which its restrictions were obviously enacted to subserve*” (*Standard Oil* 221 emphasis added).

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Kelo v. City of New London* parallels the

literal interpretation of the Sherman Act because it provides legislatures a wide breadth of eminent domain power with the intent of determining later how that power should be restricted (*Kelo* 18). But while antitrust law was limited and clarified in the *Standard Oil* case, eminent domain lacks a restriction akin to the rule of reason and the door remains open to eminent domain abuse. The concept behind the rule of reason is appealing, because it restricts governmental power without categorically rejecting certain practices³. Therefore, I propose that we adopt the rule of reason in eminent domain.

However, one major factor prevents us from directly applying the rule of reason to eminent domain jurisprudence: the problem of efficiency. Shenefield and Stelzer note that under the rule of reason, an action is anti-competitive if its “net competitive effect” is detrimental to the market. This is difficult to determine; therefore, rule of reason cases are typically expensive and lengthy because they “frequently require the use of expert witnesses and intricate economic and statistical studies” (17). Time and money, however, are rarely available in eminent domain cases. Justice Thomas noted in his *Kelo* dissenting opinion that targets of condemnation proceedings tend to be poor (*Kelo* 57), and it would be unreasonable to assume that they could afford the legal fees necessary to win a traditional rule of reason case. Also, as Justice Douglas noted in the *Berman* case, the repercussions of legal delays on condemnation proceedings may endanger development plans (*Berman* 35); if legal challenges to proposed takings are too lengthy, contractors may back out of redevelopment deals. Thus we must modify the rule of reason to be inexpensive and expedient. There are two main features of the rule of reason that make it attractive. First, it considers actions holistically, weighing their pros and cons before reaching a final decision. Second, it is based in an understanding of the spirit of the law, rather than its letter. I believe we can adopt the rule of reason test without its cumbersome legal baggage by developing a legal framework based on the above two features.

At first glance a holistic test to determine the legality of a taking may seem impossible. After all, to precisely estimate the impacts of a proposed taking would be expensive and time-consuming. However, courts could consider a slightly scaled-down version of the holistic benefit test. In antitrust law, the Justice Department evaluates rule of reason cases by comparing the state of the market before and after a potentially illegal business action. When the end market state is less desirable than the status quo, the Justice Department typically exercises antitrust power; otherwise the government does not interfere. Similarly, in eminent domain jurisprudence, courts should consider the condition of the condemned property and its surrounding area before and after its acquisition. If the planned land use would either damage

the area or fail to sufficiently improve it, courts should declare the proposed taking unconstitutional. This analysis need not be rigorous nor include complex economic analyses; rather, a simple examination of how the land is and would be used could be sufficient.

Let us consider several situations likely to arise in eminent domain and how a holistic rule of reason test might apply. Suppose a city wants to redevelop its slums by acquiring all its blighted property via eminent domain. In this blighted zone is Grocer's market, a local store that has served customers faithfully for years. Despite its surroundings, Grocer's market is economically healthy and is one of the few successful stores in the area. Citing her store's successful business record, Grocer appeals to the local courts, arguing that the taking is unconstitutional because her market is not itself blighted. Grocer further argues that if the court would prevent the city from condemning her property, she would be willing to pay out-of-pocket to renovate her building. Nevertheless, under current jurisprudence (and particularly after the *Kelo* decision), Grocer would most likely lose her store because courts are not empowered to question the legislature's determination of the development plan. However, under a rule of reason test holistically evaluating the situation, Grocer ought to be allowed to keep her store, because her market is economically healthy, and were she to remodel her building, Grocer would clearly promote the area's vitality. Thus the goal of the redevelopment plan would be achieved even if the city did not condemn Grocer's store. The taking is therefore superfluous, and with a holistic rule of reason test, courts would have the authority to prohibit it.⁴ In situations such as these, a holistic evaluation of proposed takings seems preferable to current jurisprudence since it equitably balances the city's wishes with personal property rights.

Consider also the hypothetical city of City, which suffers from high unemployment and general economic stagnation. Although City's employment rate is low, City is not a vast slum, nor does it have a high crime rate. To combat unemployment, the city council proposes to condemn several apartment complexes in order to construct a corporate headquarters, thereby attracting new jobs and increasing tax revenue. Residents of the condemned apartments band together and challenge the taking because it directly transfers their private property to another set of private owners. Current jurisprudence dictates that since the taking is clearly related to a public purpose (restoring employment), the residents would be forced to move. Alternatively, a stricter reading of the Fifth Amendment would invalidate the taking, since the corporate headquarters is private property and thus does not qualify as public use. The holistic benefit test, however, would look beyond these simple factors and instead focus on the future of the displaced residents. The

Fifth Amendment requires the government to pay eminent domain evictees “just compensation” for their property (Fifth Amendment), and usually this payment covers moving expenses. But even so, if housing within City’s limits is inadequate, remote, or unavailable, the residents would be forced out of City and would not reap the benefits of the new corporate headquarters. Thus the holistic test would consider, for example, whether City could provide adequate housing for the former residents. If housing exists within the city limits, the benefits of a new corporate headquarters would outweigh the evictee’s troubles. Therefore, courts should allow the taking. But if adequate and sanitary housing cannot be found, the evictees’ hardships would surpass the benefits of the taking and courts should prevent the condemnation. The holistic benefit test thus acts as an equitable balance between public interests and private enjoyment.

But what of the second aspect of the rule of reason: fidelity to the spirit of the law? To answer this question we must first clarify the nature and purpose of Fifth Amendment restrictions on eminent domain. In his *Kelo* dissenting opinion, Justice Thomas argued that Fifth Amendment limitations on eminent domain are positive restrictions on governmental authority—while normally the government would have the right to acquire any property it would see fit, the Fifth Amendment prevents the government from doing so unless the acquisition is intended for public use (*Kelo* 42). In other words, the Fifth Amendment categorically invalidates takings until the government can demonstrate that they act in the public interest. The Fifth Amendment therefore presents a sort of “presumption of guilt” in eminent domain suits whereby the government must prove itself “innocent” of acting against public welfare. However, it is not merely enough that a taking provides public benefit; rather, to be consistent with Fifth Amendment limitations, the *primary reason* for the taking must be the enhancement of public good. For example, if a city proposes to condemn an Albertson’s supermarket in order to construct a Wal-Mart on the spot, even though theoretically the Wal-Mart might provide new jobs in the area, it is highly unlikely that the city primarily intended the taking to promote the public welfare. Without the power to prevent such “letter of the law” takings, courts cannot protect private individuals from legislative excess. The rule of reason thus empowers courts to challenge takings with shaky primary motives or shady ulterior motives.

In summary, the rule of reason test applied to eminent domain would consist of two tests. The first: holistically, would the proposed taking create more benefit than harm? The second: does the proposed taking genuinely promote public welfare? These two tests, I believe, would empower courts to

combat legislative excesses while maintaining a stable balance between public and private needs.

There is one question that remains to be answered. No matter which means we choose to limit the power of governmental eminent domain, how are such changes to take effect? Through *stare decisis*, only a new Supreme Court ruling on eminent domain can amend the *Kelo* decision. Fortunately, recent changes in the Court's structure suggest that it may soon revisit eminent domain. Since the case of *Kelo*, the conservative Justices Alito and Roberts joined the Court, and should the Court's recent trend of conservative decisions⁵ continue, the issue of eminent domain may soon come under Court scrutiny. But with history as a guide, it is unlikely that we will see such a reversal. The three major eminent domain cases—*Berman v. Parker*, *Hawaii Housing Authority v. Midkiff*, and *Kelo v. New London*—span a period of fifty-one years, and in each case the Court maintained precedent. Moreover, while Alito and Roberts are both new to the Court, the Justices they replaced (Rehnquist and O'Connor) both dissented in *Kelo* (*Kelo* 27), and should a new eminent domain suit come before the Court, it is unclear whether the Court's new constitution would have a meaningful impact. Complicating the issue is the widespread outcry against the *Kelo* decision. Alan Weinstein, director of the Law and Public Policy Program at Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, notes of *Kelo* that “only one other Supreme Court case has sparked a similarly extreme reaction [:] *Roe v. Wade*” (27). Although national furor may influence the Court to reconsider its decision, it may also have the opposite effect of distancing the Court from eminent domain suits until tempers cool. We will have to wait to see how these subtle and conflicting factors play out in the Court.

Implicit throughout this discussion of eminent domain jurisprudence is the balance between the rights of the individual and the state. With *Kelo* the Court categorically ruled that in eminent domain suits public benefit supersedes private property rights. But eminent domain cases encompass a vast spectrum, from local economic development as in *Kelo* to statewide land markets as in *Midkiff*, and to automatically find in favor of public interest is to oversimplify the subtleties of each case. In all issues of eminent domain, the question of public versus private rights should not be decided unconditionally in advance, but rather on a case-by-case basis in light of the relevant facts. The government should not table debate of a nuanced issue in the interests of efficiency. ♦

NOTES

- ¹ There is another restriction on eminent domain, that owners be paid “just compensation” for their property (Fifth Amendment), but this limitation is irrelevant to the *Kelo* case.
- ² The State of Hawaii and Federal governments controlled 49% of the land. Of the other 51%, 47% was controlled by these seventy-two individuals (*Hawaii* 232). This amounts to control of 92% of all privately-owned land (my calculation).
- ³ The 1958 Supreme Court case *Northern Pacific Railway v. United States* established that a specific set of business practices should always be considered illegal. However, that this decision came almost fifty years after the *Standard Oil* case (Shenefield and Stelzer 16) suggests that such a policy required years of experience with the rule of reason to develop. Hence, when applying the rule of reason to eminent domain, I recommend that we not immediately categorize anything as wrong per se and instead leave these decisions to future courts.
- ⁴ Development plans where cities redevelop one property at a time with the cooperation of the original owners are sometimes referred to as rehabilitation programs. While not nearly as common as full-blown redevelopment projects, they are comparably successful and far less disruptive (Public Use 1424). Under a holistic rule of reason test I would not be surprised if such programs became the norm in renewal projects.
- ⁵ For example, *Gonzales v. Cabart*, which upheld the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act.

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FALL 2007 WINNER *Sophie Theis*

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

MY FIRST CONVERSATION WITH SOPHIE about her idea for this essay occurred at a faculty dinner at Sophie's dorm, during which Sophie engaged our table in a lively discussion about travel service programs aimed specifically at high-school students. In the weeks subsequent to that discussion, Sophie experimented with a range of writing styles and topics in my course on "Cross-Cultural Rhetoric," but she returned to examine the glossy advertisements and alluring promise of teen travel programs. At the same time, she demonstrated a commitment to discovering a writer's voice that was truly her own. Now, months after that first discussion, it is with delight that I introduce readers to her work in this collection of Boothe Prize essays.

In "Imitation vs. Internalization: The Rhetoric of Teen Travel Program Advertising for College-Bound Youth," Sophie offers readers a beautifully written examination of those seemingly innocuous high-school ads for international service travel experiences, challenging our perceptions about what it means to help others, and forcing us to interrogate our love for travel, for self-discovery, and for doing good deeds across the globe. Her paper is timely and important: so many Stanford students arrive exhausted from meeting the challenge of admissions, with the kinds of programs Sophie interrogates fueling the fire of overachievement. As Sophie's argument shows us, these programs mobilize visual rhetoric and parent testimonials to promise the development of an ideal character essential for the college application process. Sophie's paper investigates the alarming new trend of "robo-students" as well as deeper questions of tourism and the authenticity of the intercultural encounter. Sophie scrutinizes the way we package our experiences for ambitious purposes, even while she shows her new expertise in crafting a careful argument about the rhetorical force of ads as persuasive texts.

Her essay is both a powerful and provocative piece, one that reflects the intellectual richness of Sophie's own character and showcases her newly minted voice as a rhetorician and a scholar. She offers a powerful wake-up call in a voice that speaks for her generation. I hope it is a voice that we will continue to hear for years.

—ALYSSA O'BRIEN

Imitation vs. Internationalization: The Rhetoric of Teen Travel Program Advertising for College-Bound Youth

Sophie Theis

Travel is the subject of dreams, of lists of things to do before dying, of fiction, of boasting, of lifelong savings and planning. To travel is to escape, to change, to renew and to grow, and many, many people want to have these experiences. According to the World Tourism Organization, an estimated \$735 million was spent in 2006, with over 842 million international tourist arrivals.

Today there are few demographics that are more attracted to the promises of travel than the modern privileged American youth. What differentiates this demographic from the other traveling types is that affluent college-bound high-school students are literally just that. Bound by college and constrained by high expectations, these youth are drawn to the idea of travel as an escape from their limiting day-to-day lives. However, with college-preparation indelibly imprinted on their minds, youth only half-heartedly cast off the confines of normal life; the travel experience is seen also as an advantageous tool.

Capitalizing on the frenetic competition for college admissions, a new industry of teen-targeted international service-oriented summer programs has evolved. These programs must meet contradictory demands, offering students a freeing experience diametrically opposed to day-to-day life while providing them with an advantage on their college applications. Programs such as Putney Travels, Global Routes, Where There Be Dragons, and many others bring students to the developing world to assist in projects that can involve building houses, tending to ecological reserves, or teaching English, alongside bonding with their small group of peers and their local host community. These trips promise self-improvement, self-discovery, and self-esteem in a package deal that requires only affluence to participate: the price tag varies from \$4,000 to \$8,000 for a multi-week international adventure.

Flip open a glossy, magazine-style 100-page catalogue of Putney Travels' offerings—a one- or two-page spread for each destination, from Nicaragua to Nusa Penida, each destination categorized under community service, global action, cultural exploration, or language learning—and testimonials from past participants, detailed trip itineraries, romantic descriptions of the country, and photos of enthusiastic youth working hard and connecting with the local people in exotic locales paint for the reader a world quite different from his or her own. Indeed, it is on this distinction that the entire purpose of this breed of teen travel program turns: that participating on one of these trips will be liberation from daily life's dissatisfactions, from the listlessness, routine, hollowness, role-playing, and artificiality tied up in the college-preparation experience. While offering an escape, these promises also cater to the desire for *proof* of good character, tangible validation that can be easily translated onto the resume. Despite being specifically purposed to offer freedom from social pressures, provide the opportunity for authentic engagement, and encourage self-discovery, these teen travel programs ultimately become yet another institution to encourage the imitation of qualities over their internalization, blurring the line between the values of others and one's own goals.

To set the stage for understanding the specific teen travel program phenomenon, we must briefly touch upon some of the fundamental modern Western cultural assumptions and values tied up in the appeal of travel, across age demographics. People move for change—to find something new and to escape the old and familiar, to inhabit a sphere totally separate from daily life. In our postmodern mindset, dissatisfaction with the “mundane moment”—our day-to-day life—permeates our existence. We have become disenchanted by “desacralized modernity,” a term Crouch et al. coin in their introduction to *The Media and the Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures* (Crouch et al. 10). It has become commonplace to criticize the mundane moment—we are well aware of the spiritual shortcomings of our current lifestyle, the lack of moral mooring to which Crouch et al. refer, the speed that drives progress but tramples interpersonal interaction. We wistfully acknowledge that modernity fails to fulfill certain basic human yearnings for experiences, such as authentic connections and freedom from prescribed roles.

For American high-school students in affluent professional communities primarily clustered on the east and west coasts of the United States, the mundane moment's pressures are particularly demanding and pervasive. With college admission viewed as an indication of good character and a measure of self-worth, youth will frequently structure their entire lives around their admission decisions, often with adverse implications. Youth may model their lives after an ideal, a fictional character perfectly *formatted* for the college

application. This dream applicant would possess eye-catching standardized test scores; pristine transcripts; enough extra-curricular activities and academic honors to fill out all the provided lines; profound, sometimes nearly melodramatic life-defining experiences to prove one's character in the admissions essay; and good interpersonal relations to solicit a teacher's shining recommendations. Denise Clark Pope, author of *Doing School: How We Are Creating a Generation of Stressed Out, Materialistic, and Miseducated Students*, observes in an interview with the *Palo Alto Weekly* online edition an unhealthily intense striving for this imagined ideal in an effort to garner college admission. "I see so many kids and parents striving for perfection—according to a flawed definition of success (super parents/uber-kids). This is truly impossible."

Such great emphasis on two-dimensional representation relegates internal growth and private processes to the bottom of the priority list. The result is that youth of today "have no time to reflect on what they are learning or doing," as Pope explains to the *Palo Alto Weekly*, so that the reality of the teenage mundane moment is characterized by superficiality and artificiality. "Many admit that they are simply 'doing school'"—not engaging in depth with material or even enjoying the activities that they do. As one student explains, "we are 'robo-students'—just going page by page, doing the routine. School is lifeless," reports Pope in the *Weekly*. This listlessness, engaging for the sake of external appearances, persists outside the classroom. "Apart from not feeling motivated to learn anymore, you also don't want to do anything risky. People just do things to look good and get into school. Beyond that doesn't really matter," notes Stanford freshman Kristin Schmitz from Dallas, Texas.

But with the possibility of travel, many things can matter. Dissatisfaction with modernity fuels desires to *escape* from modern confines, but it also inspires travelers to *pursue* a fantasized new environment, one we will call the "travel moment." This moment appeals as the antidote to modernity by evoking the illusion of an anti-modern utopia. We perceive of this "travel moment" as capable of rectifying the deficiencies of the "mundane moment" of modern living. Travel, notes Crouch et al. in the *Tourist Imagination* introduction, bridges a realm of experience we think of as otherwise practically inaccessible, allowing us to move from routine, work, immobility, restriction, and practicality into an arena where spontaneity, self-serving actions, and mobility come first (Crouch et al. 2). As Chris Ryan, author of "Stages, Gazes, and Constructions of Tourism" in *The Tourist Experience*, says, "Escape from home is often an escape from obligation" (Ryan 4). Tasks and demands of others are supposed to be absent in the travel moment; the world is rearranged to allow travelers the freedom denied them in normal life.

THE TRAVEL MOMENT: SEPARATE OR SEPARATED?

The literature of these volunteer summer programs presents an experience diametrically opposed to the mundane moment with extreme, nearly hyperbolic language, reinforcing this cultural perception of travel as separate. On their websites and brochures, the summer programs build the travel moment as an abnormally vibrant, hyper-life experience. Putney notes in its catalogue's opening passage on the inside cover that "each year, many alumni report that their time with Putney was 'the best summer of my life,'" and their parents describe their child's growth as "*far exceeding* the benefits of a year at school." Noting superiority to normal life and even the normal summer experience becomes a familiar refrain across the literature of this business. The website for Where There Be Dragons (W.T.B.D.) sets out their measurement of the intensity of the trip: "Go if you want your senses blown, your worldview challenged, and your life hugely enhanced by the dramatic difference of life in the underdeveloped world." Through the ethos cultivated by the enthusiastic testimonials, the travel trips wield pathos to stimulate the teenage yearning to experience something separate from the day-to-day. Not just different, these trips are painted as *superior* in the potency of feeling as well as in the mere possession of feelings otherwise precluded by the mundane moment.

The advertising of these programs reiterates the idea of active engagement, a pair of qualities whose absence is responsible for the banal disconnect from life, feeling, meaning, and experience that characterize the teenage mundane moment. According to the Putney brochure, "participants are actively engaged," and "through their active engagement in the group," participants learn and grow through "activities that they are directly involved in planning and implementing," or as W.T.B.D. puts it, "our programs are engaging, interactive sojourns." Global Routes participants "are actively engaged in expanding their horizons." Finally, "there's nothing passive about a Putney program," and on the W.T.B.D. website, "our programs are not for passengers; they are for participants!" The images that accompany this motivational text are consistently, and not surprisingly, of active youth: working on their service projects, trekking through scenic landscapes, or building relationships with the local people. In their expressions resides a mixture of wonder, happiness, and excitement; everybody is grinning in the photos.

Active engagement grows from authentic interest, a principal "lost" aspect of the teenage experience, considered stamped out by pressures to conform to the demands of the college application. The indicators of self-propelled, honest interest—creativity and expressiveness—have been noticeably

on the decline in an inverse relationship with college frenzy in recent years. “Because students are so busy all the time, because parents think that’s what they need to get into college...they don’t get into their imagination enough,” says Marilee Jones, dean of admissions at MIT, as quoted in the NPR article “School, Study, SATs: No Wonder Teens Are Stressed.” In the face of such a pervasive notion of the existence and legitimate pursuit of an ideal behavior, creative centers shut down, for imagination comes to be slated as superfluous to the task of grasping the essentials, passing tests and doing what is required. The departure of imagination can mean the loss of self-faith and confidence to explore. As journalists Deborah Stipek and Robin Mamlet posit in the *San Jose Bee* op-ed “The Culture of College Pressure,” “many of our brightest and most talented young people come to internalize the message that who they are must be ‘packaged’ into a shape that only partially resembles who they are at their core; in other words, they learn that who they really are is not enough.”

In professing to bring youth into an environment that appreciates the non-conforming individual, the travel programs’ over-enthusiastic support for authenticity deliberately caters to this insecurity. As part of its task to represent a world separate from the mundane moment, the travel programs emphasize how their trips allow and stimulate authenticity, where youth feel freed from social constructs. Particularly in a summer program, where a dozen or so youth are thrown together without prior knowledge of one another, youth are unburdened by their backgrounds or reputations. In essence, they can be whoever they want to be—or whoever they are.

Physical distance and temporal distance from home help contrive the sense of separation from modernity. The top of each page in the Putney brochure carries a banner of a geographical emblem of the country: a snow-covered peak for Ecuador and a lush strip of jungle for the Dominican Republic. Further photographic evidence only displays images of the countries as underdeveloped and poor, their people traditional and impoverished, establishing the anti-modern environment of the trips’ travel moments (fig. 1). Participants gleefully drink from coconuts in Nusa Penida, and on the India page, help a local man sculpt a clay pot by hand; no cars, washing machines, computers or paved roads appear in the entire brochure. Living conditions are always mentioned as simple, humble,



Fig. 1: Swinging the scythe in the field because mechanical crop-harvesting devices haven't yet come to Ecuador? It's more likely that Putney is making every effort to separate the travel experience from the mundane moment, even in terms of time.

in local homes, schools, or dormitories. Old-fashioned sepia-toned mini-maps on each trip's page highlight the country of interest and, with the absence of modernity's artifice and excess, evoke authenticity in simplicity and timelessness.¹

Authenticity of participants is another professed value that distinguishes the travel moment from the mundane. Putney emphasizes its celebration of the uniqueness of each individual traveler, free from obedience to a certain social role, saying that trip leaders "are attracted to the opportunity to go beyond the superficial level and to get to know each participant as a mentor and a friend," whoever they are. W.T.B.D. echoes this sentiment, stating that their leaders "actively encourage group members to explore the interests that inspire them as individuals." Illustrating the effect of this endorsement of authentic interest are frequent photos of participants on their own engaging with locals; as in fig. 2, it looks like participants are allowed the autonomy and have gained the self-confidence to



Fig. 2: Working independent of the group, a teen demonstrates the proactive independence encouraged in the participants.

engage in independent enterprises. Passivity may be the natural reaction to the artifice and non-meaningful external demands of modern normal life, but with authenticity prioritized, the travel atmosphere is genuinely supposed to inspire personal interests and self-expression, regardless of the participants' adherence to otherwise omnipotent social roles, as in the mundane moment. Meaningful connections appear to come more easily in such an environment. Photos with more than one participant are invariably group shots of the teens grinning, arms around one another; drawing on pathos to project the appealing image of a warm, inclusive, clique-less group where everyone is valued.

However, the invariability of the experiences expressed in the trips' advertising points to the fact that a singular, streamlined perception is an effective tactic to appeal to youth who have been conditioned throughout their high-school college-preparatory life thus far to seek activities, qualities, and ideas that are easily translatable to paper. Being able to reduce complexity and condense it into two dimensions is prized, and college-centric teens pick up on this format of the travel fantasy, the thinking being that it will make for a good admissions essay because major ideas have already been proposed and clarified.

Even if youth are supposed to be allowed individuality on their trips, the independence of their *perception* of the travel moment is something worth questioning. With such extensive and homogenous descriptions and expecta-

tions for the programs, the experience is essentially pre-coded and pre-processed so that the participants, going into their trips, are perhaps excessively conscious of what they are supposed to perceive and how they are supposed to feel. In general, the categorization of the complicated mess that is life appeals to our desire for order and clarity; our life experience depends on a simplifying perception, or as Tim Oakes, author of “Get Real! On Being Yourself and Being a Tourist” suggests, we typically assume life matches up to the way we imagine and represent it (Oakes 244). But in these programs, the imagining itself is carefully cultivated by an *external* source, so much so that youth hardly have a role in determining the meaning of the trip. In this respect, the teens are actually *allowed* to be passive, and their individuality and independence of perception are not celebrated nearly as much as the trips claim.² The rift here seems to suggest that merely being able to recognize the importance and value of authenticity and individuality means that one possesses those qualities. This type of face-value behavior is just what propelled the cycle of detachedness in the mundane moment and comes from the attitude that fundamentally prohibits the travel programs from separating their style of travel moment from teens’ mundane moment.

THE MOVEMENT (AND MERGING) BETWEEN MOMENTS

Travel creates the desire to experience a world separate from the normal life and seduces with the very promise that life is mutable, that someone’s current existence does not necessarily cement his or her path. The potential to travel offers the temptation to transcend boundaries and by extension, adjust oneself; as Crouch et al. states in the introduction to *The Media and the Tourist Imagination*, “the importance of the tourist imagination is that of suggesting a creative potential inherent in free movement between different spheres of life” (Crouch et al. 2). Not only can travel promise an escape from the limits of a singular sphere, it can also promise to dissolve the limits that delineate these mostly disconnected spheres of the self-insignificant and self-significant. It is a view that validates dissatisfaction and affirms dreaming for something one “deserves.” Youth are no longer defined by their uncontrollable environment.

For youth, recognizing that change is possible and, moreover, accessible to them is empowering; Tim Oakes in his essay, “Get Real! On Being Yourself and Being a Tourist” from *Travels in Paradox* explains that the sense of power comes from “the ‘escape’ into a purer ‘space’ of travel and mobility...in that it evokes a sense of control over an otherwise uncontrollable world.” (Oakes

248). That youth are *able* to escape their environment signals that their identity is not entirely dependent on its context, immutable and static, but rather, that it is an entity over which they have control. Highly professional brochures and websites and an emphasis on the safety and trustworthiness of their program and trip leaders—they are “fun, energetic, creative, safety-conscious, and knowledgeable” in the Putney catalogue—are ways that the travel programs foster the sense of ease of access to the treasures of the travel moment.

Promoting the idea that everyone can participate also *diminishes* the gap between the mundane and travel moment; they appear less separate or opposed. On most pages describing one of Putney’s trips, “Leader Profile” boxes reinforce the connection between the travel moment and the mundane moment not only by stimulating trust in the leader but also by demonstrating the relevance of one’s travels to normal life. In the example of the Senegal community service trip shown in fig. 3, Michelle Sriwongtong’s accomplish-

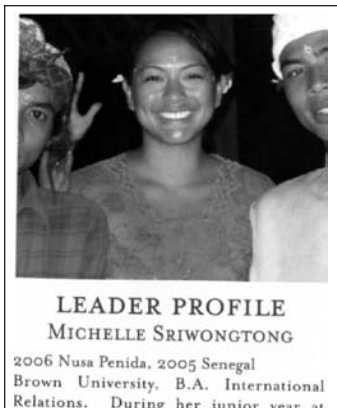


Figure 3: The leader’s mini-resume shows how the travel moment can be harnessed for the mundane moment and forecasts how participants will benefit in both spheres.

ments start, as do all the other leader profiles, by listing her B.A. degree from Brown in International Relations, a reference that, by assuring readers of her competency and intelligence, reminds them about the indelibly impressive quality of college prestige. Second only to the trips she’s led, citing her degree from Ivy League member Brown University characterizes Michelle with the prestigious university’s own positive brand connotations before any of her own personal accomplishments. The passage continues with her condensed resume: a junior year abroad in Senegal, founding of a NYC non-profit, and co-captain of Brown’s soccer team. Aside from building her ethos as a trustworthy leader, the leader profile is an illustration of what achievements can look like simplified onto

paper. Impressing readers with quick rundowns of their leaders’ successes, Putney encourages emulation—more for the value of an impressive resume than for the experience behind the achievements, something that brief documentation like these blurbs or a college resume cannot really demonstrate. What Putney does demonstrate is that the travel moment can actually be converted into an advantageous tool for change in the mundane moment.

BE WHO YOU ARE AND END UP A CHANGED PERSON!

The movement between the mundane moment and the travel moment spheres, in freeing one's character from a constraining context, opens the path for self-change and self-discovery. Explains Anderson Meethan in *Tourism, Consumption, and Representation: Narratives of Place and Self*, "It is as if, in the past, an individual biography would be linear in nature, and socially prescribed by occupation, family role, and social class; they are now self-produced and producing" (Meethan 3–4). But for modern youth, the ability to create a "biography," to define one's life, is a double-edged sword. While potentially empowering, the liberty of constructing a personal biography can mean that teens take their autonomy in crafting themselves to such an extent that they sculpt their character into one that shares no similarities to their true sensibilities and sensitivities, all in an effort to "look good" for college and within their community. One manifestation of this is engagement in extracurricular activities that hold no sincere interest for the teen but look good on paper. If teens can be whoever they want to be, why not be the ideal, the flawless college applicant? It is an easy role to assume because it mostly requires diligence and effort, and does not really depend on sincerity.

One of the central paradoxes of teen travel advertising is that while assuring participants that their trips will alleviate the mundane moment's pressures to be someone other than oneself, they simultaneously advertise with exuberance *change* of self. In this way, travel literature perhaps unintentionally repeats the message from college, from parents, and from peers, the message that with their emphasis on individuality they are claiming to counteract: that there does exist an "uber-youth," an ideal to aspire to. The very values and qualities that the program's language uses—intending to emphasize the authentic, self-revelatory atmosphere of the trip—then end up crafting a cohesive image of an uber-youth. In a time when youth are actively seeking roles that can translate on paper, describing ideal characteristics inspires imitation and often a trashing of authentic self.³

Harnessing the insecurities and shortcomings of the mundane moment, the qualities promised help project their trips as the antidote to the mundane moment, but also as the antidote to the average teen in normal life, the opposite of the person actually reading the brochure or skimming the website. Ethos-packed testimonials from parents deliberately resonate within the framework of the teen pressure cooker that is the high-school college-preparatory experience. Quotes such as "Rachael stepped out of her American teenage box" and "Daniel is older, wiser, and more alive than he was when he left" illustrate that the change in the travel moment are manda-

tory for these qualities; youth will not possess these qualities *until* they have participated in one of these trips. This message quickly converts into a call for *everyone* to change, that all the normal readers out there could make improvements in this direction. Also, the very construction of “before-and-after” suggests a reduced linearity that, while adequate for listing achievements on the college application, cultivates a life view that measures success in tangible results—often imagined and crafted to match up to outside pressures or an externally constructed paradigm like those of the travel programs.

By introducing boundaries into the sphere that is perceived as free and amorphous, these qualities and the notion of the uber-youth articulate a role that teens are implicitly encouraged to play. Any type of traveling can fall into role-playing even as the travel moment is seen as liberated from roles. As Tim Oakes argues in his essay “Get Real! On Being Yourself and Being a Tourist,” “We are seduced by the *role* of the traveler, the adventurer, the exile, the tourist.” (Oakes 245). This can become dangerous when the roles are so strong that the validity of individual experiences is measured against the set of criteria one’s imagination and the travel program rhetoric has erected around the trip; as Oakes notes, “the world must be reconfirmed by others.” (Oakes 245). In this way a dependency on an external processor is cultivated; not only is individuality again somewhat suppressed, youth also are no longer under the obligation to create meaning themselves. Rather, they can continue to take it at face value, as imposed by others—much as life is for them in the mundane moment.

The other qualities these trips pack into the image of the uber-youth sound great, particularly appealing because they echo college application expectations, but they continue to propagate the notion of “label-qualities,” or characteristics that require no effort or pain to acquire. Life-long friends, leadership skills, ownership over their work, and learning to “push out of my comfort zone” are attributes that appear throughout the genre; Putney’s brochure states on their first page, “the maturity, self-confidence, global perspective, and sensitivity towards others that participants develop are derived from close friendships, personal discovery, and the tremendous satisfaction of conquering new challenges.” Verb choices like “are derived” touch upon the backstory of these qualities but rely on cliché to communicate their value. Additionally, even “conquering new challenges” becomes something fun



Fig. 4: Photos of children with participants represent the bond between locals and foreigners, but surely children’s non-socially conditioned friendliness isn’t reflective of adult locals.

and easy, a process by which to gain “tremendous satisfaction,” and not the other way around, in which some positive feeling would motivate actions. By inculcating solely domesticated, abstract ideas into the minds of the potential participants, skipping the difficulties, the how and why, the language glosses over the process of internalization of these qualities.

As in fig. 4, the “close friendships” that youth will have ideally developed through their trips are accepted as a simple task, especially in regard to the local people. In the description of the Dominica trip, nothing is even required of the youth to establish good relations, for the “neighbors often stop by with gifts of fresh fruit” at their residence. Nearly every program page includes a section describing effortless collaboration and communion between locals and travelers; in the Dominican Republic, “students get together with friends in the community, playing baseball or learning to dance the *bachata* in the open air.”⁴

Despite much photographic evidence of youth and locals working together happily (fig. 5) and at least a sentence in every trip description mentioning “friends” in the community or some sort of ostensibly uncontrived coming together, relations with people from other backgrounds are intrinsically fraught with complications that remain unnoted in the travel program literature. Ivan Illich, in his 1968 address to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects in Mexico, scoffs at the notion of the hyper-privileged youth and the hyper-impooverished rural residents connecting in any meaningful, equal-footed way. “You can only dialogue with those like you...there is no way

for you to really meet with the underprivileged, since there is no common ground whatsoever for you to meet on,” he asserts, drawing on school dropout statistics that immutably separate Latin America (and presumably other underdeveloped countries) and the United States.⁵ Stanford Ethics of Public Service professor Rob Reich cited Illich’s “go-to-hell” condition that would serve as a litmus test of an interaction that could really be considered a connection based on equality: “namely, don’t do the service unless the people you’re serving are *capable* of telling you to go to hell if they don’t want you there.” Prizing deep, meaningful connections when it is a very unlikely prospect, or labeling interactions as bonding, then, propels the cycle of surface-value labeling that teenagers are used to in their mundane moment. The process is brushed aside as unimportant in comparison to the *use*, the *value* of the experience to normal life.



Fig. 5: Images of collaboration illustrate Putney’s promise that students undertake projects “working side by side with local people.”

Indeed, there is a distinctive absence of hardships and moments of doubt. The testimonials and trip descriptions fail to clarify that the qualities advertised take work to truly possess. As Ann Hulbert argues in her *Slate.com* piece on “Servi-Tourism: Community Service, Three-Star Style,” “Kids may well be missing out on the true—and less than gloriously transformational—growth opportunity that community service has to offer America’s micro-managed youth elite: an occasion to be a lowly cog and have to cope with real-world glitches.” Is it easy to discover yourself and be yourself, and only yourself? Is it comfortable to bond with others—especially with the local people with whom you have so little in common? Hulbert laments that these service programs fail to offer an “unmediated glimpse of how difficult some social chasms can be to cross.” Since the message is virtually silent on the real gritty process, youth receive broad encouragement to imitate these qualities. Eager for role models, youth translate this selective communication into a message directing them to display, but not necessarily possess or go through the process to obtain, these qualities. Internalization, not emphasized, comes across as unnecessary.

It is unfortunate that well-meaning travel programs, intending to offer an authentic, liberating experience different from teens’ day-to-day lives, fail to communicate a separation between the mundane and the travel moment because elements of the mundane moment persist in the travel moment. Youth are attracted to the program to escape from the pressures of their mundane moment but end up further bound by the trip’s prescriptive, pre-coded experience with its roles and expectations, and the qualities of the uber-youth replicate the striving to be someone else in the day-to-day sphere, which the youth were trying to escape in the first place. Painting the experience as simple, accessible, and easy, the service trips support the surface-value culture wherein the ultimate value of an experience is in the ability to translate to paper and to prove self-worth for others.

The confusion between bound and free, helping and helped, role-playing and role-creating could be elucidated by an explicit acknowledgement of the distinction between external and internal aims. First, the trips could include in their advertising a section on the college pressures so present in participants’ minds so that they could be clear and aware of their motivation for the trip. This might help free them from subconscious college-obsession, that lingering constraint of the mundane moment that, as it is now, persists in the travel moment, unthreatened and just as actively dictating their behavior. Second, if the trips made a point of emphasizing the individualization of the experience in its advertising, perhaps in the form of diary entries encouraged or group discussions, participants would likely enter the trip feeling that

their individual opinions were truly valued to others and to themselves. And third, if a greater attempt was made to discuss the difficulties that face the travelers—to acknowledge their status as tourists and foreigners, rather than presenting successes like they came naturally—the programs would affirm the necessity of self-propelled effort to gain qualities, and, additionally, the importance of engaging in experiences not for an end result that will look good and prove good character, but for one's own curiosity and desire for exploration. ♦

NOTES

¹ The local people too must support the separation of the mundane and travel moment. In theory, pretentiousness and adherence to binding social roles evaporate in an environment physically removed from a dominant culture of flawed modernity. But since the local culture is often indecipherable and not explored, the travelers really face few barriers in interpreting the atmosphere as they like. There is very little inherent in the local culture that supports authenticity; rather, it is the distance from understanding these communities that allow “constructive authenticity, a projection of authenticity onto objects,” people, and places that often have nothing to do with the actual nature of the subjects themselves (Ryan 8).

² Having an external presence casting roles, creating meaning, and dictating perception casts in doubt the fundamental pursuit of authenticity through the travel moment. As the central tenet of the teen travel program, an atmosphere of authenticity is also a primary distinguisher between the mundane and travel moments. Explains Oakes, even as the tourist “recognizes the alienation and inauthenticity of the world...in the process, we find ourselves ‘objectivating’ and reifying authenticity itself.” With a Berman quote at the outset of his essay, Oakes argues that the pursuit of authenticity is futile and even self-destroying, in that the search would necessarily shift into seeking a pre-conceived perception. If authenticity is an unconstructed, “pure” experience, any pre-coding of an experience will negate it.

³ Self-change through travel is a longstanding expectation of the tourist. As we have discussed, radical departures from what Oakes deems “modernity’s dualisms” clears the path for a more authentic atmosphere that can bring out a more authentic self, separated from the social constraints and adherence to social roles of the mundane moment. The different role—the role of tourist—can be more a liberating role than a confining role. With a new sphere dedicated to the tourists’ whims and pursuits, the tourist can slip into the role of protagonist, central character into a self-constructed narrative wherein he or she can experiment.

⁴ Selective imagery in the teen trip rhetoric argues visually for the good relations between the Other and the visiting youth. The vast majority of the images of the Other in the Putney brochure and on the Global Routes website is of children. One reason for the youthful dominance is that children are not yet aware of social norms. Also, children’s eagerness to be friendly and connect with strangers buttresses the idealist notion of commonality or universality across cultures, a sentiment echoed by a past participant who noted that despite their lack of shared language or culture, he was able to find “the common interest that unites us” through nothing more challenging than dance and games. In this way, the Other is different in a good way—inviting and easy to connect with.

⁵ Additionally, Illich reframes how he sees the travelers who do not speak the language, “[you] impose yourselves on a village where you are so linguistically deaf and dumb that you don’t

even understand what you are doing, or what people think of you.”

The professed aim of these programs, volunteerism loses some of its potency when it is centered on the benefit of the givers. For one, clearly the amount of money spent on one of these trips would be more effective as a public service donated to a professional charity program working the area—and then, the training and preparedness of the youth to build houses or teach English is doubtfully sufficient to be even basically helpful, especially considering the small time frame in which the youth are physically present. And on top of that, the in-and-out quality of the service, its temporality, prevents truly deep connections with projects or with the local people. La Piana said his daughter considered the “service component less satisfying.” Constructing a community center, “basically all they needed Americans to do was buy the materials. A bunch of men from the village knew all they needed to do to build the community center. They did not need a bunch of American kids who had never in their life swung a hammer to ‘help’ them.”

Because it creates questionable economic value that is still nevertheless lauded, the community service component also threatens to support a patronizing, unequal subject-Other division between youth and the local people. Illich condemned this type of “servi-mission” as a “benevolent invasion of Mexico” that “exude[s] self-complacency.” Since youth are ill suited to offer something of value, due to the pre-set conditions of the short trip without training or skill requirements, their work’s priority is only on others as part of the illusive pretending. Being told that they will be and are a helpful presence encourages youth to plow ahead confident in their worth and in the neediness of the local communities. They are told through their ineffective, yet celebrated, labor that they, being privileged Americans, are somehow innately more capable and competent than the locals.

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FALL 2007 HONORABLE MENTION *Dixon Bross*

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

They were gentle, because of exhaustion, and considerate, because of a new respect for each other, and therefore, as happens between men and women, felt the fact of the strangeness—the fact that they were, essentially, strangers—more intensely than the first anonymous time. Frederica thought of Jacqueline, and felt—for the first time in her life—a stab of pure sexual curiosity about another woman, and then a stab of jealousy. She was interested in this. Maybe jealousy was an enormous part of normal sexual behaviour—it was certainly in novels—and therefore significant. You do not know another person, even when his sleeping face on the pillow, very close to your own, has a small, pleased smile on its mouth (A. S. Byatt, *A Whistling Woman*).

IN THE MOMENT when A.S. Byatt writes, “She was interested in this,” her protagonist, Frederica, shifts from a bodily register to a cerebral one. Of course, *A Whistling Woman* does not oppose these registers, but connects them in the very passage from body to mind that takes place as Frederica responds to and reflects on her sexual curiosity and erotic jealousy. But what is most significant in the above is how the passage that Frederica undergoes from one state to another is catalyzed by the experience of interest she has. By attending to that experience, Byatt’s *A Whistling Woman* shows how a state of interest is a means of reframing everyday life—figured here through the deeply normal image of a sleeping face with a pleased smile—as an object of contemplation.

Moments such as this one are precisely Dixon’s concern in his essay, “How Interesting: Interest and the Quotidian in Art Cinema.” Building on the insights of an interdisciplinary range of scholars, Dixon brilliantly and carefully explores how contemporary art cinema interests us. Interest, he argues, is a largely cerebral feeling, an affective state in which we take cognitive pleasure at playing critic, at exploring rather than resolving ambiguities (at the point of resolution, interest vanishes). Art cinema in particular excels at stirring up this mental feeling by looking at everyday life through an aesthetic lens. Put simply, art cinema prompts us to see the interest of our own day-to-day lives by projecting them in their boring plainness on a movie screen.

Dixon couples his argument with a style to match. One of the most striking features of “How Interesting” is prose both patient and plain, in the best senses of those adjectives. Slowly but surely, Dixon moves from sentence to sentence, and section to section, making concrete what in the hands of

many other students, and even professional scholars, would have remained an elusively abstract and frustratingly disembodied idea. And the result of Dixon's simultaneous stylistic and argumentative patience is an essay that stays with you, making itself felt whenever, wherever, you call something "interesting" again.

—JOEL BURGESS

How Interesting: Interest and the Quotidian in Art Cinema

Dixon Cross

Two friends leave a movie theater, the night is dark, and their faces are mostly hidden. I thought the film was really good, says one. I thought it was really interesting, says the other. What is the second person trying to convey, exactly? Are they in agreement, did they both find the movie “good”? Or is the second deliberately avoiding agreeing, choosing instead to use one of the most vague words in the English language? Even as he’s saying it, he may not know. It is my belief that when we call something interesting, we are responding to an intellectual stimulation—that we find something cognitively enticing and curiosity arousing. In film, and art cinema more specifically, the depiction of the quotidian is a powerful appeal to our sense of the interesting. And ultimately, what makes the quotidian interesting in art cinema is how it recontextualizes everyday life as aesthetic experience.

Our sense of what is interesting, however, is hard to pin down. As in the example above, claiming that something is interesting appears to be synonymous with any empty praise: decent, nice, cool, etc. In common parlance, we are often satisfied with this very shallow definition. We use it to avoid saying something negative; its vague nature allows us to use a word of praise without needing any clear evidence that would support it. But there are other times where a meaning seems to become clear. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, says that something is interesting when it is connected to importance (a definition now obsolete), or “having the qualities which rouse curiosity, engage attention, or appeal to the emotions.” (The *OED* also goes on to say that another usage of the word is to speak delicately of a woman’s pregnancy, by saying that she is in an “interesting situation,” a definition now archaic and also inapplicable to my argument here about aesthetics.)

There are other definitions of the word as well. In fact, the psychological community is very interested in defining interest. In *Exploring the Psychol-*

ogy of Interest, Paul Silvia classifies it as an emotion (Silvia 14). This is significant because emotions are distinct states of mind that have clear symptoms and origins that we can identify, and then use to help define what was before only a vague feeling (21). The modern psychological school of thought believes that things that an individual finds complex, conflicted, uncertain or novel trigger an emotional state of interest, while things that are found to be simple and familiar engender happiness (25). In a psychological study where participants were asked to rate their feelings after reading a short piece of fiction, readers found stories where the outcome was uncertain to be interesting, and stories with happy endings to be enjoyable (26). This is significant because, while classified as an emotion, interest seems to be derived from a set of adjectives much more cognitive and intellectual than those of other emotions (25). Complexity, novelty, and a state of uneasily resolved conflict are all more intellectually challenging concepts than simplicity and familiarity. Happiness is a state often associated with serenity, tranquility, and peacefulness, while the state of interest implies cognitive action, attention to the object, and intellectual focus. When we are happy, we relax and appreciate a moment, when we are interested in an experience, our brains do not relax; they examine and pay attention to the activity. Those things that are interesting according to the psychological community are so because they are generally more cerebral.

Sianne Ngai would agree with the majority of the above, but has some interesting qualifications to add as a scholar of the aesthetic. In “Merely Interesting,” she observes that there is no clear evidence needed to use the word interesting, or rather, there exist too many qualities that could elicit “interesting” as a response (Ngai 6). The concept of beauty, on the other hand, implies a sense of aesthetic harmony, or an attractive appeal to the senses or the mind. What is interesting lacks these guidelines. Things are interesting when they cause a reaction of interest in us (i.e., our curiosity may be piqued, we may become confused, intrigued, or otherwise drawn in). Ngai says that being interested is “not knowing exactly what it is that we are feeling and [experiencing] a feeling about this very feeling” (33). Most importantly, being interested entails the promise of further action; it calls for further justification, for further exploration of what has elicited the feeling of interest and a more accurate definition of your emotional response (22). This is not as clear a definition as it may seem. To be interested is to be confused and undecided, but more importantly to be on the way to resolving your state of confusion. To call something interesting is to signal that more information shall be forthcoming, that I am intrigued or put off and uncertain as to why—that I “want to play critic,” I want to explain my interest, justify my

reaction, and further develop it through aesthetic evidence and logical argument (39). Admitting interest is not asserting judgment in itself, but is instead a statement of intrigue and sufficient intellectual curiosity, conflict, or confusion to warrant additional scrutiny of the object before coming to a final judgment.

This sounds similar to the psychological definition, and it is. Ngai focuses on the subject's response as an aesthetic one, and the psychological community focuses on the object that elicits such a response. And our day-to-day usage seems to be supported by both the aesthetic and psychological definitions as well. All three notice the cerebral nature of interest: that it is an emotion, but that it is one that is heavily intellectual. According to Silvia, objects that elicit interest embody complexity, conflict, novelty, and uncertainty, and Ngai tells us that the emotional state created is similar to its creators: conflicted, uncertain, complex and, while most of us have experienced the state of interest before, still relatively novel.

The definition of interesting that I plan to use throughout the rest of the paper is a combination of the above: something is interesting when it embodies or elicits the sensations of complexity, novelty, conflict, or uncertainty. This state of interest is brought forth by many different things: books, relationships, conversations, anything that puzzles and entices. But let's return to our original example. Two friends leave a movie theater, one friend has found the film good, and the other has found it interesting. Now, it could have been nearly any movie that called forth these responses, but it is my belief that the response "interesting" is most typically brought forth by what is called art cinema. In contrast to what is known as classical Hollywood cinema, these films are typically and deliberately more novel, complex, and confusing, and thus clearly earn the above response. But they also frequently portray the quotidian and daily events of our lives, which, despite a common-sense reaction to the contrary, I also believe elicits the sensation of interest.

First things first: what is art cinema, and why is it more interesting than Hollywood film?

Long still shots, protagonists that don't care, and painfully boring plotlines where nothing seems to happen are all attributes commonly attributed to independent films. David Bordwell gives a very good definition of these kinds of movies in "The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice." First, he notes that "art cinema defines itself explicitly against the classical narrative mode," the "classical narrative mode" meaning Hollywood film (Bordwell, "Art Cinema" 775). This is not so hard to swallow. Viewers accustomed to

Hollywood productions often react strongly to art film, saying that nothing is happening, or alternately, that nothing makes sense. This conflicted response is caused by art cinema's attempt to reconcile its two competing ideals: realism and subjectivism (777). According to art films that elicit a response of confusion or boredom, very little happens in real life (hence the response that nothing is happening in the film) and the human mind is rarely rational (hence the response that nothing makes sense). While conventional Hollywood film believes in cause-and-effect narration and pursues a goal of engaging the audience through the use of the sensational, art cinema views narration, and especially the cause-effect dynamic, as mutable, making use of flash-forwards, surrealism, and in other cases, an extreme dedication to realism (775). This extreme realism is further developed by using "realistic—that is, psychologically complex—characters," and by making no attempt to hide the artifice of the camera: art films don't try to lie to you through cliché heroes and quick camera work (776, 779). Bordwell believes that this is because art cinema is less concerned with the minimal action on the screen, than the reaction of the characters and the audience. There is a focus on the individual and the human condition, and these are often approached with an air of passivity. But above all art cinema is about how things happen, not what happens (776, 779).

Focusing on how a story is told rather than on the details of the story itself is an inherently more intellectual journey. A typically modernist practice, focusing on the mechanics of the telling inserts another layer of complexity to viewing a film. Rather than just surrender to the contained universe of the plot line, we are constantly made aware of ourselves and our position outside of the film. This mental distance makes it much more difficult to forget that we are watching a film, that a man or woman decided which scenes and which events to show us, and eventually forces us to wonder why the director chose these scenes. This recognition of the artifice of the film engages our intellect and makes us think much more, and much more deeply, about art film than we may while watching a Hollywood production. This is chiefly why art cinema is more interesting than classical cinema. While art cinema dedicates itself to exploring the relationship between audience and film, thereby engaging our intellect, classical cinema seeks to minimize the distance we feel from the film, and instead of appealing to the intellect, appeals to our emotions. Classical cinema is not interesting, but emotionally powerful, clear, and enjoyable.

The above definition of art cinema is a negative definition for the most part: it is not classical Hollywood cinema. Luckily for us, David Bordwell also does an excellent job describing classical cinema, which explains most of

our aesthetic experience of film. It is difficult to succinctly define the majority, and when doing so, one must always understand that there will be exceptions. Nonetheless, Bordwell identifies several key qualities of what he calls classical cinema. Those qualities are as follows: a dedication to story; little room for individual innovation on the part of the director; ease in understanding; clarity; a goal-oriented protagonist; a scene of reckoning, where the conflicting forces in the film usually face off and are reconciled; unity; realism, to a degree—in that nothing seems impossible, all the laws of the contained universe of the film are upheld, gravity still works (unless in space), and there is no magic (unless in a fantasy world); and, finally, a desire to hide its artifice—that is, classical cinema seeks to mask the fact that it is a created film (Bordwell, *Classical Cinema* 3, 16, 18). When all of these aspects come together, a seamless story is told as clearly as possibly, and the message and purpose of the film are easily delivered.

Despite making it as easy as possible for an audience to view a film, classical cinema is not entirely transparent. Bordwell argues that classical cinema still relies on the viewers' intellects, but in a different way than art cinema does (Bordwell, *Classical Cinema* 7). In mystery movies there are frequently moments when the audience is required to think, to make connections, and to figure out “who-dunnit” from the clues given. But as mentioned above, art cinema makes an appeal to the intellect through unresolved ambiguities and the intrusion of artifice, where the most complex cognitive work required in classical cinema is usually involved in comprehending the story's intricacies of plot development rather than the motives of the creator of the film. The narrative of the film is where it is easiest to differentiate between the two genres. If there were a graph of increasing conflict between the protagonist and his obstacle followed by absolute reconciliation, then it is likely that the film belongs in the classical genre. Conversely, art cinema frequently abandons plot altogether, instead progressing through distinct episodes or vignettes, each with their own narrative obstacles and sometimes without any at all.

But how is something that lacks plot interesting? Don't we go to the movies to escape our dreary day-to-day lives, searching for something to disturb the monotony? How do films that deal with the mundane and ordinary instead of the sensational and extraordinary garner and hold our interest when any one would argue that explosions and car chases or tales of success and triumph are more interesting?

Well, actually, they're not. Using our above definition of interesting—the correct one, I believe—car crashes and victory over obstacles are not interesting at all. There is no confusion and no uncertainty, and the conflict above is not the same kind of conflict as a determinant of interest. That sense of con-

flict is when the film is conflicted itself, either through ambiguity or through clear contradiction. A classical film might clearly show that drug habits ruin lives, while a film more evocative of the art cinema mode might not come to any conclusion on the matter. In a standard narrative, the film is very clear that there is this sense of conflict in the narrative; the film is not itself conflicted. This type of conflict would be the conflict in the contained universe of the film. The protagonist wants to escape, but encounters narrative conflict when the police begin to chase him. What we may be feeling as viewers in response to such a narrative is enjoyment: we may enjoy seeing damage, movement, and the success of those characters we identify with, but it is a distinct emotion from interest. Classical cinema avoids stimulating the intellect abstractly, as is evident in the removal of the artifice of the film, the dedication to clear illustrations of each cause and effect in narration, and the nearly required unambiguous ending. Instead of playing with our intellect, classical cinema stimulates our emotions, and seeks to cause enjoyment rather than make us think.

To understand why classical cinema can't both focus on our emotions and still remain interesting, it is necessary to look at how classical cinema affects our emotions. First, we have to recognize that while watching a film we do not believe that what is passing on the screen is "really" happening; the plot line and any response to it I may have occurs solely in the imaginary world of the film. Instead of full desires, I experience meta-desires or quasi-emotions elicited and contained by what is passing on the screen. For example, if I am watching *Finding Nemo* (2003), I have a desire that father and son be reunited in the world of the film. However, I do not wish that the script were changed so that father and son were reunited on the screen more quickly (Currie 186). My desire is not a product of the world that I live in, but the world of the film. If I am still watching *Finding Nemo* and feel sad because father and son are separated, it is not because the movie was made poorly. More accurately, I experience a meta-emotion of sadness. In the contained imaginary world of the film, I feel pity imagining a family split in such a way (Currie 187). This emotional reaction is a sort of empathy; by imagining ourselves in a different position than the one we occupy in real life, we develop emotions and desires to fit our new and only real-seeming situation. The fact that we experience pseudo-desires and meta-emotions while watching a film does not alone make a film uninteresting, however. While watching any example of art cinema we could experience the same sensation of almost-emotions in response to the characters and their situation, but in classical cinema, those emotions are often much stronger.

Meta-emotions are important to keep in mind when looking at why a

film is interesting because they are so closely tied to the sensation of identification with a character. Frequently, a sense of identification is the first thing you discuss with your friends upon leaving the theater. It is sometimes even the basis on which you judge a film. Berys Gaut defines identification as another kind of imaginary emotion, like the pseudo-desires described above. It occurs when we can imagine ourselves in the situation of a character, sharing their physical and psychological traits, and respond with a mixture of empathy and sympathy (Gaut 203, 207). She argues that we are more likely to identify with characters that have attractive traits, like beauty, street-smarts, or a strong wit, but we are also attracted to those characters that we feel sympathetic for: vulnerable characters, or characters who fall victim to unfortunate events (Gaut 211). Because both classical and art cinema use similar characters, we react with the same kind of emotions to similar stimuli no matter the type of cinema. However, our emotions are engaged to different degrees in the two genres, because of their different aims and appeals.

Bordwell establishes, rightly I feel, that the art cinema hero is a vulnerable character, and as mentioned above, psychologically more complex, thereby garnering some empathy for his plight. Often, however, he will just as soon lose our empathy when he shows himself to be unconcerned about his own fate. Disaffected and removed from the rest of the world, the protagonists of art cinema sometimes become characters who, while we identify with them, just as often become objects of scorn. Frequently, the response in the audience toward characters that remain stationary or refuse to act is the frustrated cry, "Do something!" On the contrary, those characters that have a strong investment in their own fate, and at the same time find themselves in truly pitiable or otherwise emotional situations, will garner much more empathy from an audience. Because classical cinema uses characters for which we feel more empathy, we feel a stronger emotional reaction toward it than we do toward art cinema. This relationship between the strength of emotional response to a film and the situation of a character is finally part of what affects how interesting a film is.

Curiously enough, while gaining an audience's empathy, a character will lose its audience's interest. While more and more of a character is explained, we grow closer and closer to him, which is great news for script writers and movie producers: fleshed-out characters create powerful emotions in their audiences. *Finding Nemo* is so popular not only because its characters are so adorable (drawn with big eyes and proportions like puppies) but also because they are in such a fully developed and pitiable situation. However, through this fleshing-out, there is less left to further question. Once we know a character's entire back story we can no longer become interested in him, we will

have found out everything that puzzles and intrigues us. Nemo would be a very interesting character if his motives were unclear. If we never knew how or why he disappeared, we would be much more interested in him and his fate, and would intently try to figure it out, looking for evidence and clues to help fill us in. Nemo elicits empathy, however, because we know his fate, and know that it is a terrible one, one in which he is a victim to powers outside his control, truly pitiable and mostly blameless. We can see, then, that when questions are answered, interest dwindles. We would be more interested in a mysterious Nemo whose motives were uncertain, but instead are more emotionally attached to the one about whom we know so much. The sensation of interest is still the urge to ask why, to plunge back into something, to “play critic” and come to a conclusion. But once that conclusion is reached, we are no longer interested. In successful classical cinema, the trade-off is interest for empathy.

Further trade-offs include choosing a character easily identified with over an interesting one, which is indicative of classical cinema’s dedication to engaging emotions rather than the intellect. However, empathy and pitiful characters are not the sole emotional appeals of classical cinema. Classical cinema appeals to the masses because it also offers a thrill. As human beings, we enjoy risk, and enjoy experiencing risk both in real life, and in the meta-emotions of film. In *Exploring the Psychology of Interest*, the concept of a boredom drive is discussed, which would justify the way we seek risk as the fulfillment of a desire to alleviate our boredom (Silvia 50, Schiebe 58). Karl E. Schiebe, author of *The Drama of Everyday Life*, cites the evident examples in modern society that human beings are drawn to the dangerous in our society. It is a puzzling conundrum. As socially mindful and rational creatures, we fight against war, disease, and disaster, but as he points out, “ask yourself whether or not you consider the United Nations, the Pope, and the National Council of Churches to be boring” (Schiebe 61). His point is that there is something inherently perverse within us that enjoys disrupting the practical and familiar merely to see something new and different. Our Western culture is inherently confrontational. It flourishes in times of war and competition, and even the Socratic method and teaching in general are processes in search of conflict. In viewing film, then, our thirst for blood is no less apparent. We enjoy the meta-emotions of fear, thrill, and danger, just as we enjoy the meta-desires for conflict and resolution, but our attraction to risk is much stronger than our other attractions (Schiebe 61).

Miriam Hansen agrees that classical cinema appeals not to the cognitive but to the sensory, but doesn’t believe that it is limited to the sensation of danger (Hansen 71). Hansen argues that classical cinema is “concerned with

...the sensual, material surface...and [an] excess of situations over plot” (Hansen 61). It is through an appeal to our emotions, aided by the sensual surface of modern cinema, that the majority of classical cinema succeeds. But it is not only emotions of thrill that break the boredom drive, although it does so strongly. That “excess of situations over plot” is exemplified by the old Hollywood standby, the gag: the pratfall, the one-liners, the explosion, or the dance routine. Oddly though, car chases and pie fights don’t fit into Bordwell’s definition of a mode of cinema that is dominated by cause-and-effect narration. These sideshows are never purely narrative. It may be important for the story that Marlin, Nemo’s father, falls in with a bunch of sharks and somehow survives; this makes the situation more dangerous and risky, and also impresses upon Marlin’s character that he must find his son. However, there is no need, narratively, for those sharks to be comical apprentice-vegetarians.

In “Emotional Curves and Linear Narratives,” Patrick Keating explains the use of these unrelated appeals that dominate the genre that Bordwell defines as purely plot oriented. Keating argues that gags and sights—like vegetarian sharks—help to create enjoyable situations. People enjoy comedy, even when it has little to do with the plot of a movie (Keating 5). He subjugates the narrative of a film to the process by which a viewer’s emotions are controlled. In his argument, since a viewer’s emotional state is more important than his comprehension of the narrative, the typical plotline of miniature successes and failures on the way to final reconciliation is an attempt to engage our emotions rather than create a more plausible story. Without any responsibility to the narrative of a film, we enjoy movement, slapstick, and song and dance because they stimulate our emotions.

Finally, then, the division between classical cinema and art cinema is one of both technique and aim. Classical cinema seeks to gain viewers by entertaining them emotionally, providing them with sympathetic characters, clear plots and pleasing experiences. By doing so, by foregoing any appeal to the intellect and the interesting, classical cinema provides a foil for art cinema. We have seen the way in which classical cinema makes its appeals and avoids engaging the interesting. To say that art cinema merely does the opposite of classical cinema is not entirely precise, however. What is interesting must be engaged chiefly through the intellect, and art cinema does this by portraying the quotidian as an object, not merely of our daily lives, but one to be appreciated intellectually as an aesthetic experience.

On the surface, *American Splendor* (2003) seems to be an ideal example of art cinema. It opens with a very American scene: four boys are standing on a 1950's doorstep celebrating Halloween and looking for some candy. The first three are dressed as Batman, Superman, and the Green Lantern, but our hero is merely wearing his comfortable leather jacket and a dour expression. The housewife who answers the door is perplexed, "But what superhero are you?" The boy's answer is emblematic of the film's stance. "I ain't no superhero, lady, I'm just a kid from the neighborhood."

In this and other moments, this film takes a very firm stance against, as our hero puts it so eloquently, "Hollywood bullshit." *American Splendor* is the true story of Harvey Pekar, a lonely and depressed file clerk who starts a comic book detailing his daily adventures. His comic's tagline is "Ordinary life is pretty complex stuff," and he explains to his illustrator that we don't need to look to tales of extraordinary happenings and beautiful people to make art, that there is something repulsive and unappetizing in all that "idealized shit." So he finds the humor in waiting behind old Jewish ladies in the supermarket, the melancholy in the tragic figure of his friendless boss, and the beauty in the falling snow over Cleveland. Throughout it all, however, he is very conscious of focusing on the mundane details of his true life, of not stretching the truth to envelop a happy ending or kitschy moral. In his comics, he gives it to us straight, showing us the way that the world really is, and, as the film documents through Harvey's rising popularity, we eat it up.

Nonetheless, *American Splendor* remains a member of classical cinema. It is a story about alternative media, but is not what it documents. It is transparent and deliberate in its delivery, and, as a film, still relies on aspects of the sensational. After all, the linear narrative is what drives the film. It follows a somewhat celebrity, chronicling his love life, rise to popularity, and battle with cancer, all the while exploring his novel view of the world. The film relies on slick cinematography (the conventional method to disguise the artifice of film), never resting in one position for too long, and follows a distinctly causal narrative. Its themes are interesting; we feel confused and want to know more when Pekar first sets out to write a comic book about nothing more than his life as a file clerk. More frequently, however, the plot appeals to us emotionally: through his humorous first date, his comic books' successes, and his own personal failures. Here, while describing an artist who explores the interesting, an act much more in keeping with art cinema, the film itself employs more classical methods.

The difference in methods between the two cinemas is clearly seen in Jim Jarmusch's film, *Stranger than Paradise* (1984), an outstanding alternative to

Hollywood glamour. It is clearly an independent film, striking any viewer as “different,” relying on long, still shots and little in the way of plot or action. While Harvey Pekar argues strongly for truth and reality in fiction, *American Splendor* merely explores the theory using the techniques Harvey rebels against. *Stranger than Paradise*, on the other hand, adheres to both a representation of reality and an entreaty to the mind, while the modern media that Harvey hates depicts and makes use of the sensational. The opposite of the sensational, the truth and reality that Harvey searches for, is described by what I would like to call the quotidian. The use of the quotidian, and the dedication to the interesting that underlies it, is one of the key differences between art and classical cinema. *Stranger than Paradise* plainly represents this difference.

Stranger than Paradise is the story of three young, disaffected people. Willie lives in New York City and spends most of his time alone or with his best friend Eddie. From what we are shown he enjoys sitting listlessly on his bed, smoking cigarettes. He doesn't seem to work, nor does he do anything else with his time. The film opens when his mother calls. He is shocked to hear that he will have to put up his cousin from Budapest for ten days. He doesn't ask why she is coming, and he is never told; Eva simply arrives, and Willie is less than welcoming. At this point, we can clearly see the difference between *Stranger than Paradise* and a Hollywood telling of the story. For the next ten days, little happens between the two. In fact, little happens at all. There are a series of scenes in sequence where the two do not move from their respective places in the apartment as the light changes, and the television drones on through the night. One year after Eva leaves, Willie and Eddie follow her to Cleveland, spend a week there in which little happens once again, and then go to Florida. There, Willie and Eddie pay little attention to Eva, going to the races instead, and she contemplates leaving. At the end of the film Willie, searching for Eva, is stuck on a plane bound for Budapest while Eva returns to the motel room and sits spinning her hat in her hands. There is a linear narrative in the plot here, time passes, and we follow it through the story. However, causality, that staple of classical cinema, is missing. We are never told “why.” Why does Eva come to New York and America, why does she have to stay with Willie, why does Willie live the way he does? These questions are never answered, but, as is typical in art cinema, they are never even asked. These questions play such a minor role in the experience of *Stranger than Paradise* that an audience is rarely prompted to ask them. They must merely accept what they are given and experience the film on its own terms.

Leaving these questions unanswered contributes strongly to my interest in the film, but is not the only way in which art cinema garners interest. It

can also be accomplished through the cinematography of a film. *Stranger than Paradise* takes advantage of its cinematography to echo the film's basic theme: that real life is boring, uncomfortable, and without both the gloss and the clear logic that is so prevalent in classical cinema. A typical scene involves a single shot showing an entire room that may stay for as long as the scene needs it: sometimes as long as several minutes. An example of this is the scene in which Willie and Eddie accompany Eva and her date to the movies in Cleveland. The camera is facing the audience, showing the four of them sitting together, both Willie and Eddie sitting next to Eva. The film they are watching, though we never see it, is a kung fu action movie. The shot stays still, not moving from the four of them as they eat their popcorn and watch impassively. The sounds of bodies hitting each other and shouts and cries in a foreign language can be heard, and the light flickers gently on each character's face. There are few others in the audience, and little else to distract your attention. The scene, completely without dialogue, is almost five minutes long. It is an incredibly uncomfortable and almost painful experience for the viewer. Watching it, you are forced to identify with the four of them, trapped in an uncomfortable situation, not really enjoying themselves. For five whole minutes the camera doesn't move. This stark rigidity and plainness echoes the mechanics of the plot of the film. Nothing is being hidden from the viewer because there is nothing to hide. There is very little even to show in the lives of these three young people. Bordwell identifies this aspect of art cinema as the documentary-like fixation on the factual (Bordwell, "Art Cinema" 777). The shot, like the rest of the film, merely presents everything it can, hiding nothing, and showing the little that there actually is, as it is.

This depiction of life, not as something glamorous but as something mundane, is an example of what I call the quotidian. Quotidian means daily, as in the everyday tasks, errands, trials, and tribulations one undergoes each day. To put it bluntly, the quotidian is often boring. There are no narrative fireworks, and when there are, they are dealt with in the most realistic manner possible. When winning the lottery, you are not immediately handed a bag of money. There are hoops to jump through, and decisions to make. The portrayal of the quotidian embraces this aspect of our reality. Other synonyms are prosaic, everyday, and normal, but for me, the idea of the quotidian captures the frustrating aspect that I find so present in our day-to-day lives, the feeling that nothing seems to be happening despite our cultural ambitions and desires to create change. A dedication to the quotidian is a dedication to real life, not the realism of classical cinema, where things must be plausible and logical, but an understanding that very often illogical things happen, and even more often nothing happens. The quotidian focuses on the

non-dramatic events that make up so much of our lives. It also embodies a refusal to turn life into the simple chain of cause-and-effect in which all ambiguity is resolved, recognizing each moment as no more important than any other trivial event in our lives. While arguably depressing, and certainly boring when found in real life, the quotidian is rewarding, and above all, interesting when it is incorporated as an aesthetic experience in film.

One of the clearest representations of the quotidian as interesting is the film *Killer of Sheep* (1977), in which we follow a depressed black slaughterhouse worker, Stan, merely existing for a week or two. We are shown the neighborhood kids playing and fighting, Stan struggling both to work and enjoy the company of his wife, and above all else we are shown the everyday life of black society in downtown Los Angeles. Nothing happens that is extraordinary. My favorite scene comes early in the movie, and is one of the few times that we see the protagonist smile. He holds a warm cup of coffee to his cheek, assumes a dreamy smile, and talks about how he loves the feeling of the cup, like it's a woman's body you're pressing your cheek into. This is one of the only moments of joy in the film. Stan's life is hard living in the ghetto of Los Angeles, and there are many things to be dour about. Throughout the film, we are shown many of these depressing moments. Stan spends a day off work going through the process of procuring an engine for a broken-down car, going from friend to friend, borrowing money, and then finally buying the engine only to insecurely fasten it to the bed of his friend's truck, at which point it rolls off in to the street and breaks. Later, Stan and a group are in a car going out to the country for a picnic. Unfortunately, on the way, the car gets a flat tire and they have to turn back. Nonetheless, Stan finds joy in the pleasure of a warm cup of coffee against his cheek. Throughout the film, these examples are shown only as fractured moments. They are never fixed into a chain of cause and effect; they instead form a tapestry of experience contrary to the linear progression of classical cinema and emblematic of the quotidian.

The scene in which Stan enjoys his coffee serves both as an example of the quotidian and as an example of the appreciation that we all have for those quotidian moments. Stan is a married man and, presumably, can lay his chin on a woman's body every night. Nonetheless, the simple pleasure of a warm mug can break his depression, and allow him to immerse himself in the feeling and his imagination. As a viewer, I find that this scene stays with me, and refuses to be taken for what it merely appears to be. At the same time, however, I am just viewing a man enjoy his coffee, something that I can see at any street corner in America. Indeed, the scene's power comes from its absolute normalcy. It is a typical moment, one we may all have experienced. But even

if we have not experienced this same situation, we find it special because it is so believable. The quotidian is powerful not because it manipulates our emotions through fireworks and scenes of reckoning, but because it speaks to our experience.

At first glance, then, the quotidian does not seem to be interesting. A perfectly normal, mundane act is not novel, it is not uncertain. There is no conflict or complexity in the above scene with Stan and his coffee, or in the movie theater with Eddie, Eva, and Willie. These are merely very normal scenes of average everyday life. So how do they elicit the need for further response from viewers? And how can we find the quotidian interesting when we live it every day? What evokes the sensation of interest is the idea of watching something so normal in a setting where we are prepared to view art. Something that is totally normal, something that we would be able to view by merely turning around in our seats in the theater, gains power when it is presented to us on a screen. This is where novelty, uncertainty, and conflict enter: through the recognition of artifice, one of the focuses of alternative cinema. We realize that we are watching something normal, but also understand that, because it has been shown to us in the context of our examination and consideration, we view it in a way different from the way we would normally. Accompanying the question of why this normal scene has been chosen is an increase in a desire to understand the scene. By introducing these scenes in the context of viewing art, we view these scenes as art, and so look at them differently, because they are presented to us outside of their regular context.

This recontextualization is different from any reframing that might occur in classical cinema. In classical cinema, any scene where a man drinks his coffee is usually embedded with meaning. Either the scene is used to reinforce the casual nature of the scene before disaster breaks, or it could be used as a defining character sketch. In art cinema, these instants are moments of the quotidian because they are left to our interpretation; they are given to us as aesthetic moments, free of the meaning that would be attached in the plot of a classical film. Aesthetic moments in general, while perhaps created without the intrusion of the intellect, are usually met with and appreciated intellectually. Very often people feel an emotional response to a work of art, but more often than not, I believe, a large part of that emotional response is interest. They feel interest because, if art were simple, if a painting elicited a single, clear response, there would be little need to continue to contemplate it and the work of art would fade from public consciousness and disappear. In the same way that learning the slight of hand behind a magic trick produces boredom and disinterest in the trick, where before wonder and curiosity ran rampant, decoding and completely understanding a work of art destroys, in

a large way, its appeal. Art cinema reframes everyday moments into quotidian ones by taking them out of context, and making them moments of art. When these moments become artistic, and not plot oriented, we are allowed to interpret and value how and where the quotidian fits into our own lives. In an aesthetic frame, we do not struggle to assign meaning to everything; rather, we begin to appreciate the role of moments without causal significance.

For example, even though the film is an example of the classical mode, *American Beauty* (1999) becomes art cinema for a moment in this very way. In the film, there is a character, a young man, who sees the world as though it were being presented to him. He finds moments of art in the most quotidian happenings, like a plastic bag fluttering in the wind. While many of us have seen bags being blown in the wind, we do not see the value in them until they are captured, confined, and reproduced outside of their environment for our contemplation. As soon as we see the plastic bag shown in *American Beauty* on the television in the boy's room, we are able to view it as art, and the blowing bag becomes interesting because it has been reframed aesthetically. Again, this reframing forces us to reevaluate and come to a new conclusion about this quotidian scene. In his essay "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein and the Everyday," Michael Fried paraphrases Wittgenstein, "only a work of art, precisely because it compels us to see it in the right perspective, can make life itself... available for aesthetic contemplation" (Fried 524). In the artistic recontextualization of the quotidian there comes a confluence of art and reality that demands our interest. It is the intrusion of artifice, the singling out of certain moments, that raises them in our perspective and makes them unique because of their normalcy, interesting because of their mundaneness.

The quotidian calls for further examination, is puzzling, confusing, and interesting not only because it is so out of place on a screen. We are used to being spoon-fed our heroes and morals, and art cinema doesn't. The quotidian relies on the viewer to come to his own conclusion, a situation that becomes interesting when the conclusion is not immediately grasped. Because we see these events, or these kinds of events, daily, it is difficult to assign any meaning to them. Are we supposed to see the fluttering plastic bag as a sign of the pollution of the modern world, the fickle nature of capitalist economies, or as a metaphor for man, merely at the mercy of the elements? In most classical movies, these questions would be answered for us, and the dancing bag would arguably no longer be an example of the quotidian, but rather a kitschy metaphor. By keeping the bag a quotidian moment, the scene in *American Beauty* attains a much greater power. The quotidian gains an enigmatic nature when put on the screen because it has been reframed as an

aesthetic moment. This air of mystery and uncertainty prompts, of course, the sensation of interest, or, in other words, the response: "I'm not sure, give me some time, some more evidence, I'm not yet done with this particular moment."

We return, then, to the concept of interesting. According to David McCracken, "genuine poetry is based on common (not extraordinary) incidents that will interest and therefore excite the mind of the reader" (27). I put it to you that the quotidian does precisely that. By encapsulating those prosaic moments, the quotidian is not only enigmatic and deserving of further evaluation, but also often a beautiful, touching, and good thing. This may seem contradictory. Sianne Ngai defined interesting as a purely neutral term, a state typified by an immediate inability to form a judgment but one implying a further search for evidence. But it is important to realize that the quotidian is more than merely interesting. When Stan puts his face to the mug, it is not only a response of confusion and interest, but also one of intense identification that we feel, understanding and empathizing with his condition, feeling our hearts touched in a way that is impossible to do through clichéd dance routines or fiery explosions. The representation of the quotidian is the only way to elicit our response to the quotidian in our own life, and by putting these moments in front of us as an aesthetic experience without the trappings of excessive meaning, we are allowed the opportunity to closely examine our own lives, as we are not when asked to enjoy a sitcom or tear-jerker.

Looking back at our two good friends leaving the theater at night, I would like to say that they are not in such disagreement as I may have led you to believe. For, finally, while perhaps meaning much more than merely good, the individual that responds with "interesting" is to a degree agreeing with his friend. We cannot be interested in something that we truly devalue. We would not spend time with something that we disliked. Calling something interesting, assigning it the quality of soliciting our further attention, therefore, is in itself a commendation. For the fact is that we enjoy playing critic. Being interested in something allows us to use our imagination and our reason at our leisure. Unless our friend is deliberately deceiving us, is using a (hopefully no longer) vague term to avoid showing his true opinion, he is in agreement. The movie was good. Both friends will leave the theater, will perhaps go for ice cream, but will most probably enjoy discussing and critiquing the film, as they explore the determinants of their particular feelings of interest.



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WINTER 2008 WINNER *Eric Slessarev*

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

IN "NATURE TAKES MANHATTAN: A SECRET REBELLION," Eric takes us for a walk on the wild side, lifting the veil on a New York whose mighty skyscrapers muffle and obscure, but fail to extinguish, the secret life that flourishes in burrows, nests, and other hidden fastnesses of the city. Invoking a fundamental opposition between the manufactured city and wild, untrammelled nature, Eric proposes that certain gestures on the part of the city dweller—both actions and acts of the imagination—constitute a "quiet protest" against the sterility of the industrial landscape. Whether by pausing to admire a fern growing in the cracks of a viaduct, cheering for a pair of red-tailed hawks nesting atop a Fifth Avenue apartment building, or chronicling (in a MTV film, no less) the antics of an army of singing cockroaches who resist eviction from an East Village apartment, city folks, Eric posits, enact an environmental rebellion every time they acknowledge and affirm wild nature.

In the research proposal that laid the groundwork for this paper, Eric sketched out an essay that would encompass a world—and then some—ranging geographically from Manahattan with its red-tailed hawks and rats; to Telegraph Hill in San Francisco, home to the eponymous parrots; to urban Soweto, South Africa, where cows are kept in the streets; on to India, whose "urban monkey problem" Eric references; and then concluding in Chernobyl, where nature has, surprisingly, returned. The exceptional scope of this paper, as outlined in the proposal, expressed itself as well in a wide-ranging literary-philosophical inquiry that draws on the insights of Jack London, Umberto Eco, Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, T.S. Eliot, among others, along with Joseph Berger ("The Water's Fine, but is it Kosher?"). "I like to mix-up disciplines," Eric confided to me on a preliminary information sheet.

That Eric will one day succeed in writing his magnum-opus, one of whose appeals will be its multi-disciplinary flavor, seems likely to me. The very fact that he was able to conjure up such a universe of references in his proposal attests to his research skills, erudition, and ambitions for his work. And the comprehensiveness suggested in the proposal clearly makes itself felt in his essay. One of Eric's main challenges in writing this essay was to find a way to streamline and package his research, and to frame and organize his argument. His decision to use the wilds of metropolitan New York as a case study for illustrating a dynamic that, arguably, repeats itself in multiple vari-

ations worldwide has proved to be a happy and productive one.

The second major challenge Eric faced in developing this paper related to issues of style and tone. In its first iteration, the essay had what struck me as an “oracular” quality, a term Eric and I came to smile about. The guiding intelligence in the essay seemed to be that of a remote sage handing down pronouncements from on high, at a great distance. The language came across as opaque in places, and after reviewing a few pages of the draft, class members reported to Eric that the essay was at times taxing to read. Eric’s responsiveness to this constructive criticism and the resourcefulness with which he went to work on revising his prose, concentrating on achieving a more accessible style, was exemplary. The final essay exhibits his sure command of voice and never sacrifices the keen sense of humor that invites us to contemplate alligators in the sewers. While “Nature Takes Manhattan” may not be oracular, with its deft elaboration of the tension between the modern city and the wilds, it is visionary.

—WENDY GOLDBERG

Nature Takes New York: A Secret Rebellion

Eric Slessarev

“We had no goal beyond the Park Avenue viaduct, which, with its crevices and crumbling mortar, is a perfect place to see chink-finding, xerophytic ferns ...” (Sacks).

IN HIS 2007 *New Yorker* article “Botanists on Park,” acclaimed popular science writer Oliver Sacks tells the story of the wild ferns that grow between the stones of the Park Avenue viaduct. The article briefly sketches the exploits of a pack of fern enthusiasts who decide to follow a busy Manhattan thoroughfare in search of urban plant-life. What place do these insurgent plants occupy in the structure of a fabled metropolis? What is it about the wild ferns of Park Avenue that inspires amateur botany and captures Sacks’s literary imagination?

It is probably fair to assume that most modern cities are distinctly manufactured: leveled, excavated, paved, and landscaped to serve the people that inhabit them. Humans build cities for various reasons and employ all degrees and types of planning and architectural styles, but the theme of *manufactured structure* is in all likelihood inherent to all cities, particularly large, industrially constructed metropolises such as New York. In this sense cities exist in opposition to that which is wild: the untamed plants, animals, and fungi that gnaw, undermine, contaminate, and erode man-made structures. If one accepts that the city and the wild are opposed, then the spectacle of Sacks and the fern enthusiasts takes on a subversive meaning: in a certain sense, those who value nature in the midst of a modern city perform a quiet protest by enshrining wild invaders, implicitly questioning the environmentally destructive forces of industry and urbanism. In other words, one might argue that to marvel at a fern growing among skyscrapers is—perhaps unwittingly—to challenge the value of the skyscrapers, to acknowledge the mortality

of stone and mortar, and to rebel against the orthodox urban aesthetic.

In what follows, we will investigate how city-dwellers who value or enshrine wild elements engage in an oblique protest against the manufactured structure that surrounds them. Some of the evidence for this secret protest lies in natural and social history, but the most meaningful examples come from folklore, art, and literature, and thus culture will form the centerpiece of our inquiry. New York City, the quintessential “concrete jungle,” provides an excellent case study because its especially rich and varied cultural history abounds with stories and creations that reflect the passive rebelliousness of nature-loving urbanites. Although conclusive proof of such subversion may be unreachable, this investigation aims at least to open the door for further analysis by describing New York City from the perspective of the bird-watchers, rat-watchers, botanists, and ecologists—environmental rebels, all—who walk its streets.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF MANUFACTURED STRUCTURE IN NEW YORK CITY

What exactly defines the “urban aesthetic” that nature-loving city dwellers seem to be subverting? To describe the city as a place of technology, industry, and manufactured structure assumes that cities can be readily defined. Journalist and self-styled urban design critic Mike Greenberg questions the idea that cities have any single, stable definition in his book *The Poetics of Cities*:

A city is a palimpsest, a document with many layers of accretion and imperfect erasure, many glosses and commentaries and marginal notes. No city was summoned into being in an instant, by the will of a single creator. Any city reveals the traces of its development over time and space (57).

Greenberg asserts that no city can be defined in a phrase—cities are polyphonic, the product of many cultures and many histories. This seems reasonable in the context of New York, a particularly dynamic metropolis. The online city guide, NY.com, describes a varied landscape housing over seven million people from all across the globe. The guide sums up the enormity of the city with a quotation from H.G. Wells, “to tell the story of New York would be to write a social history of the world.” In light of the overwhelming complexity of New York, perhaps it is presumptuous to claim that the city is fundamentally opposed to wildness.

However, the well-known material aspects of New York City show that it is a good example of urban manufactured structure, and that its existence

inherently opposes wildness. Emporis.com, an international database of building statistics, catalogues 13,026 individual buildings within the city limits, 5,014 of which are high rises—the sheer surface area covered by these buildings, in addition to all of the paved space, means that much of the city area is impervious to ordinary ecological colonization. There is, of course, plenty of extraordinary ecological colonization going on, as the city faces a constant onslaught of plants and animals that establish themselves in the cracks and niches of the paved landscape, and within tamed parks and gardens (Weisman 26). The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation reports that the volume of pesticides used commercially in New York City in 2005 was 116,762 gallons, which is as much as one sixth of the amount used in all agriculture statewide that year—evidence of an active battle against wild invaders (“Final 2005 Report”). Even the earth the city is built on requires constant, industrial-scale maintenance in order to support streets and skyscrapers. Environmental journalist Alan Weisman investigates the effort of keeping New York from succumbing to the elements in his bestselling work *The World Without Us*, where he uncovers the startling fact that 13-million gallons of local groundwater are pumped from the city’s subway tunnels every day to prevent collapse (24). Clearly the struggle against natural forces is essential to the survival of New York. In this light the actions of urban naturalists seem particularly rebellious, for the plants and animals they revere assault the city by degree with every root, burrow, and nest.

But what about planted trees, gardens, and public parks? One might object to the claim that New York is opposed to wildness by pointing out that the city was not designed as a sterile wasteland—room was made for green public spaces that are in no conflict with the integrity of the city, and are in fact integral to its structure. However, planned parks and gardens do not constitute wild elements because almost invariably they are constructed and maintained by humans, tamed and controlled (although some parks go wild and provide an interesting exception, discussed below in the section “Wild Spaces”). Central Park is a good example of a park built to the ideal of manufactured structure. Urban bird-watcher and nature-writer Marie Winn makes the point that no matter how wild Central Park has now become, its original designer, Fredrick Law Olmstead, and his collaborators never “intended any part of it to be a real wilderness” (Winn 21). Olmstead’s journals confirm that Central Park was deliberately manufactured, requiring the draining of marshes, the blasting of “undignified” rocks, and the removal of “primeval forest” so that the land might “resemble a charming bit of rural landscape” (Olmstead 212–13). Even if sections of the Park have since revert-

ed to a less ordered state, it is significant that the very spirit of the Park's design excludes wild elements. Apparently resistance to untamed nature is intrinsic in the design of the city, even in parks.

Because New York City physically opposes the wild, its inhabitants sometimes resist nature through stories, norms, and practices that reflect the ideals of manufactured structure. Some anecdotes about New York's plumbing system provide good examples of cultural hostility toward wildness. One of the nation's most famous urban legends, the tale of the alligators that inhabit sewers, comes from a 1935 *New York Times* article that tells of an eight-foot-long alligator emerging from a manhole on East 123rd Street ("Alligator"). Urban folklorist Mark Barber notes, however, the biological impossibility of large reptiles persisting in city sewers and explains the story in terms of "the deep fascination and fear of what may be lurking underneath our cities" (113). More recently, in 2004, there was an outburst of public hysteria when the presence of microscopic copepods in city water was publicized, even though the harmless crustaceans had been in the water for years. The orthodox Jewish community spearheaded the protest on the grounds that the shelled plankton were not kosher, and there was a general surge in water filter purchases across religious persuasions (Berger). Both these stories are rather whimsical, but it is reasonable to assume that most New Yorkers expect sewers and tap water—plus streets, alleys, gutters, and rooftops—to be more or less animal free. Urbanites who defy this cultural norm by inviting some degree of unplanned natural colonization are also challenging the industrial sterility and manufactured structure of the urban landscape.

BIRD-WATCHERS

Oliver Sacks and his fern fanatics disrupt the normal rhythms of Park Avenue just by looking at wild plants. The urban botanists cause a traffic jam as drivers gawk, passersby take photos, and police officers gaze with "suspicion" and "bewilderment" (Sacks). Simply stopping to observe wild elements is enough to disrupt the fast-moving patterns of urban existence. Although fern-watching may be an uncommon pastime, the deceptively passive action of observation is shared by all urban naturalists. New York City bird-watchers provide a good case study.

New York City lies on a major bird migration flyway that extends along the eastern coast of North America. Although much of the city is hostile to migrating birds, parks, marshland, and skyscraper ledges provide habitat for many species that persist in the urban environment (Rothschadl). The

Audubon Society of New York City manages bird populations in the city and provides resources for public bird-watchers. One might expect that the Audubon chapter for such an urbanized area would be anemic, but this is far from the case: the organization's 2007 report shows that patrons donated over \$422,000 to the society over that year, with funds going to nature tours and education for over 3000 New Yorkers ("Annual Report 2007"). Audubon works to monitor the ecology of the city by extending bird censuses to urban parks and monitoring nesting heron colonies on waterways. The organization even made a successful push to dim New York's signature skyline during migratory months by having several large skyscrapers leave lights off overnight to reduce fatal collisions by passing birds. Nesting birds benefit from intense micromanagement—Audubon directed the cleaning and repair of a single hawk nest on the 12th story cornice of a building on 5th Avenue (New York City Audubon). Clearly many New Yorkers care a great deal about local birdlife and are ready to support intensive conservation projects.

By devoting money and energy to the painstaking preservation of relict bird populations, urban birders draw attention to the environmental hostility of their industrial living space. Audubon conducts its Christmas bird count every year and reports on the successes and losses of carefully tended heron colonies and raptor nests in the five boroughs (New York City Audubon). Inevitably, the bird count inspires the question: How many birds would there be if the city was never built? In other words, acknowledging the fragility of urban bird populations implies an environmental criticism of the city. Furthermore, New York City Audubon's mission statement suggests that the organization's basic ideals conflict with urbanism and manufactured structure. The statement posits an unorthodox, environmentalist vision in which ordered, man-made structures are peripheral, and New York City is described in terms of its "12,000 acres of vast and diverse wetlands, forests and grasslands" with no mention of skyscrapers and busy streets (New York City Audubon).

It is scarcely surprising that a large environmental organization like Audubon is philosophically opposed to industrial urbanization and seeks to redefine the environment of the city. Much more striking is the grass-roots environmental culture shared by everyday city bird-watchers. The story at the center of Marie Winn's book *Red Tails in Love* gives a good indication of the vitality and popularity of urban bird-watching and environmentalism. In this *New York Times* "notable book of the year," Winn tells the story of Central Park birders who maintain a voluminous, tome-like bird guide in the park boathouse, and chronicles the lives of a famous breeding pair of red-tailed hawks, Pale Male and First Love (7–20). Scattered through Winn's medita-

tive text are environmental criticisms leveled at the sterile structure of the city, such as when she questions the use of poison for rodent control, or decries the effects of urban noise pollution on migratory birds (103, 226). Winn's book paved the way for a popular PBS documentary on the red tails, *Pale Male*, and a large public following coalesced around the hawks. In 2004, the city attempted to clear Pale Male's roost out of concern for the cleanliness of the surroundings, and almost immediately faced a massive public outcry (Rothschadl). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that Audubon moved in to negotiate between the city and outraged citizens, promoting the installation of a special debris guard to keep nest material and pigeon remains off the streets. In a 2005 press release, the Wildlife Service, Audubon, and the City Parks and Recreation Department announced the joint creation of a \$100,000 "raptor fund" for the preservation of the city's multiple hawk and falcon nests. The creators of the fund pointedly "applaud the tenacity of New Yorkers" who rallied for conservation ("Coalition").

The struggle to protect New York City's raptors certainly fits the model of public protest. Bird-watchers—seemingly innocuous, passive observers of nature—jumped to the defense when the city threatened to eradicate disorderly raptor nests. The citizens were so charged that Audubon, a heavyweight environmental organization in its own right, had to intervene to moderate between outraged New Yorkers and the city. The action of bird-watching takes on a different meaning in light of the Pale Male story. Those who watch are far from passive; they are standing guard over wild elements, waiting to protest loudly when the city tries to clean those elements out. There are several live-feed internet cameras installed in the city, including one "hawkcam" in Queens run by Audubon and an independent "falconcam" on 55 Water Street ("55water"). New Yorker birders can check on the condition of their cherished birds at any time of day from any part of the world. Through constant vigilance, devoted birders protect urban raptors from the scouring arm of urban hygiene and the threat of manufactured structure—city maintenance cannot disturb a nest without public knowledge and swift resistance. In this way the gaze of the urban bird-watcher becomes a force of grass-roots environmental resistance.

VERMIN

Birds of prey are majestic, endangered, and charismatic—an easy rallying point for environmentalists. Public defense of urban raptors could be the product of a superficial, romanticized love of nature that poses no real threat

to the foundations of industrial urbanism. The attitudes of New Yorkers toward vermin are far more complex. Sometimes city dwellers choose to value pest animals that are normally considered ugly and offensive. Can the culture of the rat and the roach embody an environmental protest?

Rodents and cockroaches are ubiquitous in New York City, where they are almost universally treated as pests and exterminated whenever possible. The City Department of Health provides online guides to rodent and cockroach control that speak to the prevalence of the pests and the importance of control efforts (“Pest Control,” “Cockroach”). A December 2005 Health Department document states that 25% of city households report rodent infestations and 30% report cockroach infestations, with concentrations highest in northern Manhattan, southern and central Bronx, and central Brooklyn—low-income neighborhoods (“Pests”). Furthermore, a 1997 seven-city study on asthma in low-income households found that “asthmatic children exposed to cockroach infestation in their houses or apartments have more frequent and more severe asthma attacks” (Romano). On the matter of rodents, the City Health Department puts matters bluntly: “nobody should have to live with rats” (“Pest Control”). It seems reasonable to actively exterminate rodents and roaches wherever they are present—public hygiene and social equity demand as much.

Even so, a brief study of urban culture reveals that some individuals are ready to side with the pests. Even if vermin are justifiably reviled, it is significant that New Yorkers often delight in celebrating and imagining the lives of urban vermin in literature. In some stories vermin are appreciated and partly redeemed, although this often means they are tamed and manicured, or made cute for public consumption. Consider the case of E.B. White’s classic children’s novel, *Stuart Little* (1945) Stuart the mouse is a totally anthropomorphized rodent who navigates the iconic landscape of Manhattan as an integrated member of society. Significantly, the great, frightening abyss of Stuart’s world is a mouse-hole, a threatening reminder of the feral nature that Stuart has overcome in becoming civilized (White 11). White accepts the presence of mice in the city on the provision that they cease to become mice, and in this sense he remains close to the anti-vermin status quo. A second children’s text, George Seldon’s *The Cricket in Times Square* (1945), presents a more unorthodox vision of vermin in the city. Seldon’s characters—a mouse, a cat, and a cricket—are more like real animals, scavenging for food among the drainpipes and packing boxes of Times Square. They coexist pleasantly with humans, but remain animals in an urban street environment (Seldon 1–10). Published fifteen years after *Stuart Little*, Seldon’s book is slightly more daring; instead of taming the urban rodent, he redeems the

mouse as a mouse. A young New Yorker reading Seldon's text might develop a more tolerant, sympathetic attitude toward domestic vermin that are usually trapped or poisoned without a second thought. The effect is rather innocuous, but still obliquely subversive: a subtle change of perspective in the mouse's favor.

Not all apologies for vermin are as charming as Seldon's mouse story. More recent cultural creations make a loud call for the appreciation of less attractive animals. In a 1997 nature guide, *Wild New York*, authors Mittelbach and Crewdson offer a short natural history entitled "Rat Nation," which makes an important statement simply by including rats amongst more charismatic fauna (76–79). More extreme than *Wild New York* is Robert Sullivan's 2004 bestselling work of nonfiction, *Rats*. Sullivan sets the stage for his underground natural history by describing New York as a place of mechanical repetition, relating that he lives in "an apartment building on a block filled with other apartment buildings" (1). Sullivan's retreat from the overwhelming sameness is a "filth-slicked little alley" where he sits "rain or no rain, night after night, and always at night" to watch rats (2). The act of rat-watching is an explicitly rebellious gesture, a challenge to anthropocentrism: Sullivan states that "it is the very ostracism of the rat, its exclusion from the pantheon of natural wonders, that makes it appealing to me" (2). The rest of Sullivan's text is part natural history, part travelogue as he tours around in search of wild urban rats. The end of the book includes an odd parallel with the Pale Male hawk saga when Sullivan's alley is cleared out by city exterminators. Unfortunately, Sullivan is a lone rat dissident, and his attempts to protect the burrows of his filth-slicked alley prove fruitless (213–19). The lovers of vermin evidently comprise a subculture of one.

Even so, in some circumstances vermin successfully capture the imagination of popular culture in full, untamed style. The cockroach—perhaps even less outwardly charming than the rat—wins admiration as a source of comic inspiration. Don Marquis's "archy and mehitabel" (sic) 1920's comic strip from the New York *Sun Dial* features poems tapped out by a cockroach who writes in the style of e.e. cummings because he cannot manipulate the "shift" key. One poem from 1927 reads, "insects are not always/ going to be bullied/ by humanity/ some day they will revolt/ i am already organizing/ a revolutionary society." The humor of this stanza comes from the quixotic spunk of archy's challenge. The audacity of the roach-poet conveys an ironic truth; although roaches are small insects, they are ubiquitous and indestructible, perpetually evading bigger, more intelligent human hosts.

A more recent example of roach-related irony is the film *Joe's Apartment* (1996), an MTV production that tells the story of a building in the East

Village controlled by omnipotent, singing, dancing roaches. The appeal of the film comes from a role reversal; the roaches are not exterminated, but rather the apartment's mafia landlords are thwarted when the insect horde fights back with the threat, "we know where you live. *We live* where you live." When the film's college-age protagonist, Joe, claims the apartment for himself, the roaches tie him down like a modern-day Gulliver with the declaration, "*We* were here first. We'll be here last too. We've got a longtime lease on this planet. Roaches will be crawling over the daisy popping out of the last, rotting human corpse." Much as Don Marquis did seventy years earlier, John Payson, the film's writer and director, evidently sees the potential for heroism in the life of the common cockroach. By highlighting the survival powers of the roach, Payson humiliates his human characters by reminding them of their mortality and subverting their anthropocentric self-assuredness. In Payson's film the cockroach is transformed into a symbol representing a critique of human dominance.

Perhaps the most extreme form of this critique goes so far as to *equate* humans with insects. Tyler Knox's bizarre and disturbing novel, *Kockroach* (2007), tells the story of a Times Square motel cockroach who becomes a man, reversing the metamorphosis that occurs in Franz Kafka's classic tale. The novel's eponymous protagonist is a classic anti-hero who rises through society to the rank of senator through amoral swindling and violence. Knox depicts the roach world as an alternate civilization built on alien values, such that his hero initially finds his human face "horrifyingly ugly, with none of the sharp elegance of the cockroach face" (8). However, while *Kockroach's* sensibilities are alien, his cynical, survivalist attitudes also lead him to success. Perhaps Knox is suggesting that the differences between vermin and humans are only skin deep, and that human virtues are also fundamentally vermin-like qualities.

Knox's work suggests a common thread uniting New York's vermin stories: literature can bring pests closer to people. E.B. White and George Seldon make mice lovable; Robert Sullivan lives among rats; Joe teams up with the roaches under his sink; and *Kockroach* strides out into human society. In each of these cases humans and animals are brought into comparison, although each artist clearly has his own perspective on the relationship. Thus it seems possible that when humans become more culturally intimate with vermin, they may become more tolerant of the pests that physically surround them. In other words, the "vermin story" is like a peace protest against the war between pests and people. In this light, this story has great potential as an environmental critique because it forces city dwellers to re-evaluate even the most unpleasant aspects of their highly structured relationship to nature.

WILD SPACES

“If there’s some we hold in common it’s the love we hold for earth
We reclaim the vacant lots and grow tomatoes and the herbs!”

The More Gardens! Coalition sang these words to the tune of “John Brown’s Body” before a New York City courthouse in 1999 (Von Hassel 1). The coalition was protesting the reclamation and development of community garden spaces under the orders of Mayor Rudolf Giuliani. In a costumed “Rites of Spring Parade,” protestors marched through the streets dressed as giant flowers and vegetables (Staeheli 98). Community gardens are not wild spaces, but the example of the More Gardens! protest provokes an interesting question about wild spaces in New York. If people are willing to rally around gardens, then might they also sometimes value uncultivated, undeveloped islands in the ocean of urban structure? It seems that intact, undeveloped wild spaces might be hard to defend in a city with high real estate demand and a history of literally paving over the forests and marshes of its pre-urban environment. In some respects the untamed landscape is the most radical icon of protest against the urban aesthetic of manufactured structure.

In a city where land is a commodity, some individuals and organizations persist in celebrating relict pre-urban ecology. An environmental historian of New York City, Matthew Gandy, describes the “sharp polarization of perspectives on public space” that emerged in the 1990s in response to increased gentrification pressures (104). He writes that “Central Park is now the tranquil core of an increasingly globalized dynamic of land commodification,” and indicates that the City’s many other parks are shrinking while Olmstead’s creation persists only because it is iconic (105). This means that New York is poised to lose many marginally wild spaces—parks that are partly reverted to an untamed state. Some parks, like Chelsea’s High Line, came into being through uncontrolled ecological colonization, literally reclaimed from vacant lots by wild flowers and grasses (Weisman 27). Brooklyn’s Prospect Park, with its particularly tangled lakeshore, is a good example of a park space that has been partly recovered by wild colonists. City authorities recognized the importance of Prospect’s untamed elements, and rather than “weeding” the lakeshore, teams of ecologists assessed the space for massive restoration in order to improve “the relationships between water quality, vegetation, and wildlife” (Caldwell 4). It is significant that New Yorkers valued a patch of tangled park enough to protect it from the space demands of gentrification, treating it as an authentic wilderness.

Arguably, New York City’s ultimate environmental subversives are those who celebrate extinct pre-urban ecology, imagining the city returned to its

primeval wild space or even re-conquered by the wild. The Mannahatta Project, run through the Wildlife Conservation Society, is a research program that proposes “to understand, down to the level of one city block, where in Manhattan streams once flowed or where American chestnuts may have grown, where black bears once marked territories, and where the Lenape fished and hunted” (“Mannahatta”). The Mannahatta Project is only an educational program, but the image of the island restored is a powerful environmental symbol that carries a subtext of destruction. Alan Weisman draws from the findings of the Mannahatta Project in *The World Without Us*, where he sketches a hypothetical future in which the city, abandoned, decays back to a wild state. Weisman’s haunting, apocalyptic descriptions of weeds bursting through asphalt and rain-gutted skyscrapers are more awe-inspiring than frightening. The image of the city reclaimed is as beautiful as it is tragic, and it recurs as a compelling visual across media. *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), a film about climate apocalypse, contains striking shots of New York partly submerged under a pristine layer of glacial ice. In 2007, the high-grossing film *I Am Legend* practically advertised Weisman’s book with both scenes of New York turned partly to grassland after three years of neglect and compelling images of escaped zoo-lions chasing deer through the city streets. Weisman’s book and the two films carry a powerful, humbling message. New York City, a great achievement of human engineering and industry, is mortal, subject to the unrelenting forces of nature. Such predictions of urban apocalypse re-frame the city as an insignificant, temporary folly on the geological timescale. The specter of the apocalypse confronts the hubris behind manufactured structure and asserts the ultimate dominance of wild spaces.

At some level, the analysis here has been necessarily sketchy, and the examples admittedly eclectic. Clearly the environmental rebels of New York City comprise a nebulous and varied group, often with little relation to each other. However, in the midst of this cacophony of examples several themes resound clearly, outlining an environmental critique that is unique to the city. First, in a large city, those who watch wildlife are not passive, for they implicitly protest with their gaze. Second, the pest-infested environment of the city forces some urbanites to appreciate the least charismatic animals. Third, when the grandeur of the city is juxtaposed with the memory and persistence of wild spaces, people sometimes imagine a radical future that frames the very mortality of industrial civilization. These three perspectives are valuable additions in the arsenal of environmentalist thought, and it seems probable that only a city could produce such critiques. In places like New York City, nature and manufactured structure collide to generate conflict and nurture activity and creativity. A typical rural activist might never develop the obsession to

defend one hawk's nest, the stomach to watch rats, or the audacity to imagine skyscrapers destroyed. In this sense the city is far from sterile—rather it is a potential hotbed for radical environmentalist thinking. ◆

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WINTER 2008 HONORABLE MENTION

Sasha Engelmann

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

AS THE CONDITIONS AND PARADIGMS of the global environmental crisis transform before our very eyes, a question emerges: How can environmental activism improve, when the conditions that challenge it are so new, vast, and abstract? How will the environmental movement change to meet the abstraction that is this crisis of human infrastructure, weather, and gas?

Sasha Engelmann answers these questions by turning our critical attention to the philosophical and cultural assumptions that have driven recent environmental protest groups such as Greenpeace. If the environmentalist movement is to meet the crisis at hand, she argues, it must embrace a philosophy more amenable to the 'new nature' that is the world in warming. Instead of tailoring their rhetoric to the dark iconography of oil derricks, environmentalists might teach us to mark the experiential texture of living in a world of weather.

In this regard, Sasha argues that the art of Olafur Eliasson and the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty can provide us with the rhetorical frame we need. How will this vision look in the context of actual protests? That is the urgent question of this beautiful essay, and it is one that will be answered in the years to come.

—SCOTT HERNDON

Breaking the Frame: Olafur Eliasson's Art, Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology, and the Rhetoric of Eco-Activism

Sasha Engelmann

Here, there is no white cube, no carefully spaced series of rectangles on the wall. There are no points of focus signified by elaborate bronze frames. I do not feel compelled to pay attention to detail, read captions and important dates or walk in a prescribed path. In fact, all that is required of me is to absorb, feel, and interact where I am tempted. Once inside Olafur Eliasson's installation, I am entirely seduced into a realm of pure perception.

The Icelandic light and space artist Olafur Eliasson has become, through his work and philosophy, a post-modern sensation. His installations are at once marvels of natural material and unnerving reflective environments, where viewers are given leading roles in the art's construction and are offered new lenses through which to perceive natural elements such as water, light, and organic matter. Eliasson effectively decouples natural forces from their traditional molds. His work is startling for this reason, and its value is found not only in the initial reactions of the audience to the installation but also in the way it sensitizes individuals to the infinite number of perceptual shifts possible in their interaction with familiar elements in daily life. Eliasson's work is seductive, spectacular, and therefore memorable; evidence of his rise in popularity was seen when thousands flocked to the Tate Modern to experience his grand installation, *The Weather Project*. More than any other contemporary light and space artist, Eliasson has attained a position of great influence on the international stage while preserving for every viewer a delicate interactive experience.

But Eliasson's work is more than a body of aesthetic phenomena. Its importance lies in its ability to elegantly fuse the creation of spectacle with the consequence of a fundamental shift in individual perception of natural elements, sculpting a new interface between the human and the natural. Given the forces of imbalance that have historically altered man's relationship to nature and the continuing discourse surrounding the human impact on our planet's atmosphere, it is easy to credit Eliasson's work with the primary purpose of quiet protest on behalf of the pristine natural resources that have been lost to the modern citizen. If it would be misleading to ascribe a direct eco-activist purpose to Eliasson's art or attribute to it a rhetoric of protest, his installations nonetheless do effect a reconstruction of perceptual boundaries between man and environment, indirectly realigning cultural paradigms on civilization's role in interacting with Earth.

Eliasson might almost have committed the principles of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* to memory. His work offers a departure from rationalist divisions separating modern culture and environment and cultivates a paradigm of mutual and receptive co-evolution between humans and the biosphere. And while his art is not in itself a new environmental rhetoric, it serves to show us how a philosophy more conducive to an ecological sharing of the Earth can be communicated and practiced in an effective, tangible way. There is a lesson here that extends far beyond the techniques of avant-garde art. Eliasson's idiosyncratic methodological approach to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenism actually has the potential to inform and improve the tactics of modern environmental protest. Such thinking can extend to groups like Greenpeace, who all too often perpetuate a hierarchical divide between society and nature for the sake of global media attention. And Eliasson's phenomenist approach to the natural may help inform a new set of global paradigms, leaning toward sustainability and long-term interaction between society and ecosystems. Ultimately, tenets of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy may be expressed in the actions of leading environmental organizations so that ingrained paradigms on environment—the first set of rhetorical frames that binds progress to sustainability and climate change mitigation—may be broken.

NOTION MOTION

My eyes register darkness as moisture and coolness touch my skin. After a few seconds there is a wall of gray, lucidly glowing and slightly pulsating before me. As I walk farther into the room I feel a floorboard creak under my foot, and I am startled by a movement on the opposite wall. I test the floorboard again. The

weight of my foot creates a ripple that travels up from a point in the bottom center of the wall to the ceiling, in greater and greater rings. It is like standing on a dock by the edge of a placid lake, yet now the water is a vertical front. It is unnerving and quieting at the same time.

I find myself in a fluid environment where I have influence. Even the smallest movement by my weight creates a response in the water, as if the moving surface is answering the curiosity in my action. The grayness is melancholy and the light ripples are meditative, offering rhythm. I am suspended in a universe where light and water are the only materials, and the artistic canvass transcends the limits of the wall.

I instantly recall memories of the Adriatic Sea. On one summer visit to my mother's family on the island of Hvar in Croatia, I remember standing at the edge of the small dock that stretched into the warm waters of the bay, watching light play off the restless surfaces. But immersed in Olafur Eliasson's installation *Notion Motion* I am also aware that the waterscape in front of me is contrived, disjointed from association with the natural element itself despite the memories it evokes. This is not the water that revealed darting motions of fish in flight, bright corals and wild seaweed. It is too austere, too willful. This waterscape assumes an autonomy that is at once startling, yet without the implication of immediate danger. Staring at the face of this fluid projection I feel enveloped and overwhelmed with the powerful presence of a force beyond my control and even my immediate understanding.

The water is denaturalized, and my suspicion that the water holds the power in the room is enforced through Eliasson's intentional exposure of the framework behind the screen. A passage leads around the back of the wall, where I can clearly see that a spotlight projects ripples from the surface of a shallow pool onto a scrim that forms the vertical wall in the installation. When a person steps onto a certain floorboard in the adjacent room, a string pulls a small flap of wood that disturbs the water behind the scrim, and the disturbance then translates to the projection. Yet when people are tempted to jump on the floorboards, the flap of wood transmits nothing more violent to the pool, therefore limiting human interference with the rippling projection. The impact of the visitor is tempered in scope so that one can animate the work, but never overwhelm the calm that is central to the work's presentation.



Fig. 1. Olafur Eliasson, *Notion Motion*

This effortless combination of spectacle, interaction, and demystification found in *Notion Motion* is a mark of Eliasson's installations. In the liminal space between wood and water, familiarity and uncertainty, action and reception, I am forced to allow myself to simply exist with and accept the elements that I perceive, however strange this immediately feels. It is in this visceral state that the work is realized so that now I am free to rethink my relationship to water and light. And it is here that I experience an artistic representation of nature that is beyond any landscape painting I have seen framed on a wall. The most fundamental shift that Eliasson's work intimates is that of breaking the traditional frame of the landscape in its role as metonym for ingrained cultural philosophy on nature. By defying the white cube of gallery presentation and the repeated formulae of landscape portrayal in art, Eliasson rebels against the paradigms of nature as conquest, nature as Eden,² and nature as an unfathomable, indestructible phenomenon.

When taken in the context of the anthropogenic degradation of Earth's most organic materials, Eliasson's work is inherently political. It is the very same set of paradigms that Eliasson deconstructs that have been driving forces behind the misuse and careless stewardship of our planet. For ages humanity has viewed nature as the ultimate prize, both because of the relationship between resources and growth of civilization and also the belief that the natural landscape is so spectacular and so vast that there is no conceivable way humans could have a serious impact on it. Few individuals in the nineteenth century thought spewing ash from coal production into the air was a problem, given the interminable greatness of our atmosphere, until numerous deaths occurred from air pollution in industrial cities such as London and New York. And it was only recently that the international community recognized the direct connection between emissions of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and destruction of the ozone layer.

In his installations, Eliasson engineers a direct human involvement with natural elements that transcends cultural models of the relationship between man and environment so that the individual, instead of simply observing and admiring, is now given the heightened responsibility of interacting with natural forces through art. Eliasson demonstrates that there is an apparatus behind the perceptive front that registers human action; nature is no longer something pristine and immeasurably vast but an evolving system in which man has a footprint.

In crafting these territories of perceptual phenomena, Eliasson draws directly from the philosophy of phenomenism, especially as conveyed by the French scholar Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*. Merleau-Ponty offers a vision of the interaction between humans and

environment as a kind of visceral, immersive experience. Unlike rationalist philosophers who distinguished between man and nature, reflection (scientific reason), and the senses, Merleau-Ponty believed that, "Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them" (xi). The corporeal mechanisms of our bodies react to stimuli from our surroundings in an instantaneous exchange, so that we exist effortlessly as part of a system, unified in our mutual participation and reception.

These tenets are clearly expressed in Eliasson's art and have the potential to animate a shift in the modern environmental movement. Environmentalism as catalyzed by figures such as John Muir and Rachel Carson was born from the concept of a more intimate and equal relationship between humans and nature. But more recently, eco-activist protests led by groups such as EarthFirst! and Greenpeace have begun to perpetuate a polarization between humans and nature through dramatic tactics aimed at media exposure. Rather than retreat to the line of rationalist division between human and natural forces, it is now essential that we find a set of tools and an effective medium for altering human perception of nature toward a worldview that will nurture ecological understanding. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenism presents the tools, and modern ecological protest is the medium. Eliasson's work is a kind of connecting force, illustrating how principles of phenomenology can be expressed clearly, spectacularly, and without over-analysis.

IMMERSIVE ART AS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTEST

The constantly evolving worlds of modern art and environmental protest may overlap through the practice of phenomenism in a way that underscores the increasingly urgent message at the heart of human and natural welfare: we must act now to save our ailing planet. A paradox exists in the fact that Eliasson's art itself cannot be labeled as eco-activist or explicitly ecological in origin, but it carries political weight through the implementation of phenomenological values that alter the cultural paradigms on nature that viewers bring to the exhibition. If Eliasson's art has the ability to alter perception and undermine cultural paradigms without being transparently eco-conscious, it is necessary to consider the effect of art that is ecologically and politically driven, both in form and apparent message. While Eliasson successfully employs optical and sensory seduction of the audience to reflect a highly participatory and equity-based relationship with the environment, other artists are more blunt about the underlying environmental goals of their work.

The German artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser was a pioneer of environmentally conscious and charismatic architecture and painting in the twentieth century, essentially advertising unique elements of his environmental philosophy through his artwork. In designing the transformation of an old furniture factory into one of Vienna's most exotic museums, Hundertwasser openly expressed his beliefs in the rights of nature. His architecture reflects his radical opposition to normative modes of living in the modern city, including a rejection of the straight line, the horizontal floor, and uniformly matched windows. From the outside the museum *Kunsthausein* appears to be a mosaic of black and white tiles arranged in curved lines. Trees grow out of some of the building's windows while the top of the building is literally a rooftop garden. Brightly colored pillars line the entrances to the museum and even the tiles of the pavement are curved in swirly patterns.

Hundertwasser believed that just as pores are the sources of air for the human skin, so must the walls of a building act as a "Third Skin"³ and be full of numerous windows. Similarly, his theory that trees should be a more integral part of the city landscape is exhibited in the rooftop garden and the small plots of dirt that allow trees to grow out of windows on every floor. According to Hundertwasser, "The tree tenant pays his rent in much more valuable currency than humans do" (Harel 2), and the trees in *Kunsthausein* symbolize the rebirth of man's rank as an important partner of the tree and nature itself. Instead of continually destroying the land, the building is a testament to Hundertwasser's belief that "We must give territories back to nature which we have taken from her illegally" (Harel 3).

Inside the building the floors are uneven so that one can return to a more natural walking experience. The green roof serves both as an expression of a renewed relationship between the inhabitants and nature as well as a feature that serves to regulate the building's climate during the winter and cool it during the summer, saving energy and expenses. The pillars are an important aesthetic addition because they give people "the good feeling of standing next to a tree" (Harel 5).

Hundertwasser's work is similar to Eliasson's in that it is immersive. Both



Fig. 2. Friedensreich Hundertwasser, *Kunsthausein*

artists incorporate raw and natural materials to raise the issue of human interaction with environment. Major differences lie in the fact that while Hundertwasser bathes the audience in a manifesto of environmental ethics, Eliasson attempts no direct imposition of his beliefs, instead allowing the viewers to arrive at their own shifts in perception and ideology by their own paths and inward mechanisms. Though Hundertwasser's work expresses relevant themes in our modern environmental crisis and has changed the outlooks of many different audiences over past decades, it is Eliasson's art that is the most exciting in its construction of an ecologically cohesive bond between humans and nature. Both Hundertwasser and Eliasson have successfully bridged the gap between modern art and environmental activism, proving that art can act on multiple levels to catalyze greater ecological receptivity. But in a world obsessed with virtual reality and sensation, Eliasson's installations have the greater potential to completely reinvigorate the way the world perceives the relationship between humans and the earth.

SPACE POLITICS

The claim that Eliasson communicates ecological consciousness is not valid, however, unless we consider the exact political properties of his work and analyze how the techniques he employs are in fact agents of social change. The aim is to investigate an important distinction between the political effects of Eliasson's installations and the assertion that the art is meant or created to inspire sympathy for nature and our planet. There is danger in assuming a direct link between effect and purpose, and if Eliasson's work is significant in its ability to alter perception of the relationship between man and nature, it would be seriously misleading to equate this effect with the art's constructive goals. A paradox exists here. Taken in pure form, Eliasson's artwork does not call for environmental change, nor is it a form of eco-activist protest. But it is inhabited by principles, namely those of phenomenalism, that enable it to have a political consequence, and in this way it alters how individuals view landscape, and by metonymic association the interaction between humans and environment.

The elegance of Eliasson's work lies not only in its aesthetic appeal but also in its delegation of artistic construction and ultimate interpretation to the visitor. In many installations, Eliasson openly calls for an intimately engaged spectator with titles employing the possessive pronoun *your* as in *Your natural denudation inverted* (1999), *Your egoless door* (2005), and *Your sun machine* (1997). Eliasson's work at its core demands that the visitor rec-

ognize his pieces as constructions and reacts to them by creating structures of his or her own invention. In a sense each visitor projects him or herself into the spatial canvas that Eliasson's work occupies and is therefore cast in a principle role in the process of aesthetic production.

The political work that Eliasson's art enacts is therefore presented as a task to the visitor. In his essay on the political portent of Eliasson's work, the critic Mieke Bal concludes:

This is why, in order to work politically, Eliasson's art needs to stage a fictitious space for its experiences and experiments. Reluctant to espouse the discourse of political art as manifesto, this work is much more effective, aesthetically and thereby politically, because it does not pronounce upon the world, but considers how seeing it differently is already changing it (178).

Changing perception without explicitly "pronouncing" the nature or direction of this change is another expression of the work's paradoxical qualities. Eliasson provides tools to the visitor, attending to people in time and space, and enabling liberation from traditional modes of perception and ingrained myths of our culture. The audience does not leave his work as a body changed in the same way, but altered almost imperceptibly in an infinite number of directions. To say that Eliasson's artwork addresses a direct concern for the environment is unfounded, but to allow that the art is invested most clearly in the issue of environment, and to recognize the limitless number of possibilities of perceptual change that can be derived from the work, is to acknowledge that Eliasson's pieces have the profound ability to inspire new visions of the exchange between humans and nature.

BREAKING THE FRAME

We have seen that Eliasson's art works with a double edge, both providing the aesthetic environment for an infinite number of perceptual shifts and investing the viewer in the issue of landscape and nature. Here we shift from analyzing the art's lack of ultimate political goals to consider the aspects of Eliasson's art that do have the latent potential to inspire environmental change. These questions remain: exactly how does Eliasson employ natural elements to invent work so radically different from traditional nature-oriented art, and how does this have the effect of re-imagining the symbols of landscape in modern culture?

Works such as Eliasson's *Notion Motion* challenge traditionally constructed landscapes, both in the form of meticulously painted nature scenes characteristic of Dutch and Western artists and in the evolving philosophical

relationship between humans and the environment. *Notion Motion* presents the audience with an element commonly found in landscape painting and familiar to every viewer, but distorts it so that it becomes surreal, out of its natural plane and on a highly disturbing scale. In the installation *Moss Wall*, reindeer moss is anchored to a gallery wall with a framework of chicken wire, so that the surface appears to be a massive front of moss. The moss is disconcerting because instead of playing the role of a simple foreground or taking the shape of a doormat, it is now confrontational and imposing. It demands attention, even permeating the room with a distinct natural odor and slightly warming the temperature of the air. Though it immediately reminds the viewer of a natural scene, either painted or in nature itself, the moss is effectively denaturalized, now assuming a defiant personality so unlike its counterparts in real and constructed landscape.



Fig. 3. Olafur Eliasson, Moss Wall

The concept of landscape is closely tied with the history of changing perceptions of humanity's place in the environment. Eliasson succeeds in undermining normative ways of representing nature in art, and in doing so invites questions concerning the philosophy behind the surviving paradigms of civilization and environment. Just as images of the pristine American frontier created in the nineteenth century represented the common belief in "Manifest Destiny," Eliasson's installations suggest a modern way of interpreting and understanding the presence of nature. At the heart of the new philosophy that Eliasson's art applies to environment is human involvement, or a continual exchange of stimuli between subject and object. In *Notion Motion*, it is precisely human participation that animates the artwork and without the catalyzing forces of human presence, the work would exist as merely a lucid gray wall.

Eliasson often opens his exhibitions with *Room for One Color* (Grynztajn 6). The single wavelength yellow light produced by rows of bulbs running along the ceiling of a narrow room forces a reaction in the iris of each viewer, so that adjacent white rooms and hallways appear blue in relation to the yellow atmosphere. While experiencing the color yellow, we are also neurologically compensating for the



Fig. 4. Olafur Eliasson, Room For One Color

absence of other colors in the room. It is exactly the human sensory apparatus that is as much a part of the piece as the wires connecting the lightbulbs to an energy source. The essence of our experience is not explicitly given but a product of interweaving body and room, environmental qualities and our own internal sensations.

In analyzing the way that Eliasson delegates an active role to his audience, Daniel Birnbaum writes, “Olafur Eliasson’s art is not complete without you; in fact, you are part of it. His works are not self-sufficient objects in the usual sense; rather, they are environments—productive arrangements, heterogeneous apparatuses—awaiting your arrival” (131). This element of interaction is central to Eliasson’s work in that it also espouses phenomenological arguments that permeate the artist’s research and constructions. Installations such as *Moss Wall*, *Room for One Color*, and *Notion Motion* are all examples of “perceptual phenomena,” in which the viewer exchanges “bundles of sense-data” and stimuli directly with the works themselves.⁴ The installations, according to the tenets of phenomenism, exist not as physical objects but more purely as the sensory reactions that humans perceive.

MERLEAU-PONTY: SENSE DATA

True philosophy consists in relearning to look at the world, and in this sense a story’s being told can give meaning to the world quite as ‘deeply’ as a philosophical treatise. We take our fate in our hands, we become responsible for our history through reflection, but equally by a decision on which we stake our life, and in both cases what is involved is a violent act which is validated by being performed.

—Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenism is the force that animates Eliasson’s work so that viewers do not only emerge from the art with broadened concepts of light and space but are also shifted in numerous directions to question traditional tropes of landscape and nature. In essence, the tenets of phenomenism provide the politicizing potential in Eliasson’s installations, loosening the frames through which the audience is accustomed to viewing environments. The experience is humbling; viewers are introduced into a “being in common” and absorb a sense of unity in the reception of sense data. Merleau-Ponty illustrates this sense of sharing experience: “The world is precisely that thing of which we form a representation, not as men or as empirical subjects, but in so far as we are all one light and participate in the One without destroying its unity” (xiii).

Merleau-Ponty argues that perception is continual and occurs without

our conscious awareness. In the following passage he discusses the emergence of sensations as qualities that are as complex as the objects themselves:

To see is to have colours or lights, to hear is to have sounds, to sense is to have qualities. To know what sense-experience is, then, is it not enough to have seen a red or to have heard an A? But red and green are not sensations, they are the sensed, and quality is not an element of consciousness, but a property of the object. Instead of providing a simple means of delimiting sensations, if we consider it in the experience itself which evinces it, the quality is as rich and mysterious as the object, or indeed the whole spectacle, perceived (5).

The body of sense data that we perceive is therefore a cumulative account of our environment as a perfect image of the world that requires no analysis. Our bodies sense colors, lights, sounds and space, all without the slightest turn of reflection, so that to perceive the world is to acknowledge the richness and value of every sensory experience.

In describing the consequences of a truly sensory, participatory relationship with an object, Merleau-Ponty states, “But the system of experience is not arrayed before me as if I were a God, it is lived by me from a certain point of view; I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception” (304). In playing the part of the viewer as sensory receptor, reacting to stimuli and projecting back onto the work, we become so much a part of the work itself that our perceptions of other, unrelated objects may change as well. As Merleau-Ponty remarks, our perceptions expand onto the “complete world,” demonstrating a consequence of the artistic experience: we are now altered perceivers and seers.

Eliasson comments on the possibilities of perceptual change inherent in his work in an interview with Robert Irwin: “To me the greatest potential of phenomenology lies in the idea that subjectivity is always susceptible to change. I like to think that my work can return criticality to the viewer as a tool for negotiating and reevaluating the environment—and that this can pave the way for a more causal relationship with our surroundings” (55). “Causal” is the operative word here. Eliasson suggests that his artwork has the power to remake our visions of reality. Often dwarfing viewers in the face of natural elements and creating a space of necessary exchange between audience and artwork, Eliasson offers to the viewer the concept that our relationship to nature should be one of mutual exchange, not over-dominance or disconnect.

Two additional key aspects of Eliasson’s work that make it so radically different from traditional landscape painting and western views of nature as

conquest are the inherently socializing conditions found in his installations and what Eliasson calls “seeing yourself seeing.”⁵ Viewing an installation such as *Notion Motion* involves not only participation of the individual, but also the individual’s awareness of the presence and effects of other people in the same atmosphere. In the darkened, liminal space of the room, facing the projected rippling surface, one feels transported into an equalizing atmosphere. Along with any other viewers who may be present, the individual is introduced into a realm of discovery. The actions of others are as much a part of the participatory experience as the viewer’s own, resulting in a mutual construction within the artwork, although no single viewer experiences the same stimuli as another. Individual reactions are preserved within a socializing environment.

“Seeing yourself seeing” is the process by which a viewer understands the nature of the apparatus that creates the given spectacle. Eliasson never attempts to conceal the framework behind his installations. In *Notion Motion*, the viewer can actively scrutinize the spotlight, the shallow pool and the moving wood that combine to create the projection on the scrim. The spectacle, instead of retaining a purely mythical presence, is exposed as a construction of wood, water, and light. The viewer simultaneously appreciates the fantastic effects of the piece while understanding the methods behind the sensation.

In an interview with Eliasson, the installation artist Robert Irwin stated, “I look around at the world, and it’s loaded with these kinds of frames. But, actually, there are no frames in our perception. It’s a continuous envelope in which we move. You realize that framing is a device” (56). While analyzing the use of limits and boundaries imposed on the average citizen by modern society, Irwin recognizes that Eliasson’s work has the potential to perceptually free the individual. While breaking the frame of the traditional landscape, Eliasson succeeds through the principles of phenomenism to construct new visions of human interplay with nature. His tactics of creating a common ground while preserving the individual experience, and allowing the individual to literally see the process of spectacle, have the direct effect of altering perceptual pathways and the indirect consequence of disintegrating accepted modes of thought concerning man and nature. Each viewer is liberated, each has a new set of lenses through which to interact and appreciate natural elements.

THE RHETORIC OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTEST: NORTH SEA AS FILM SET

The implications of Olafur Eliasson's technique of applying phenomenalist tenets in artwork are vast. The environmental movement is at a critical point in history, and the welfare of the planet in many ways depends on the actions of those groups strong enough to attempt to incite change within ingrained environmental practices. Past decades of environmental demonstration have seen some major victories in favor of increased sustainability, but the radical and dramatic images of activists chained to trees are losing their shock value. In order to be the forerunners in mitigating the effects of climate change, leading environmental organizations will need to rethink their strategies and behave more deliberately. Because modern environmental protests too often result in the Faustian bargain of increased media exposure at the expense of polarizing the human/ nature relationship, it is vital for the health of our future Earth that these protests abandon the frame of the melodramatic and spectacle-hungry media, and instead engage the logic of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenism as a means to break the initial perceptive barriers to global sustainable action.

Within the sphere of modern environmental protest, many groups and organizations have transformed the act of demonstrating for a certain issue into the art of dramatic, ecological performance. Often such groups intentionally reduce the complexity of the environmental debate by employing clear and universally understood symbols of good and evil and purposely catering to a worldwide audience that laps up images of heightened drama and conflict. The unintended but devastating consequences of this strategy are twofold: not only is the environment set as a backdrop to human antics; the harmful paradigm of an abyss between nature and modern culture is also perpetuated. Among organizations that repeatedly use dramatic rhetorical tactics and cater to the global media to send their message, Greenpeace has been extremely influential.

During the spring of 1995, one-dozen Greenpeace activists occupied a decommissioned oilrig in the Brent Sea, 120 miles off the coast of the Shetland Isles. The rig had been under the operation of oil companies Shell and Esso until both determined that it was no longer useful and needed to be disposed of. Weighing the equivalent of 2000 double-decker buses, the Brent Spar



Fig. 5. Greenpeace inflatable at Brent Spar. Water canon used by M.V. REMBAS and M.V. TORBAS at base of platform to prevent boarding.

Copyright Greenpeace/David Sims June 1995

was one of the largest masses of sheet metal stationed in the North Sea (Jordan 20). Shell made the controversial decision to tow the rig out onto the continental shelf and let it sink into the depths of the ocean.

The Greenpeace protest occurred in two periods of action. The first period lasted from April 30th to May 23rd and involved several protesters actually living on the Brent Spar, sending Internet reports to a Greenpeace support ship, the *Moby Dick* (Kershaw 7). The reports and photographs of the protest were forwarded to the international media. Pictures of lifeboats covered with rainbows and labeled Greenpeace seemingly battling the massive ships of the oil company sparked worldwide outrage aimed at Shell and its environmentally unsound practices. Greenpeace had successfully taken the conflict and transformed it into a kind of David-versus-Goliath epic battle.

The first period of action ended when Scottish courts gave Shell permission to evict the activists, and the oil company forcibly removed all people from the Brent Spar. Still, when Shell received support from a conservative British government and announced its plans to continue towing out the rig later in the spring, Greenpeace returned with a smaller but equally determined group of protesters. Shell used water cannons from its vessels to bombard the activists day after day, and finally began to tow the rig 330 miles out into the Atlantic with the environmentalists still on board. Finally, on June 20th, Shell collapsed under rising media condemnation and the tugboats turned around, bringing the rig and the exalting protesters back to shore.

The Brent Spar protest entered history as one of the first times an organization so successfully used methods of drama to gain media exposure and highlight an environmental issue. Nicholson-Lord wrote in 1997, "When the definitive history of environmentalism is written in the next century, the moment when a group of activists took over a pensioned-off oil platform in the North Sea may well merit a chapter all to itself...most people agree that, after the Brent Spar, nothing will be quite the same again. Ostensibly, Brent Spar was about the disposal of a huge amount of rubbish...but it was also a modern morality tale played out on our television screens and in the pages of our newspapers" (Jordan 21). The implications of Shell's defeat extended not only to the company's policy but also to the actions of other major oil companies. In an apology to customers, Shell stated, "We are going to change ... it is not enough to conform to laws and international rules... Acceptance by society is needed too" (Jordan 21). Shell went on to announce a greenhouse gas emission reduction plan in 1998, and supported the Kyoto Protocol, all in an effort to be seen as environmentally conscious.

What danger then lies in the dramatic, performative tactics of Greenpeace's eco-activist protest? The answer is found in the relationship

between the message-oriented strategy of the environmental organization and the appetite for sensationalism and drama in the modern media. While Greenpeace simplified the complex struggle for health of the world's oceans into a cataclysmic battle between the rainbow warrior and the evil oil industry in order to more pointedly assure distribution of its message, the media effectively turned the North Sea into a film set, bringing the story to the forefront of international news more for its spectacle value than pressing content. Nature is presented as a backdrop to the action; humans are the center of attention. Even when the protest had been such a success, the idea that nature was the primary and only focus was lost in translation; thus by attaining and using tools of mass-exposure to raise awareness Greenpeace sacrifices some of its ecological goals. A paradox exists in that by utilizing rhetorical tactics to focus world attention on an environmental issue, Greenpeace ends up creating an anthropocentric theatre and widening the perceived gap between humans and nature.

In describing the interplay between a message and its dramatization, it is necessary to consider what also may be the consequence of Greenpeace's use of symbols to communicate meaning and heighten awareness. We have seen that the parallels between the life boat vs. oil ship battle and exciting conflicts canonized in stories like that of David and Goliath fed media fascination with the event so that it was distorted, and the environment was forced into a minor role. In another way, the efforts made by Greenpeace to symbolically equate the friction between the oceans and the oil industry as that between good and evil worked to trivialize the terrifying complexity of the environmental issue at stake.

In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Slavoj Žižek argues that the attempt to give meaning to a threatening and little understood event masks our innate fear of the impact of the event itself. Using the example of the ill-fated Titanic, he writes, "perhaps all the effort to articulate the metaphorical meaning of the Titanic is nothing but an attempt to escape this terrifying impact of the Thing, and attempt to domesticate the Thing by reducing it to its symbolic status, by providing it with meaning... the meaning obscures the terrifying impact of its presence" (1). Similarly, the photographs of the tiny Greenpeace dinghy facing the monstrous oil ship on the turbulent waters of the North Sea reduces the terrible uncertainty and complexity of the destruction of our oceans and the intricate relationships between interest groups like Shell, corporate capitalism, and the environment into a single dramatic metaphor. The rainbow warrior is good, the oil ship is evil, and nothing more is said in media releases about the impact that such a massive structure of steel could have had in polluting the seas. Nothing is communicated about

the seemingly endless battle of words between Shell and organizations such as Greenpeace that occurred long before the protest, in which Shell even agreed to conduct environmental impact reports on all scenarios involving the Brent Spar to avoid confrontation (Jordan 13). And still less was said regarding the political relationships between lobbyists on both sides of the conflict and the British government, a story that reveals hushed agreements and alliances.

The act of applying symbols to events and processes enables individuals to digest even the most intricate and deeply disturbing issues. Just as adding a metaphorical meaning to the sinking Titanic enabled individuals to rationalize the event more easily so that it assumed less of a threatening presence, the transformation of the Brent Spar conflict into a loaded allegory of good against evil weakened the urgency of the ecological issue at stake. In environmental protest, the danger lies in the fact that such a defense mechanism is detrimental to the understanding of the natural issue and the societal, political, and cultural events that surround it.

MAN AND BEAST/MAN IN THE WORLD

For after the error of those who deny the existence of God... there is none that is more powerful in leading feeble minds astray from the straight path of virtue than the supposition that the soul of the brutes is of the same nature with our own; and consequently that after this life we have nothing to hope for or fear, more than flies and ants...

—Rene Descartes

A still greater ramification of a protest like that on the Brent Spar is that it further supports a philosophical hierarchy between man and nature. In radically playing up human interaction and conflict, the protest demonstrates a deep disconnect between anthropogenic forces and natural forces. In this way, Greenpeace translates a kind of humanistic view of the natural world characteristic of the distinction between man and animal forms espoused by rationalist philosophers such as Descartes. Such philosophy is based on the widespread and historical belief that humans, as beings that according to Descartes differ from animals and plants through possession of a soul, are inherently superior and necessarily the dominant life form on Earth. Greenpeace, in its volatile rhetorical tactics aimed at exposure through human drama, is inadvertently perpetuating this rigid binary between human society and nature.

What is explicitly portrayed is a clear dichotomy between the dynamic of the actors on stage and the static, immobile stage set—in effect a kind of

anthropocentric monologue. In a world where it is now clear that what humanity demands has a direct and lasting impact on the Earth just as natural events daily affect human lives, it is necessary to show that instead of being separate and unique powers, human society and nature are part of a symbiotic system. These are the ideas that sparked modern environmentalism and motivated a generation of social activists under the leadership of visionaries such as John Muir to challenge society and politics for the sake of greater equity in the relationship between humans and nature. These are the ideas that we must re-ignite, but to do so we will need to approach environmentalism using a rhetorical method that has the ability to reconstruct mutualism between man and nature in an age of spectacle.

The elegance of phenomenism lies in its ability to abolish the strict definitions of rationalistic tendencies in modern protest and its potential to reinvigorate the ideas that fueled the early stages of modern environmentalism. Merleau-Ponty explains how we can bind together our perception of the world with a sense of belonging and unity in all things:

Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them. The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Truth does not 'inhabit' only 'the inner man' or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. When I return to myself from an excursion into the realm of dogmatic common sense or of science, I find, not a source of intrinsic truth, but a subject destined to the world (xi-xii).

According to Merleau-Ponty, our instantaneous perception and receptivity to all things is the condition through which we become a more integral part of environment. Merleau-Ponty offers us this method of viewing the world and therefore the power to understand how we can exist in a participatory exchange of forces with nature. In this way phenomenism supplies a new rhetoric in which we find shadows of the ideas that catalyzed environmentalism in the twentieth century, while rejecting formal rationalist constructions of man as separate from nature. Yet, unlike the pioneers of the environmental movement, our environmental leaders must face the challenge of the most pressing environmental threat in history: climate change. We have seen that the concepts of phenomenism are presented and exhibited in modern art—why not expand this influence to environmentalism?

GREENPEACE ACTIVISM AS PHENOMENALIST PRACTICE

The future of the environmental movement lies in the readiness of groups such as Greenpeace to modify their methods and to present their ideas and messages attractively and palatably to an evolving public without employing simplifying, dramatic rhetorical devices that detract from the ecological ideas themselves. It is clear that an ever-increasing amount of spectacle is necessary to appeal to mass audiences, and it is not a viable option for Greenpeace to continually raise the stakes, searching out ever more inflammatory situations as catalysts for their messages. In order to change the views of a public eye that is ever harder to capture and hold, it is time for Greenpeace to consider breaking the “frames” that Irwin speaks of, refusing to let the media “focus” the issues and employing values of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenism to reinvent the rhetoric of eco-activism.

The radical action characteristic of early Greenpeace protests was vital to awakening the world to environmental degradation, but the form of spectacle now needs to evolve in order to continue to have a positive effect. As the science of climate change continually presents irrefutable evidence that our planet is in crisis, it is ever more urgent that the international community begins to shift its ingrained behaviors. Change in behavior cannot occur without change in perception, and this is where phenomenism enters the equation. Greenpeace is not a society of philosophers, and the abstract nature of the philosophical tenets I have discussed may seem unattainable or incomprehensible for an activist organization. Still, Eliasson shows us how phenomenism can be expressed and used to utmost effect in tangible constructions of the simplest materials. Eliasson’s use of phenomenist principles, such as exposing the framework behind each spectacle and creating a kind of “being in common” in viewers while retaining the individual role, are concepts that can be translated to public acts of protest. In some cases, the Faustian bargain may still be inevitable, but Greenpeace can change its rhetoric to reflect a new focus on dismantling the ecological issues from the frame and thus avoid the rationalist division of man and nature that past protests have sustained.

The most clear and direct way for Greenpeace to implement the tenet of “being in the world” espoused by Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenism is by acting as a leader in educating the public on ecological interdependence. Ecology, by definition, is the science of biological interdependency, and in this way can be directly correlated with Merleau-Ponty’s arguments on living in a unified world. It is known that the primary reason individuals become members of certain organizations is to receive information, and the most gratifying reward from acting as a member in the long run is a feeling of

increased awareness and knowledge on environmental issues. In order to communicate the idea that citizens of the world are participants in a greater ecological space, as unique and mobile parts of a greater whole, Greenpeace can teach a kind of receptive co-evolution as the standard for the relationship between humans and nature. More precisely, by educating the global audience on the interconnected nature of our biosphere, it may be possible to foster greater participation in environmental activism and spread the kind of ecological consciousness necessary to catalyze behavioral change.

One way for Greenpeace to reveal a framework or effectively relocate a demonstration away from its dramatic symbolism may be to utilize dynamic networks of communication in digital and computerized formats to allow open and democratic viewing of each protest. Just as CNN hosted a YouTube debate this year, where viewers across the globe could access the top presidential candidates on a more direct level than ever before, so Greenpeace can employ modern methods of dialogue to reveal behind-the-scenes work in every case of activism. In this way, although newspapers and televisions may still reveal the spectacle in the form of single, powerful images, the average global citizen will also have the ability to see the materials—the wood, water, and light—that exist behind the sensation.

In an interview with Robert Irwin, Olafur Eliasson commented, “This may sound naïve, but I think you can apply introspective and self-evaluative tools to any situation—and this ultimately gives you the opportunity to reposition yourself in society” (58). This concept can be applied to an organization, even an entire movement, just as effectively as it can be applied to an individual. The spheres of modern art and eco-activist protest have crossed in the past to the point where artwork has acted as a vessel for environmental philosophy, and demonstrations have been injected with drama and allegorical symbolism. Yet each of these techniques is no longer as potent as it was in recent decades. The next step in the interface between environmental protest and art may have potentially revolutionary effects if the more subtle but deliberate tools of phenomenism are employed to alter perception in a less-polarizing yet equally spectacular form. This way, environmental organizations may succeed in teaching an understanding of our biosphere as a realm of common interdependence, where society and nature act in a balance of mutual exchange. As exemplified in Eliasson’s art, philosophy has provided the tools to break the frames of normative ways of seeing and perceiving, and ripples of change travel across disciplines. Now it is up to the leaders of environmental protest groups to use this gift that art has offered and apply it, for the ultimate purpose of healing our planet, to fundamentally “reposition” man’s perception of nature. ♦

NOTES

- ¹ I use the term “liminal” in the sense of a vulnerable, transitional state as described in Turner.
- ² The parallel between Eliasson’s work and representations of Eden were introduced in Bal’s essay, “Light Politics.”
- ³ Hundertwasser often describes architecture through poetic references to nature, as in “The Third Skin in the Third District.”
- ⁴ “Perceptual Phenomena” and “Bundles of Sense Data” are two commonly used phrases in discussing phenomenism, and are attributed to Edmund Husserl.
- ⁵ “Seeing yourself seeing” is a phrase unique to Eliasson’s descriptions of his work, as in his interview with Robert Irwin.

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ESSAYS FROM THE
Introduction to the
Humanities

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

*Boothe Prize Winners &
Honorable Mentions*

INTRODUCTION

THE COURSES THAT MAKE UP the Introduction to the Humanities (IHUM) program present Stanford freshmen with opportunities to engage with significant issues, themes, and ideas concerning human identity and existence. Students select from a wide range of offerings specifically designed for the first year of college. Distinguished faculty members address these topics in lectures, and students explore them further in discussion sections and writing assignments. The success of IHUM students' writing represented by the Boothe Prize winning essays in this volume validates the decision to organize freshman humanities in terms of freedom of choice rather than a single canon.

One cannot but be impressed by the diversity of topics and the subtlety of argument as well as the admirable seriousness essays bring to bear on a diverse range of texts. Kate Hyder addresses representations of the Civil War in a subtle consideration of works in two media: Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* and a stereoscopic photograph, Alexander Gardner's "Killed at the Battle of Antietam." Alex Krimkevich explores the complexities of ancient Roman evaluations of Greek culture, the interplay of attraction and contempt in the reception of Hellenic influence. Emily Rials brings together two works of literature, *Hamlet* and *The Book of the Courtier*, to inquire carefully into the nature of the self and especially female identity. Tony Ricciardi provides an intensive examination of Rousseau's thoughts on human nature and the role of self-love in the pursuit of happiness. Harshjit Sethi explores the Supreme Court's dismantling of school segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education*, but also uncovers the discrepancy between morality and constitutionality. Varun Sivaram offers a lucid discussion of the problem of free will. This extraordinary sweep is indicative of the breadth of the long tradition of liberal arts education at Stanford.

We congratulate the Boothe Prize winners for 2007–08, as well as the nominees and finalists, whose names are listed in this book. We are proud of these essays, and we are sure that you will find in them clear evidence of the vitality of and passion for humanistic learning that flourish during students' first year at Stanford.

—RUSSELL A. BERMAN

Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program

—ELLEN WOODS

Associate Director, Introduction to the Humanities Program

SPRING 2007 WINNER

Alex Krimkevich

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

HISTORY IS MORE THAN THE MEMORIZATION of names and events; history is something that we do, a practice. This practice requires research, and close, critical readings. Through this research we identify those questions that interest us the most, and we pursue the answers by accumulating and evaluating evidence, and by following our own avenue of inquiry.

What the student of history is often horrified to discover is that the tidy textbook descriptions of influential people and the associated significant events typically conceal a confused and confusing reality. History is complex, with multiple perspectives providing competing lenses through which we can approach any given historical question. Many students, hoping to report their hard-won answers and solutions, find this complexity frustrating and disappointing.

However, some students—Alex Krimkevich, for example—embrace history's ambiguity. For his research paper, Alex was interested in how Greek people and culture were perceived within ancient Rome. The answers he found were seemingly inconsistent, with some aspects of Greek culture and character revered, whereas others were reviled. What makes this paper extraordinary is that Alex doesn't just describe what, at first glance, appears to be an inconsistency of attitude. He asks how and why these apparently competing attitudes are able to coexist. Alex pursues his question through the primary texts, and he proposes and argues his own explanation, one that reflects a subtle understanding of historical context based on extensive reading and research. His essay is an excellent demonstration of the historian at work; this is how history is done.

—ALICE PETTY

Saving the State: Roman Resistance to Greek Influence

Alex Krimkevich

The Greek colonies of Magna Graecia sat at Rome's doorstep since that city's founding in the ninth century BCE. As the Roman city-state rose from its humble origins, it increasingly came into contact with these Hellenic settlements, initiating an ongoing cultural exchange that lasted over eight hundred years. Contacts continued to expand over the centuries that followed as the Roman republic pushed first into southern Italy and later into Greece proper. This brought an unprecedented influx of Greek culture and ideas to Rome, especially among the elite. Buildings were constructed in the Greek architectural style; young Romans were often sent to Greece to study rhetoric and philosophy; Greek slaves were imported to be used as skilled laborers or teachers. Indeed, the Roman state had "assimilated and made its own" a vast amount of "Greek gods, literary conventions, artistic forms, philosophical ideas, and social customs" (Momigliano 10).

However, the Hellenization of the Roman state did not at all meet with universal approval, especially in the mid- to late-republican period. The process was viewed with deep ambivalence by some who saw Greek culture as a degenerative force that threatened to subvert the foundations of the Roman state. For many, expansion brought Rome into contact with dangerous forces, for "the state, unable to keep its purity by reason of its greatness, and having so many affairs, and people from all parts under its government, was fain to admit many mixed customers and new examples of living" (Plutarch 414). Greece played a huge role in this cultural importation and was thus viewed with a great deal of wariness. The Romans counted among their own virtues good faith, constancy, frugality, and military strength, qualities they found critical to the welfare and glory of the Republic (Momigliano 16). Conversely, to the Greeks they attributed dishonesty, irresponsibility, excess, and lack of courage; Hellenistic values formed a troubling antithesis

to those of the Romans. That Greece had a significant cultural impact on Rome is indisputable (Gruen 250). However, where Romans felt threatened, they attempted to temper, if not counter, Hellenic influence on the state. Resistance to Hellenization during the late Roman republic focused on countering the perceived corrupting effects of Greek culture. However, resistance failed to stamp out the strong desire for Greek sophistication. Rome's interest in the integrity of the Republic, on the one hand, and its desire for acculturation, on the other, led to a dualistic approach to the Greeks where the people and their virtues were scorned, yet the trappings of civilization were largely tolerated.

Rome's initial debt to Greek civilization came originally from the Etruscans. Monarchic Rome was strongly influenced by the far more civilized and wealthy Etruscans to the north, who in turn owed their development to the export of goods from the colonies of Magna Graecia. Numerous archaeological discoveries testify to these links between the Greeks and Etruscans in the sixth century (Momigliano 12). The connection between Greece and Rome soon began to expand from trade to religion. In 493 BC the city dedicated a temple to the Greek goddess Demeter. A cult of Apollo was in place by 435 BC. Religious ties soon turned to physical contact between the two civilizations, as it is clear that Romans traveled to the Greek mainland. Before the sack of Veii in 396 BC, the mysterious rise of the Alban lake caused the Romans to send a commission to the oracle at Delphi. A tenth of the spoils of Veii were later dedicated to the Delphian priesthood (Livy 5.15, Plutarch 160). The disastrous Roman defeat at Cannae in 216 BC similarly caused the Romans to send a delegation to Delphi led by Q. Fabius Pictor. This episode also shows that Hellenic peoples had at least some presence in Rome, for the religious observances after Cannae included an unusual human sacrifice of two Carthaginians and two Greeks (Livy 22.57, 33.11). Indeed, diplomatic relations had commenced by the fourth century, as evidenced by a diplomatic treaty with Alexander the Molossian in 333 BC (Momigliano 7).

Even before Cannae, however, contacts and similarities were significant, enough for Heraclides Ponticus to mistakenly refer to Rome in the mid-fourth century as a Greek city (Plutarch 168). Greek religious figures were assimilated throughout the Mediterranean, but this syncretism was especially pronounced in Rome (Momigliano 7). Greek language and learning also became increasingly prominent in the Roman state and were particularly notable among the elite. After Titus Flamininus, father of the Gracchi, defeated Philip V in Thessaly, the Aetolians and Achaeans were pleased to find that he was essentially "a Greek in his sound and language" (Plutarch 452). Other prominent Greek speakers included Aemilius Paullus, conqueror

of Greece, and according to Plutarch, even the ostensibly anti-Hellenic Marcus Porcius Cato. P. Lucimius Mucianes was apparently fluent in five dialects (Momigliano 8). Still, Romans' lingual attempts were not always adept. In fact, L. Postumius Megellus was so insulted by the Greeks of Tarentum after his attempt to address them in their native tongue that the incident led to war (Appian 7.2). The significant extent of language diffusion can be seen by the late-third century, when Q. Fabius Pictor wrote his history of Rome, a work intended for Roman readership, in Greek.

To be sure, Pictor was forced to write in Greek simply because no Roman tradition existed for historiography (Gruen 255). However, during the period from 240 to 200 BC in which Pictor wrote, a literary blending began that would define the Latin style (254). During this time, writers, playwrights, and poets like Livius Andronicus and Ennius established Latin plays and poetry along Greek lines (Momigliano 17). Greek learning in general came to be highly valued. After his defeat of the Macedonians, Aemilius Paullus gave Perseus's library to his sons and requested a philosopher from Athens (Gruen 257). Aristocratic young men were often sent to Greece to study under the Greek philosophers; Aulus Gellius was apparently part of such company in his time at Athens (Rolfe ii–iv). Greek philosophical lectures in the Roman capital were eagerly attended, as evidenced by the crowds who flocked to hear Carneades speak in 155 BC (Plutarch 428).

Finally, the Romans developed a strong predilection for Greek luxury goods. The conquests of the advanced civilizations to the east of Italy brought massive amounts of wealth to the state. M. Marcellus's capture of Syracuse famously exposed the Romans to Greek goods for the first time on a large scale. His spoils included captured bronze and silver furniture, priceless artwork, and celebrated statuary. After the triumph over the Aetolians, M. Fulvius Nobilior likewise carried a fortune in Greek loot (Livy 25.40, 26.21, 29.5). When L. Aemilius Paullus conquered Macedon, the spoils were sufficient to permanently do away with the property tax in Rome, and Lucius Mummius's utter destruction and plunder of the wealthy Corinth supplied all of Italy with the finest Greek art (Cicero 1.1, 2.76). There was more at work here than victorious pillaging; the sheer volume of importation and its private display suggest that the interest in Greek art was genuine (Gruen 252). Strikingly, the interest was not limited to art. Around 230 BC, the Greek historian Strabo reported that Eratosthenes included the Romans among the most "refined" barbarian groups; refined meaning, of course, closest in culture to the Greeks (Strabo 1.4.9). From the third century onward there existed a "Latin Hellenism, never identical to the Greek, but never separable from it" (Momigliano 11).

The creation of this “Latin Hellenism,” however, was far from seamless. While the Romans absorbed a significant amount of Greek goods and culture, a large body of it fundamentally clashed with Roman views of the world. The Romans managed, on their own, to develop and preserve a unique political culture centered around the ideas of republicanism and civic virtue, but it was Hellenic encroachment on this system that led to resistance (Burt 23–26). Roman legend saw the republic emerge after the expulsion of the Tarquins by Brutus in 509 BC (Livy 1.60). Though the truth of this story is doubtful, Roman republicanism became synonymous with the absence of a king. For Cicero, liberty meant having “no master at all,” and he denied the possibility of a republic unless the people held power (Cicero 2.23, Sellers 11). Hence, the burden of maintaining the state, and in particular defending it, shifted to its people.

To this end, the citizen army was one of the most important institutions of the Roman republic, and prowess in arms one of its most fundamental skills. The militaristic character of the state was apparent from its inception. The late Republican writer Livy records that Romulus’s last words were a prophecy of Roman power: “it is the will of heaven that my Rome should be the head of all the world. Let [my people] henceforth cultivate the arts of war, and let them know...that no human might can withstand the arms of Rome” (Livy 1.16). Even the Greeks, famed for their defeat of the Persians, proved completely incapable of matching the Romans on the battlefield. Rome fully subjugated the Greek states in the second century BCE (Momigliano 1). Military superiority won glory for the state, but by turning the Romans into rulers and administrators, it exposed them to other ways of life. This was an important ramification for Greek relations.

Emphasis on military ability was simply part of a larger system of values. The Roman experience with the Tarquins gave laws great importance. Society was to be conducted by a code of justice, not by the caprice of individual rulers. In his writings, Livy demanded *imperia legume*, an empire of laws, not of men (Sellers 14). This meant that Rome was also a strongly *principled* society. Values and beliefs were not an abstract conception; they were codified ideas to live by, each contributing to the security and stability of the Republic. Militarism was one of these ideas. It was partially encapsulated by the Roman concept of *virtus*, which included strength and courage. “Poverty and frugality, so highly and continuously honored,” were also important insofar as they precluded greed, traditionally considered a major destructive force. *Fides*, *constantia*, and *dignitas* were crucial qualities in public life. Individuals like Cincinnatus, the famed farmer-soldier who saved the state of Rome from the Sabines, were held up as exemplars of these ideals. However,

these ideals must be examined not in the context of individual glory, but in that of relevance to the state. Indeed, the above qualities were prized because of their usefulness to the vitality of civic and military institutions; Cincinnatus, Brutus, and others were respected insofar as their qualities contributed to public services rendered. Civic virtue, then, was a set of expectations placed on citizens to act in the interests of the state. It is civic virtue that “enabled the people to receive liberty and resist the urge to collaborate with kings” (Sellers 16). Thus the welfare of the Roman Republic depended on the virtue of its people.

Greek culture was perceived as a threat by some precisely because it threatened to undermine the very virtues that sustained the state. Tellingly, the most common Roman prejudices about the Greeks were based on features directly antagonistic toward Roman values. The Hellenes were often cast as cowardly, uncourageous, and effeminate. Livy describes them as a “race more magnanimous in words than in actions” (Livy 8.2). Aulus Postumius was criticized for avoiding the Battle of Phocis, an act symptomatic of his adoption of the “worst vices of the Greeks” (Polybius 39.1). These qualities were believed to be contagious. As Scipio idled about in Syracuse during the Second Punic War, exposure to Greeks caused in his soldiers a lack of discipline and morale (Livy 29.19). The scorn for the Greek people is evident. However, this Greek trait was not one for the Romans to dispassionately disdain, for its perceived spread was seen to destroy the military strength and order that was a cornerstone of the glory of the Republic. Active intervention was needed. Indeed, the Romans, not wishing the Italians to “become effeminate” because of a long peace after the defeat of Perseus, undertook a war with Dalmatia to maintain military hardihood (Livy 32.13). The corruption of the soldiers was perhaps less an issue than it might have been, for the Romans were constantly on the offensive. The campaigning nature of the military prevented it from slipping into so-called Greek degeneracy, though the state was required to step in at times. In this way, war proved to be a tool of resistance to Hellenic influence among the men of the republic.

The Greek penchant to talk and philosophize was another major point of contempt for the Romans. Plautus poked fun at this stereotype in his plays (Plutarch, *Captivi* 283–84, *Pseudolus*, 686–88). His works were intended for lower-class audiences, so the typecast was recognizable at all levels of society. The story of Professor Phormio, a Greek philosopher who had the nerve to lecture Hannibal on military matters, was often cited as an example of Hellenic loquaciousness (Cicero 2.75–6). This in itself may have been more a source of amusement than worry, but the Romans further believed that this

talkativeness ran counter to practical matters and principles. Quintillian described the situation by establishing that “[t]he Greeks claim precedence in teaching [while] the Romans in action” (Quintillian 12.2). The Romans could see no good coming out of a state of affairs where words were allowed precedence over deeds (Gellius 18.7). The story of Carneades, an eloquent Greek philosopher, serves as an apt illustration of this. Carneades’ arrival in Rome in 155 BC and subsequent speeches “impressed so strange a love upon the young men, that quitting all their pleasures and pastimes, they ran mad, as it were, after philosophy.” When this “passion for words” flowed into Rome upon Carneades’ entrance, Cato immediately feared that the youth of the city “should prefer the glory of speaking well before that of arms and doing well” (Plutarch 428). The Romans prided themselves on active participation and discharge of duties, a societal paradigm threatened by the Greek emphasis on language.

Worse still, Romans felt that the Greeks used philosophy and language for disingenuous, if not necessarily dishonest, ends. Cato professed that “the words of the Greeks came only from their lips, whilst those of the Romans came from their hearts” (Cato 420). Carneades again served as a target of attacks against this Greek trait. Cicero said of him: “He was a Greek and accustomed to propound any view that suited his purpose” (Cicero 3.8–9). This flexibility of viewpoint was a fundamental problem for the Romans, as Greek philosophy “raised doubts about every principle of conduct” (Astin 178). There could be no absolute principles when any belief could be put forth and controverted at will, and the philosophers used their eloquence for this very purpose (Cicero 3.1). *Graeca fides* came to mean an egregious lack of sincerity and integrity (Momigliano 5). To protect Roman principles, in 173 and 161 BC the Senate voted to expel all rhetoricians and philosophers from Rome. In 155, at the behest of Cato, the Senate forced Carneades and his delegation out of Rome, and again in 92, the Senate acted to curb the growth of Latin rhetorical schools, which were constructed on the Greek model (Suetonius I, Plutarch 428, Gellius 15.11). Ultimately, the esteem with which Romans held civic values brought them into conflict with the “cynicism” and philosophy of the Greeks. To protect these values, state administrators acted as needed to remove the more “subversive” Greek elements from society, even at the expense of culture and education.

Romans further saw a moral laxity and excessive love of luxury in the Greeks. Polybius marveled at the uprightness of Roman administrators and was equally shocked at the greed and corruption of the Greek ones (Polybius 4.56). The Romans certainly saw an inverse relationship between the greatness of a civilization and the luxuries it allowed itself. Polybius felt the

Romans to have hugely erred in bringing luxury goods back from Greece, for they had done so well without them, while the conquered had done so poorly. “A city is not adorned by external splendors, but by the virtue of its inhabitants,” he argued (Polybius 9.10). The conquest of Greece had “speedily infected” the Roman with “Greek laxity” regarding morality and lavishness, supposedly since the defeat of Perseus. Pederasty and extravagant banqueting appeared in Rome where there had been none before. Cato lamented that “it was the surest sign of deterioration...when pretty boys fetch more than fields, and jars of caviar more than ploughmen” (Cato 31.25). To this end, Cato firmly supported the Lex Oppia, passed in 215 BC, attempting to limit luxury, especially the display of gold (Astin 174). For the Romans, the epitome of Greek laxity and hedonism was found in the pernicious cults that began afflicting the state in the early second century. Participants in the Bacchic mysteries, reportedly initiated by a Greek, were accused of gluttony, sexual orgies, vandalism, and murder. Men defiled by the Bacchanalian cult were considered completely unfit to defend the Republic. In 186 BC, the Senate moved to suppress the cult, before it had “strength enough to destroy the commonwealth” (Livy 39.8–18). Similarly, in 181 BC the state burned several Pythagorean volumes, ostensibly written by Numa in Greek, after it was perceived that “most of them would lead to the break-up of the national religion” (Livy 40.29).

Resistance to luxury, however, was far less pronounced than the aversions to other Greek “vices,” and Romans’ words were often not matched by action. Romans could, and would often, publicly disdain Greeks and their excess, but the spoils of war and Hellenic learning continued to flow into the Republic, even into the homes of the more vigorous anti-Hellenic individuals such as Cato and Cicero (Gruen 268–72). It is here that the dualistic treatment of the Greeks is most clear. Greek influence could be condemned and acted against in hopes of preventing the disintegration of traditional Roman republican value. However, the allures of Hellenic culture, more mature and urbane than the Roman, were not at all weak, and the Greek conquest proved an opportunity for the enrichment and cultural advancement of many Romans (268–72). This desire for civilization clashed somewhat with the traditional suspicion toward luxury. The two were not wholly incompatible, though Romans were careful to distinguish between “private predilection and...state policy,” and where a serious Greek threat was seen, they were sure to act (267). The threats were simply seen to come from the Greek people more than from their goods. Resistance toward Greek influence *did* still exist where Roman leaders perceived danger.

The Romans had conquered Greece, and yet their affinity for Greek

things caused some to fear that the Romans were becoming the captives of the Greeks rather than the Greeks captives of them (Livy 34.4). To some, Greek influence was “subversive of principles and standards of conduct, of public diligence and martial qualities” upon which Rome relied (Astin 178). The State took action where it could—initiating wars, driving out seditious thinkers, and stamping out dangerous practices. However, it failed to stem the tide of Greek culture, for Hellenic ideas and goods had permanently penetrated Italy (181). Nonetheless, the state had made clear that “in Rome Hellenization implied respect for the ruling order” (Momigliano 20). Romans could endorse Greek learning and culture and still reject what were seen to be the more detrimental characteristics of the Greek race. It was under such a system that Plutarch felt the Romans reached their zenith (Plutarch 428). This fact reconciles the bifold wariness and welcome of Hellenization. Where the state was not in danger, culture could be welcomed with open arms. ◆

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SPRING 2007 HONORABLE MENTION

Tony Ricciardi

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

ROUSSEAU OPENS HIS TREATISE ON EDUCATION, *Emile*, with the bold statement that, "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man." Accordingly, the concept of a "natural passion," those innate instincts that develop in us before we are exposed to the corrupting influence of society, becomes central for Rousseau's theory. In his paper, "Education and the Passions: Exploring Rousseau's View of Human Nature," Tony carefully examines this concept of a natural passion, tracing its implicit logic, and thus revealing a deep problem for Rousseau. Tony identifies a tension between Rousseau's admission that we are naturally and essentially social creatures, dependent on one another for our flourishing, and his claim that any modification of a natural passion stemming from the influence of society is alien and thus corrupting. If our social tendencies are natural, and isolation deadly, Tony asks, then why deem society's influence on the development of our passions alien? Moreover, Tony argues, the kind of education Rousseau prescribes in order to prolong a child's preadolescent innocence and thwart the premature development of harmful passions is itself an unnatural modification by Rousseau's own standards. In order to reconcile this tension, Tony suggests that Rousseau must show that this unnatural interference in the development of the passions is a necessary measure to maintain the natural state of the child in isolation from society. However, the cost of such philosophical gymnastics is that Rousseau's conception of human nature becomes so distorted that his argument is rendered trivial. What is natural for a human is simply what would occur were we the kind of creatures that could survive in isolation from one another.

The clarity of insight and simple elegance that Tony brings to conceptually difficult topics is what distinguishes his work. Like all the papers Tony wrote over the two quarters of "The Fate of Reason," this paper on Rousseau identifies exactly the crux of the matter and treats it with uncommon subtlety of thought. Tony is the "great dancer" Nietzsche claimed all philosophers aspire to be—precise, perceptive, graceful, and all the while giving the appearance of complete effortlessness.

—LAURA MAGUIRE

Education and the Passions: Exploring Rousseau's View of Human Nature

Tony Ricciardi

At the heart of Rousseau's *Emile* lies the idea that society corrupts man by putting him in conflict with his natural sentiments. The ultimate source of our innate desires, Rousseau argues, is self-love, which guides us in seeking preservation and avoiding harm. Society, however, causes us to compare ourselves with others and grow dependent on their opinions, thus modifying our passions and giving us needs we cannot satisfy. What results is a man "always in contradiction with himself, always floating between his inclinations and his duties" (40). The question arises, though, of whether man is truly an inherently autonomous being, devoid of any innate tendency to value his neighbor's opinion. That is, are the passions imposed on us by society in opposition to our nature, or is society itself the product of man's natural dependence on others? I propose that Rousseau's likely response would be: While man's imperfection prevents him from achieving complete self-sufficiency, the insatiable desires we gain from our social attachments would not exist in an individual whose education was completely in line with nature. Rousseau's argument is contingent upon his interpretation of the term natural, essentially trivializing his claim that the passions brought about by society are mere alien modifications.

Perhaps the most important principle underlying Rousseau's argument is the distinction he draws between the natural, self-preserving passion of *amour de soi* and the socially induced *amour-propre*. Man's innate sense of self-love, Rousseau claims, is embodied in our attraction to that which fosters well-being and our aversion from that which causes harm. Man develops a sentiment of love through blind instinct toward what preserves him, foremost of which is himself, because he is "specially entrusted with his own preservation" (213). By contrast, the other-directed *amour-propre* is characterized by the preference of ourselves to those around us. Although we may be capable

of fulfilling our basic needs for self-preservation, Rousseau argues that we cannot, satisfy those desires brought about by the latter sentiment, as it “demands others to prefer us to themselves, which is impossible” (214). Regarding the origin of *amour-propre*, Rousseau asserts that all man’s passions beyond his innate self-love are merely modifications, most of which “have alien causes without which they would never have come to pass” (213). These alien modifications arise when man begins to compare himself to his neighbors and grows dependent on their opinions, resulting in a loss of self-sufficiency.

Given Rousseau’s view of our socially induced passions as essentially unnatural, we must be careful not to generalize his argument simply to be that man is an innately autonomous being, whose complete self-sufficiency is disrupted by the insatiable needs imposed on him by society. One could object that this would lead to contradictions with several other principles discussed in *Emile*, such as Rousseau’s claim that if man were “abandoned to himself” he would “die of want before ever knowing his needs” (38). However, Rousseau acknowledges man’s inherent sociability, claiming that God alone knows the happiness of total self-sufficiency. Society, he argues, is a sign of man’s weakness, for “if each of us had no need of others, he would hardly think of uniting himself with them” (221). How then can Rousseau truly label the passions derived from *amour-propre* as mere “alien modifications” if he is aware of our intrinsic predisposition toward social attachments? If society is the product of man’s innate weakness, how is it that the sentiments resulting from his social relationships are not also natural in origin?

Rousseau’s answer can in part be seen in his explanation of the three modes of education: those of nature, men, and things. His insistence that we must direct the latter two toward the education of nature, because they are the only ones over which we have any control, provides considerable insight into what exactly he considers man’s nature to be. For instance, Rousseau labels education as a form of “habit” that stifles nature like “[a plant] whose vertical direction is interfered with” (39), suggesting that man is in his natural state only so long as his education does not distort his innate sentiments of self-love. Indeed, within the same passage Rousseau essentially defines “natural” to be the state of our passions before they have been “constrained by our habits” and “corrupted by our opinions.” From this, we may gather that, even though man may have an innate tendency to form social attachments, any modifications to his sentiments that result from those relationships are unnatural by definition.

Even if we grant Rousseau this definition, however, the soundness of his arguments can still be brought into question. After all, how do we know that

amour-propre is a result of these outside forces, rather than a sentiment that emerges naturally with the coming of adolescence? Not only does Rousseau state that “all the affections of [man’s] soul” are born of his original need for a companion, but he also acknowledges that the attraction of one sex to the other is “the movement of nature” and that “these passions will be born in spite of us” (214–5). Furthermore, he illustrates how this original desire for companionship inevitably results in further attachments and the comparison of oneself to others, claiming that “from the need for a mistress is soon born the need for a friend” and that “this is the source of the first glances at one’s fellows” (214–15). Given that our sentiments naturally change as our need for companionship grows, how then can Rousseau justly attribute these modifications to the education of men? His most likely response to this question would be that while the development of *amour-propre* may be a natural occurrence, it happens much earlier in individuals who have been exposed to the “dangers of society” at a young age than it does in those who grow up in “happy ignorance” (214–6). Because the education of men is “almost always premature” in forcing a child into adolescence, he argues, the child’s “nascent passions” are not allowed to develop as they would naturally (215–9). Rousseau’s solution, therefore, is to prolong the preadolescent years as long as possible by avoiding exposure to forces that would cause the child to form social attachments at an unnatural age: “What must be done is to prevent anything from being done” (41).

Perhaps the most notable objection to Rousseau’s position is that his suggestion of prolonging a child’s preadolescent years could be viewed as an interference with the child’s natural development. Given that he acknowledges that the development of *amour-propre* is a natural occurrence and that man is an inherently sociable being, should Rousseau not consider it unnatural to delay the emergence of *amour-propre* by preventing a child from forming social attachments? Regarding the progress of a child’s “knowledge of his sex,” for example, he claims that “the greater the effort made to retard it, the more a young man acquires vigor and force” (216). This suggests that the child’s entry into adolescence would have come about much earlier if no effort had been made to delay it. How then can Rousseau truly believe that such an education is in line with nature, given his previous assertion that man’s passions cease to be natural once they have been modified by outside forces? Perhaps his only possible response would be to claim that prolonging a child’s prepubescent years merely ensures that the emergence of *amour-propre* does not occur any sooner than it would if the child were isolated from society. If the child had no risk of developing social attachments prematurely, then his instructor “would have nothing to do” (219).

Even if we accept that Rousseau's solution is merely a countermeasure to the "alien modifications" of society, we still cannot avoid the fact that delaying the onset of adolescence is itself an alien modification. If we have to resort to manipulating the development of a child's passions in order to prevent his sentiments from being affected by the outside world, how can we truly say that the child has been allowed to develop naturally? Moreover, Rousseau's statement that it would be unnecessary to stave off the emergence of *amour-propre* if the child were raised in isolation is completely irrelevant, because man is not naturally born into such an environment. The only way to reconcile his argument would be to further modify his definition of "natural" to be the state of the passions in an individual who was kept isolated from society. As a result, Rousseau's original assertion that all the passions born of alien modifications are unnatural is essentially trivial; he is merely claiming that we would not have developed these passions in the absence of such modifications.

Rousseau's theory that self-love is the ultimate source of our passions can still provide considerable insight into how our needs are reshaped by societal interactions. For example, by merely considering whether the desires underlying a given action truly reflect our basic drive for self-preservation, we could determine the extent to which that action has been influenced by *amour-propre*. It may also be true that man is happiest when all his passions reflect his original sentiment of self-love; if anything, this paper has merely suggested that it may not necessarily be natural for this to occur. Perhaps we are simply incapable of achieving Rousseau's vision of happiness, given our inherent need for companionship and our tendency to form social dependencies. Whatever the case, we should not merely assume that man is truly happy only when his passions have not been modified by alien forces, as his own nature makes it essentially impossible to avoid them. ♦

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FALL 2007 WINNER

Kate Hyder

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

"AMERICAN MEMORY AND THE CIVIL WAR" is a particularly demanding IHUM course, in part because it poses difficult questions about how to interpret the hotly contested legacy of the Civil War, as well as how to understand the changing nature of collective memory. Moreover, it challenges students to read and interpret an unusually wide variety of course material—everything from opera, memoir, and film, to paintings, music, and more. Kate Hyder, in her essay, "Self-Reliance," provides us with an example of the excellent work that can emerge when students fearlessly put such different forms of expression into a dialogue that confronts the issues of memory and representation.

Kate's essay juxtaposes Stephen Crane's "authentic" and deconstructive Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage* with Alexander Gardner's somber stereograph, "Burying the Dead, after the Battle of Antietam," one of many images Crane drew upon for inspiration. Kate's eloquent, engaging writing style acts as a subtle frame for her argumentation, which is founded upon close-readings that elucidates elements of the works that are neither obvious nor superficial. In fact, she moves past a simple comparison of Crane and Gardner's use of nature as backdrop for their works, in order to contend that they both see war as a force that corrodes not only innocence and life, but also, less obviously, religion. She then points out that Crane and Gardner construct such a vision in order to remind their readers to stand apart as individuals and take their own stand on the war. In this way, Kate achieves one of the highest aims of writing: she not only states the foundation of her comparison, but more importantly interprets its significance in the texts and explains why it matters to us. Yet even as she forwards her argument, she prompts her readers to consider how texts and images travel across time and place, and boldly affirms that they do not necessarily have to accept the interpretations that she presents here in "Self-Reliance." Such a move, rather than undermining her contentions, ultimately enables Kate to leave us with the important reminder that a text's meanings are and never can be fixed—indeed, they require constant examination and reinterpretation, tasks that lie at the very heart of our daily scholarly endeavors.

—MAGDALENA L. BARRERA

Self-Reliance

Kate Hyder

Beyond the dates and locations of battles, numbers, and names of men, it is hard to know much about the Civil War. Yet this event, some say the most defining in our history as a nation, is remembered in as many ways as there are people who have thought of it. These differing memories are important because how a people interpret the past frames how they view contemporary society. *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane and “Burying the Dead, after the Battle of Antietam” (fig.1) by Alexander Gardner examine the war in two different media. Both present an argument about the war. The book, *The Red Badge of Courage*, uses words that conjure images; the stereoscopic photograph “Antietam” presents visual images that the viewer must use words to explore. By presenting man-made destruction against the backdrop of Nature, these texts argue that in addition to destroying innocence and life, war corrupts religion. Not only is this initial argument rooted

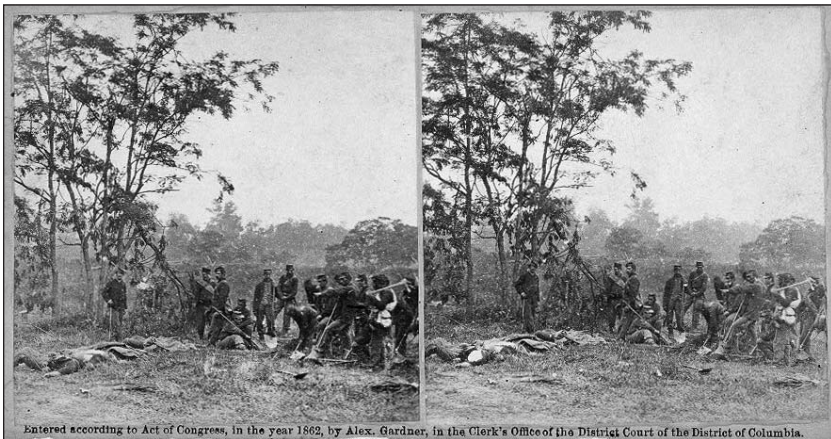


Fig. 1. Alexander Gardner, “Burying the Dead, after the Battle of Antietam.” Courtesy the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Selected Civil War Photographs, 1861–1865, LC- B811-561.

in the values of Transcendentalism, but it also urges viewers to act as individuals and stand apart from the masses.

Crane uses religious imagery to create a sense of harmony and peace in his descriptions of Nature. For example, he writes, “The trees began softly to sing a hymn of twilight....There was a lull in the noise of insects as if they had bowed their beaks and were making a devotional pause” (90). Flora and fauna alike unite to create this supportive community with the common aim of praise. Nature becomes both a place of worship and the very act of worship itself. This landscape is where Henry ends up when he flees from battle. Unfortunately, war’s destruction intrudes even into the sanctuary of the woods, where “high arching boughs made a chapel” (87). Henry finds a dead soldier beginning to decompose in his paradise and learns that not even churches are sacred ground. War can reach anywhere, and it does.

By intruding into Nature, death perverts religion. Crane refers to war as “the red animal—war, the blood-swollen god” (44). He likens the “movements of the doomed soldier....to a devotee of a mad religion, blood-sucking, muscle-wrenching, bone-crushing” (106). In contrast to the civilized chapels and hymns of Nature, war is a pagan god that feeds on human sacrifice and transforms its victims into barbarians. The Christian audience at this time would surely condemn war by associating it with the devil and primitive religious traditions. Ironically, however, Crane calls more heavily on the pagan belief systems than the Christian one by giving trees a voice and insects the intellectual and moral capacity to pray. Gardner, too, leaves us with a hint of religious imagery gone awry. Two diagonals dominate the daguerreotype; the shorter of the two, composed of the low values of the line of mulling men and trees, runs from the front right to a shallow left; the other goes deep into the painting, beginning with the high values of the dead and ending with the low values of the trees up and deep into the picture. These perpendicular diagonals face the audience at a slant, as if they make up a cross being used as an X (a pagan symbol), or a fallen cross. War has brought the fall of religion in this field.

Crane’s descriptions of Nature twist slightly the traditional religious imagery of church and praise to conjure images of a Mother Earth that must protect the innocent babes in her domain from the horrid realities of war. The protagonist, Henry, “conceived Nature to be a woman with a deep aversion to tragedy,” the tragedy of death and war. After he runs away from the battle, Henry feels that Nature approves of and speaks to him while on his own. He throws a pinecone at a squirrel and it runs, which Henry interprets to mean that Mother Earth gives common sense to her creatures so that they may use it to protect themselves, as Henry has done by fleeing the battlefield

(86–87). Crane views Nature as more integral to Henry's life than a distant, authoritative deity that set up the world to run by its laws like a clock; however, as Henry nears his potential first battle, Crane emphasizes the deep bond between Nature and Mankind by describing the advancing regiments as "just born of the earth" and Henry as "a babe" (39–40). Henry sees clearly that Nature is nurturing and very much involved in his life. Nature wants to protect him from seeing death, to stop him from returning to his regiment. "Sometimes the brambles formed chains and tried to hold him back. Trees, confronting him, stretched out their arms and forbade him to pass" (92). Gardner also alludes to this idea by positioning the dead bodies on the edge of a clearing. Presumably shot as they were running toward the protective cover of trees, these men were sadly just outside the realm of Mother Earth's reach when they died.

So try as she might, Mother Earth cannot fight against the mechanized destruction that man has determined is necessary. In the daguerreotype, the branch of a tree in the foreground has broken. That which is sacred and safe can be soiled and broken. The war corrupts Nature's babes before her very eyes as they fight and wait to fight in large groups. From the very first page, and frequently afterwards, Crane uses language of a sexual awakening to show this corruption: "the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting....the army awakened, and began to tremble with eagerness at the noise of rumors" (3). In contrast to the sleepy, innocent morning landscape, war has made the army of boys expectant for their first foray into the world of destruction. Gardner uses sexual images in his daguerreotype as well. The male soldiers' tools are extensions of their persons that they thrust into the ground, personified as female, and will use to blemish the pristine grass cover of the field.

This act of burial is itself a significant subject. In his image, Gardner has captured the moment before the men will use earth, the rejuvenator, to hide premature death that war caused. Crane also portrays Nature as a constant and life-giving force. Henry, so caught up in destruction of life and the transient nature of mankind that war highlights, "felt a flash of astonishment at the blue, pure sky" after his first encounter with fighting. "It was surprising that Nature had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment" (70). War makes it very hard to focus on the life that is present. It causes people to detach from their fellow members of mankind as a protective mechanism. Henry runs across a corpse while alone in the woods, and as it is beginning to decompose, he has no compassion for it. He retreats, keeping "his face [always] towards the thing" (88). The youth has been so numbed by war already that he considers bodies "things." He cannot,

or maybe emotionally he refuses, to see this body as something that was once like him. Likewise, the men of "Antietam" do not notice the vibrant field and life that surrounds them, nor do they appear to be interacting with each other. Each has isolated himself in his own world to contemplate the reality of war and death while keeping a chasm between themselves and the dead men altogether too similar to themselves. No one wants to get too close.

Despite this evidence that Crane sees war as a vice, debate exists as to whether this is his intended meaning. He portrays soldiers as unappreciated men dying in useless battles. Those who survive, such as the static protagonist Henry, come out of war with their ignorance and youthful pride intact, "viewing the gilded images of memory" (242) instead of critically examining the past for what it really is. Yet Crane chose to end his novel with "a golden ray of sun" (246), implying Nature lives on and can undo the damage of war. Crane himself also chose to become a war correspondent, first looking to join in the Cuban revolution and then going to Greece to report on the Greco-Turkish war (xli–xlii). Gardner, too, obviously a man who used war to make a living, appears to be in personal contradiction to the story he tells in his photograph. It seems that there is no way to get around this dichotomy; either these artists' actions are at odds with their message, or they mean the audience to make a different interpretation of the text. Upon closer examination, however, the conflict unravels. Crane's words and the image of "Antietam" are not necessarily supporting pacifism; they are foremost urging readers to act as individuals and never to accept the larger social construct without questioning it first. Both artists use views of Nature as holy and maternal to make this point.

Crane and Gardner put a lot of responsibility on one lone figure in their texts. The audience sees Henry as part of the larger company; but more importantly, it follows his innermost doubts and his moments of "weakness," his retreats from battle. Strangely, those moments when Henry breaks away from his mechanical regiment and thinks for himself, be they motivated by doubt or fear, are the sections when Crane bathes Nature in the most religious and nurturing light (86–90). In fact, Nature is ominous to Henry when he is with the brigade. "The shadows of the woods were formidable. He was certain that in this vista there lurked fierce-eyed hosts.... Suddenly those close forests would bristle with rifle barrels" (43). With the regiment, Henry is paranoid and distrusts the Nature he so dearly relies on when on his own. Being in a great mass, following orders blindly and relying on others, is the most despicable condition in the Transcendentalist view of the world. (This is the movement to which Crane alludes by capitalizing "Nature.") Two of the movement's greatest texts are "Self-Reliance" by Emerson and *Walden*;

Or, Life in the Woods by Thoreau. So by subjecting himself to self-examination and listening to his inner voice of fear over the dictates of his culture, Henry has actually proven that he has worth as an individual. This is what Crane is arguing for throughout the book. Transcendentalism derides organized religion and calls for spirituality and respect for all creatures. It argues that life takes place only outside of routine social acts, such as the mindless routine of military drills. In *Walden*, Thoreau retreats to Nature for rejuvenation and protection from the world, much as Henry does while on the run. Crane's techniques throughout *Red Badge* support the tenets of this movement.

In posing men for his image, Gardner also makes a conscious decision to separate one soldier from the others. He is not only facing a different direction from his comrades but is on the other side of death, separated from them by a line of dead bodies. This lone soldier obviously has a different perspective on the world, and although he could choose to join the digging soldiers, he is contemplating his options first. In the composition of the piece, Gardner gives us a hint that he will choose to stand alone and be an individual. A viewer's eyes tend to move from dark to light in an image, and so an audience looks first at the dark uniforms at the front of the field before moving out and up, deeper into the image and finally into the sky. Without the line of low values in the foreground, the viewer could pass easily into the field and toward Nature and enlightenment. The mass of people working as one on a mindless, menial task blocks the eyes' passage toward the light and instead binds audiences to the earth. The individual, on the other hand, is at one with Nature. His figure blends into the vertical lines of the trees and does not contribute to the obstruction of the pathway to heaven. So Gardner also joins with Transcendentalists in praising the individual and Nature.

At times, audiences draw out more meaning and different understandings from a text than the artist originally intended. They have every right to do so as an equal partner in the social discourse, a discourse that texts are meant to participate in and provoke freely after leaving the artist's hands. It is interesting, then, to think about the relativity of the meaning of all texts. Each viewer will bring a different ideology and context to a document, and therefore a meaning for any text never concretely, or finally, exists. Meaning is a fluid mosaic in the social mind. So to a young Stanford student today, Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* and Gardner's "Burying the Dead after the Battle of Antietam" argue that mankind's meddling interferes with the sanctity of Nature. Audiences should not accept this interpretation at face value, however; they must come to their own conclusions, choose their own path, and rely on themselves. ♦

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FALL 2007 HONORABLE MENTION

Harshjit Sethi

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

I WAS UNSURE WHAT TO EXPECT upon assigning the prompt for this essay; I had no idea what a model essay would look like. The prompt asked students to explain which Justice's opinion in *San Antonio v. Rodriguez* is most faithful to the moral logic of *Brown v. Board of Education*, and I feared that this narrow focus might constrain creativity. Yet this fear was allayed when Harshjit Sethi provided the model for the prompt.

Harshjit demonstrates mastery over two extremely complicated Supreme Court cases, but this is not what makes his essay exemplary. What sets his essay apart is his ability to master all relevant details of a problem while thinking outside of the box. When confronted with the problem posed in the prompt, it is natural to argue that a particular Justice most faithfully followed *Brown*, provide justification for this, entertain objections, and then overcome objections. However, Harshjit recognizes an important tension of the utmost importance. He views the prompt as incomplete because he believes that the dissent in *San Antonio* was most faithful to the moral logic of *Brown*, but he believes that the majority was most faithful to the Constitution. This nuanced concern demonstrates extreme maturity because Harshjit is able to show awareness of multiple important factors in an apparently straightforward question. Furthermore, he demonstrates an admirable boldness by tackling such a sensitive topic, perhaps even calling some aspects of *Brown* into question. He insightfully recognizes that the conclusion of an argument can be accepted while rejecting the reasoning for such an argument. Likewise, something can follow precedent without necessarily agreeing with that which the precedent was supposed to follow. All of this is done while questioning what is meant by "equality" and what justice and the law require concerning wealth, race, and education. It is clear, then, that this essay is a model for an IHUM course. In addition to struggling with deep questions of humanity with keen analytical skill, Harshjit also seeks to understand the practical implications of his inquiry by appealing to legal and sociological analysis.

—MICHAEL MCFALL

Constitutionality v. Morality: *San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez*

Harshjit Sethi

On May 17, 1954, the United States awoke to a radically new educational system—equal and desegregated. *Brown v. Board of Education* was a landmark decision in U.S. judicial history, one which resonated in public schools across the country. The judgment affirmed the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees to each citizen “equal protection of the law,” and serves as the highest judicial precedent in cases relating to equality in education. Two decades after this historic decision, a case disputing the system of financing public schools in Texas, *San Antonio School District v. Rodriguez*, was brought before the U.S. Supreme Court. Each of the Justices in this case claimed to uphold and further the values of *Brown*, but Justice Marshall’s dissent was the most consistent with the moral logic of *Brown*. The plurality decision, however, conformed to the strictest interpretation of the Constitution and was therefore sound on constitutional grounds. This discrepancy between maintaining consistency with the moral principles of *Brown* and with a rigorous interpretation of the Constitution raises fundamental questions about the construal and means of providing education on the “equal terms” to which *Brown* refers. *Brown*, itself, dealt with equality solely in respect to intangible attributes; more essentially, it was concerned with providing parity for people of different races. The present case considers inequality in other, more tangible factors. In assessing these cases, it is essential to consider the disagreement of the conservative and liberal Justices on the question of material inequality for this issue highlights a significant distinction between the liberal premise of maintaining the highest moral standards and the conservative rationale of strict constitutionality.

Brown assumes tremendous importance in the lives of Americans not only because of its prodigious ramifications within the sphere of racial equality in public education, but also because of its moral appeals and the values

it upholds. The moral logic of *Brown* encompasses many facets of the lives of ordinary Americans. It stresses the “importance of education to our democratic society” (*Brown* 3), for education is “required for the performance of our most basic responsibilities” and is the “very foundation of good citizenship” (*Brown* 3). It places the onus for public education on state and local governments, emphasizing that “today, perhaps, education is the most important function of state and local governments” (*Brown* 3). Most importantly, it stresses the equality of education for all by claiming that “where the state has undertaken to provide it, [education] is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms” (*Brown* 4). The Court in *Brown* even considered psychological motivations in arriving at a decision, elucidating how a separation of, and distinction between, people of different races “generates a feeling of their inferiority as to their status in the community, that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone” (*Brown* 4). Consequently, the Court reached the unanimous decision that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (*Brown* 4).

The judgment of *Brown*, however, neither explicitly nor tacitly asserts a fundamental right to education. Admittedly, the Court places great importance on education and considers it integral for a responsible and successful member of society. It even stresses the importance of state and local governments providing education. The court stipulates, however, that education is “an opportunity, where the State has undertaken to provide it” (*Brown* 4), thereby granting state governments leeway to decide whether they wish to provide public education. It thus conveys that the Court in *Brown* did not view the right to education as a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution, notwithstanding its colossal importance in society.

San Antonio v. Rodriguez considers the same general question of equality in educational facilities. In this case, however, the circumstances and the type of equality demanded by the appellants differed substantially from those in *Brown*. In 1973, the Texas system for funding public elementary and secondary schools drew on federal, state, and local funds. Federal and state funds provided almost half the school budget; the remainder was contributed by local funds, which in turn depended on the amount of taxable property in the district (*San Antonio* 1). Consequently, in more affluent districts, the per pupil expenditure on education was as high as \$594 in a particular year, as opposed to some of the poorer districts, which spent only \$356 per pupil (*San Antonio* 28). This significant difference in funding created severe inequalities in the educational opportunities provided by different school districts within the state.

Although the plurality accepts this system of inequitable funding, Justice

Marshall views the majority's decision as a "retreat from our historic commitment to the equality of educational opportunity" (*San Antonio* 31). The discrepancies in educational expenditure permit schools in affluent districts to hire teachers with college degrees and substantial experience. It also enables them to have a lower student-to-teacher ratio, thereby ensuring certain advantages to students, such as more attention from teachers. Education is therefore not being provided on "equal terms" to all, if equality in this case is interpreted as the access to the same quality of resources for all students. Through his dissent, Marshall conforms to the *Brown* decision of providing education to all on "equal terms," in the most literal sense of the phrase.

The plurality disagrees with Marshall's view, emphasizing that the state, through "the Minimum Foundation Program of Education, provides an 'adequate' education for all the children in the state" (*San Antonio* 7). Although the state and federal funds are distributed almost equally between schools, the disparities caused by local taxation cannot be ignored. The fundamental premise of *Brown* is to provide equality of education for all citizens, not simply to determine whether the education provided by the state is adequate. In segregated schools, where the principle of "separate but equal" (*Brown* 4) could hold, it was assumed that schools were materially equal. However, since these schools discriminated on the basis of race, they were "inherently unequal" (*Brown* 4) and were, consequently, inconsistent with the verdict of the Court in *Brown*. Marshall, in strict adherence to *Brown*, argues that the aim of the state system in financing public education should be to provide completely equal educational facilities, not merely "adequate" ones.

The plurality also draws attention to the "unsettled and disputed question whether the quality of education may be determined by the amount of money expended for it" (*San Antonio* 7). However, in the present scenario of education in the Alamo Heights and Edgewood districts, it is reasonable to conclude that a disparity in the quality of education did exist. Statistics for the 1968/1969 school year revealed that 100% of teachers in Alamo Heights had college degrees, as compared to 80% of teachers in Edgewood, and that 47% of the teachers in Edgewood were on emergency teaching permits, as opposed to 11% in Alamo Heights (*San Antonio* 34). This question is also indirectly answered by Justice Marshall's contention that in issues such as these, "the question of discrimination in educational facilities must be deemed to be an objective one that looks at what the State provides its children, not to what the children are able to do with what they receive" (*San Antonio* 33). In presenting an altogether different perspective on this issue, Justice Marshall stresses the importance of duty and equality for the state.

Recalling the importance *Brown* attaches to education for success in

today's society, Marshall contends that "education directly affects the ability to exercise his [a citizen's] First Amendment rights, both as a source and as a receiver of information and ideas" (*San Antonio* 42). Referring to Justice Brennan's opinion in *Abington School Dist. v. Schempp*, [374 U.S. 203, 230 (1963)], Justice Marshall concurs with Brennan that "Americans regard the public schools as the most vital civic institution for the preservation of a democratic system of government" (*San Antonio* 42). By referring to the point of view of other Justices, Marshall not only strengthens his own argument but also demonstrates the traditional importance imparted to education in previous decisions of the Court. This is analogous to the commitment to education asserted in *Brown*, since "these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education" (*Brown* 4).

The plurality counters this opinion by arguing that "the Court has never presumed to possess either the ability or the authority to guarantee to the citizenry the most effective speech or the most informed electorate" (*San Antonio* 10); therefore, even though education is important for the execution of First Amendments rights, the Court has no duty to ensure its provision. However, it is important to note that the appellants in this case seek the opportunity for an equal education and an end to state discrimination on the basis of taxable property, not the best education that the state government could provide. In essence, Justice Marshall argues that the appellants want access to the same educational opportunity, irrespective of its quality. A consequent equalization of educational facilities may result in the lowering of the standards of some schools in affluent districts, since the same amount of tax revenue would be distributed in a manner that ensures an equal expenditure on each pupil of every district. Such a financing program may be contested on moral grounds, because rich parents are being forced to fund the education of other children while their own children would be receiving substantially poorer educational facilities compared with those they currently enjoy. However, since Justice Marshall's contention would result in an egalitarian policy, it would be consistent with the moral logic of *Brown* in providing education on "equal terms to all" (*Brown* 4).

The plurality also believes that "adequate education" (*San Antonio* 7) would be sufficient for the exercise of the fundamental rights accorded by the Constitution; therefore, equality is unnecessary if all citizens acquire enough education to perform basic social and political duties, such as voting and the free exchange of ideas. However, just as the plurality believes that changing the state taxation laws would exceed the Court's jurisdiction, rendering it a "super-legislature" (*San Antonio* 9), so too the Court also lacks authority to

define what level, quality, and type of education qualify as “adequate.”

In a manner similar to Chief Justice Warren in *Brown*, Justice Marshall is also motivated by the psychological effects of the stark inequality of public high schools in *San Antonio*. He argues that the effects of the “inferior education” that “countless children unjustifiably receive ‘may affect their minds and hearts in a way unlikely to be ever undone’” (*San Antonio* 31, quoting *Brown* 4), for the “quality of education offered may influence a child’s decision to ‘enter or remain in school’” [*San Antonio* 42, quoting the decision of *Gaston County v. United States* (395 U.S. 285, 296)]. Coupled with poor facilities and resources, discrimination often promotes a sense of inferiority and social stigma, engendering a general lack of interest in education, which leaves indelible marks on a child’s psyche and may influence his decisions about whether to complete schooling and attend college.

While the plurality does not explicitly counter this point, the conservative Court traditionally disregards the psychological effect of laws and judicial decisions on the people. Such factors are often very subjective and influence different people in different ways, arguably nullifying each other. For instance, the Texas system of financing education may displease parents residing in poor districts, whereas the parents in affluent districts would likely support this policy because the money they pay in local taxes is spent exclusively on their children and on other children residing in the district. It is not the duty of the Court to base its decision on such speculations. A conformist to *Brown*, however, would argue that it is essential to consider the psychological effects only on the group that suffers discrimination, for it is they who have been wronged by the policies of the state. Likewise, in this case, Marshall is in line with the values of *Brown* by considering only the psychological influences on children in poor districts.

Despite Justice Marshall’s adherence to the moral logic of *Brown*, it is the decision of the plurality that is constitutionally correct. The main contention between the majority and the dissenting opinion is whether strict scrutiny applies in this case. The majority agrees that if strict scrutiny were to apply in this case, the Texas system of financing public schools would be considered constitutionally invalid. However, strict scrutiny can only apply to a case in which there exists either discrimination against a suspect class or a denial of a fundamental right, as secured explicitly or implicitly by the Constitution. However, in light of the present case, neither can the class that is suffering discrimination be considered suspect nor can education be deemed an implicit constitutional right.

To be considered a suspect class, a group must meet the following criteria: the group’s characteristics must be “immutable,” the group must have a

“history of discrimination,” the group must be “politically impotent,” and the group must be “a discrete or insular minority.”¹ In the present case, we could describe the disadvantaged group as being composed of all those people who reside in poor districts, which have a relatively low amount of taxable property. It is important to note, here, that members of this group are not necessarily poor; they simply reside within a poor district. The characteristics of this group do not satisfy any of the requirements of the suspect classification: the class described here is the very opposite of “immutable.” The poor constitute an “amorphous class” (*San Antonio* 8), since wealth is never stagnant. A simple change of residence would beget a change in categorization. Poor districts may be comprised of persons from different races and socioeconomic strata; therefore, there is no basis for asserting the “history of discrimination” or “political impotency” of the group. Depending on the relative definition of “poor districts,” any class could qualify as a minority. However, there is no evidence to suggest that people in these districts were in any manner detached from society as a whole. Although the liberal Court may argue that these districts are in fact primarily composed of African Americans or Americans of Hispanic descent, it is possible that a poor district might consist of a white majority. Therefore, since the Court’s decision does not directly discriminate against people of those races, which have suffered from a long history of segregation, suspect classification cannot apply.

Education, despite its importance in society today, is not a fundamental right guaranteed either explicitly or implicitly by the Constitution. Even the *Brown* decision, which is perhaps the most famous affirmation of the necessity for education in American society, refers to it merely as an “opportunity” (*Brown* 4) that a state may provide. Like many other facilities and conveniences provided by state and local governments, education is a privilege for the citizens of a state. The conservative Court contends that “if the degree of judicial scrutiny of state legislature fluctuated on the majority’s view of the importance of the interest affected, we would have gone far toward making this Court a ‘super-legislature’” (*San Antonio* 9), thus emphasizing the importance of judicial restraint.

Our assessment of the constitutional decision is, however, further complicated by the Texas Constitution and the Fourteenth Amendment to the federal Constitution. The Texas Constitution guarantees its citizens the right to an education. According to the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, “No State shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Therefore, it is imperative to consider what “equal protection of laws” entails for the conservative and liberal Court and which interpretation is most appropriate in arriving at a decision in this case.

The liberal Court strives for equality in every aspect of public education: physical facilities, educational resources, the quality of education imparted, and even intangible factors such as reputation and image. Therefore, any inequality in the features of public education is unacceptable to the liberal Court and is deemed a breach of the “equal protection” clause. Consequently, in *San Antonio*, the dissenting opinion believes that the inequality created by discrepancies in per pupil expenditure and the consequent disparity in tangible educational facilities violates the Fourteenth Amendment. Justice Marshall describes his vision of a “right to every American to an equal start in life” (*San Antonio* 31), referring to the hope that every American would be born to equality; his achievements being solely a result of his own effort and capabilities. Essential to achieving such an equal start in life is equal access, for all, to equitable educational facilities and opportunities. However, in a society where each child is born to a house with a different socio-economic, racial, and cultural profile, and is influenced by a different set of peers, a completely equal start is nearly impossible.

The conservative Court, on the other hand, views “equal protection” of the right to education in a less exacting manner. In *San Antonio*, as long as the state provides public education to all its citizens without discriminating against suspect classes, the system of financing is constitutionally valid. Discrepancies are bound to arise in the tangible and intangible aspects of different schools, and the onus falls upon the state legislature, representing the voice and views of the people, to decide whether to bridge this gap, and how to achieve a greater degree of equality if the people of the state so desire.

The conservative Court contends that “at least where wealth is involved, the Equal Protection Clause does not require absolute equality or precisely equal educational advantages” (*San Antonio* 7). Even if the Texas government were to allocate a fixed and equal amount of educational expenditure per pupil, it is essential to consider whether the State could restrict the local district from contributing toward the education of its children. Should the state prevent local districts from taking any part in the educational process, this would create a less efficient educational system, since the local district is necessarily the most cognizant of its citizens’ needs. More importantly, this intervention would infringe on the liberty of citizens by not allowing them to partake in the education of their children. The capacity of parents to contribute financially toward public education in their districts can vary substantially, and eventually the State education system would reach its initial state of inequality. Therefore, the Equal Protection Clause cannot require strict equality in cases relating to wealth, as that would place the clause in opposition to individual liberty—the liberty of individuals to expend their money

in the manner they think appropriate. Consequently, the Texas system of financing public schools does not violate the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, and the conservative Court's definition holds.

The case at hand thus draws attention to the discrepancy between morality and constitutionality. The Texas system of financing public education fails on moral grounds due to the wide disparity it creates. Justice Marshall's dissent upholds the moral logic of *Brown*, aiming to amend the system and thereby deliver to the people of Texas a perfectly egalitarian educational system. However, because the State's financing system does not violate any of the tenets of the Constitution, it remains valid on constitutional grounds. The pronouncement of *Brown* also gestures to this contradiction, because although from a moral perspective "education is the most important duty of state and local governments," constitutionally a citizen has the right to education "only where the state has undertaken to provide it" (*Brown* 6). Because constitutionality is less mutable than morality, which is dependent on individuals and, therefore, on the composition of a jury, an element of objectivity can be introduced in judicial pronouncements only by adhering to the Constitution. Thus, the liberals' hope for a moral system of public education is checked by conservatives' desire to limit the judiciary to the strictest interpretation of the Constitution, demonstrating that in this case recourse to the legislative is the only hope for appellants to obtain an egalitarian system of education on moral grounds. The judiciary will simply uphold the Constitution. ♦

NOTES

- ¹ "Suspect Classification." Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. 07 November, 2007.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspect_classification

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WINTER 2008 WINNER

Emily Rials

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

EMILY RIALS IS NOT AFRAID of big questions. What is the self, she asks in this essay, and how are characters defined? These are just the sorts of questions IHUM Fellows are trained to dissuade in a six-page paper, tending to fear (as we do) that such papers will set readers afloat upon the ether of abstraction. In the case of Emily's fine essay, however, these complex questions find anchor in a deep understanding of the social contexts and concrete details that flesh out Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*. Emily's deft analysis helps us discern how, in these texts, resonant questions about identity and freedom become intricately linked to, and are inflected by, the political structures, social codes, and normative gender roles that govern these represented worlds. Despite their differences, Emily discovers that Shakespeare's play and Castiglione's conduct manual pose an interesting dialogue to one another—and to us, as readers.

In staging this dialogue between texts, Emily's essay opens up new insights into *Hamlet* and *The Book of the Courtier*. Moreover, her essay develops its nuanced analysis with a keen sensitivity to language that is as apparent in Emily's readings as it is in her own lucid, eloquent, and judicious prose. Nowhere, perhaps, is Emily's attunement to the language of these texts more evident than in her deployment of the line from *Hamlet* that forms part of her title. "Lord, we know what we are, but not what we may be." Opening with this line spoken by Ophelia, Emily's essay gestures to the grand possibilities of the speaking, unfolding self (in our own world, as in the domain of paper people). And yet this same line, as Emily examines it, comes to betray certain limitations set upon that prospective freedom by the constraints of socially defined authorities, obligations, and sanctioned permissions. "What we *may* be," in Ophelia's case, ultimately proves little enough of what might have been. Inviting us to consider mad Ophelia as a source of potential yet unrealized authority in Shakespeare's play—in contrast to Emilia Pia, in Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*—this essay solicits attention to the selves and stories that remain unknown in *Hamlet*, and likewise to possibilities for freedom and self-definition that yet "may be."

—CHRISTINE MCBRIDE

“What We May Be”: Definition of the Self in Castiglione and Shakespeare

Emily Rials

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia observes in her insanity, “Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be” (Shakespeare IV.v.43). In madness, Ophelia touches on a theme central to understanding not only *Hamlet* but also other works we have read this quarter: how are characters defined? Is the self a fixed entity, fundamental, personal, and inalterable, or is one's character a mutable reflection of one's position in society? Ophelia's madness itself also raises the question of how society's definition of self affects gender roles. Comparing Emilia Pia's status in Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* to Ophelia's status in *Hamlet*, we find that cultural understanding of the self has much to bear on how women can function within that culture. For Emilia, a flexible idea of the self and open discussion allow her to flourish; for Ophelia, more rigid political and personal distinctions and the maneuverings of an unstable monarchy predestine her to wither, a violet stifled by the weight of expectation.

In the court of Urbino, in *The Book of the Courtier*, peace reigns. Lack of external threat, “a season deprived” of Italian wars, allows the aristocracy extensive leisure time: tennis and jousting tournaments take the place of military training, and spirited conversation constitutes much of a normal evening's entertainment (9). Castiglione describes the court setting as “the very abode of mirth,” and the courtiers themselves as “all linked in love” (11). In this happy, stable setting, the power structure can afford to be open: a Duke and Duchess whose authorities go unthreatened can trust in and socialize with their courtiers more than can a king, such as Claudius in *Hamlet*, whose kingdom is only marginally his to control. Duke Guido and Duchess Elisabetta have no reason to distrust their courtiers, and so the court dynamics become circular in nature: when the court sits down to its after-dinner discussion, “everyone [sits] down in a circle as he please[s] or as chance

decide[s]; and in sitting they [are] arranged alternately, a man and a woman” (13). Even the Duchess sits among the courtiers in the circle; everyone is allowed to contribute to the discussion. At the same time, because this court system cannot rely on physical, military prowess to separate the most valuable courtiers from the least, a new standard arises. In accordance with this new tradition, courtiers cultivate manners, rather than military knowledge, to gain their superiors’ attention. Such tradition defines the self as variable. If, as Ottaviano claims, “The aim of the perfect Courtier...is to win for himself...the favour and mind of the prince whom he serves,” then the values the courtier upholds and the commitments he will make depend far more on the values and demands of the prince than on the courtier’s initial inclination (244). The game Messer Federico proposes touches on this point as well: the ideal Courtier described by the discussants represents the individual all the aristocratic men aspire to become (19). By debating which merits befit him and which aspects of the self are not becoming, these courtiers offer advice to themselves and to Castiglione’s readers regarding what sort of people they should be. In their circle of discussants, the aristocrats of Urbino portray the self as something to be improved and perfected, something into whose improvement and perfection both men and women can have insight.

The court situation of *Hamlet* could hardly be more different. Rather than directly inheriting a peaceful duchy, Claudius comes to the Danish throne through a hasty marriage to the Queen after the death of his brother the King; Claudius’ claim to his crown, then, is disputable at best. Not only that, but Claudius also has a threat of a Norwegian invasion, led by Fortinbras, with which to contend. We see from the interaction between Barnardo and Francisco as the play begins that everyone is on heightened alert, everyone is suspicious (I.i.1–6); there are no round table discussions of courtly love at Elsinore. Instead of a circular power structure where rulers may debate openly with courtiers, the structure in *Hamlet* is a linear hierarchy, where the power slowly trickles down from king to advisors to everyone else. Everyone has a set status, and the only way to advance is by deposing another. Just as the power structure differs in Denmark, so do the societal traditions stemming from that structure. The courtiers of Elsinore replace the courtly artistry of Urbino with crafty deception: when one can advance only by demoting another, there is no open discussion about how best to promote oneself socially. It becomes clear that the court of Denmark operates under different assumptions regarding the nature of the self, too. When Hamlet asserts, “I have that within that passes show” (I.ii.85), he means he has a fundamental, personal self a self impervious to Polonius’ spying, a self whose grief will not abate if he takes his mother’s advice and “cast[s] [his] nighted

colour off" (I.ii.68). Many Urbino aristocrats focus on how an ideal courtier should look and dress; for example, Messer Federico desires "that our Courtier may be neat and dainty throughout his dress, and have a certain air of modest elegance" (102). Hamlet dismisses such concerns. Hamlet defines his self as something particular to him, unchanged by his attire, and it is that self whose interest Hamlet serves. He does not seek to "improve" himself for the sake of a superior, but rather seeks to honor the self he feels is his. If Castiglione's vision is of a chameleon soul, Hamlet's is that of a monolith.

What does all of this have to do with women? In *The Book of the Courtier* and *Hamlet*, the female characters have a certain degree of power. Both Emilia Pia and Ophelia are able to influence the futures of the men around them: Emilia through interaction with her courtly peers, Ophelia through relationships with her family and the monarchy. The extent to which these young women can exercise their influences, however, depends on their individual status within the larger court. For Emilia Pia, the elasticity of the courtly self allows her to engage in debate with her male counterparts. Women sit among the men in the discussion circle at Urbino (13), and are invited by their presence there to undertake the role of the courtly lady, which is to "teach the Courtier how to make himself loved rather than how to love... to do the world so great a benefit" (226). This role is, admittedly, assigned to Emilia and her female peers by the men around them, as it is Lord Unico who defines the court lady's "task" thus, but the authority of the position is such that Emilia can challenge the societal values she finds flawed. For example, Emilia answers Unico's ideas of courtly love and the court lady's role with her own thoughts and suggestions (226–7). Emilia, as a woman, a court lady, assumes a teacher's role, and from that position she can teach the courtiers to uphold her values. Emilia is an equal participant in the court's discussion, an independent agent who derives power from her position as the Duchess' companion (11) but who, as Castiglione introduces us to her, "was endowed with such lively wit and judgment that, as you know, it seemed... as if everyone gained wisdom and worth from her" (11). Because her society views the self as flexible, Emilia Pia's insights as a woman, as an outside observer, factor just as much into the shaping of the courtier's self as do others: as the self for her is adaptable, so too are the gender roles around her.

If, indeed, a flexible sense of self allows for flexible and empowered women, we might expect that in a culture with a more calcified vision of the self, female characters would have less room to alter and interpret their societal roles. When the self is something ever to be improved, women can safely assume influence without overtly threatening the men: everyone seeks to be better, so everyone benefits from advice. This universal acceptance of

advice and influence is likewise reflected in the idea of power in Urbino: the Courtier's ultimate goal, his motivation in seeking power, is the "noblest philosophy" of "bring[ing] into civilized living... savage people" (282). In Hamlet's Denmark, however, power is something won for individual advancement rather than something focused on bettering the planet. In Elsinore, where the self is not constructed but innate, one must do with one's given self what one can. When achievement of power involves putting one self over another, those whose selves are less assertive or aggressive can easily become instruments rather than influences. This is certainly the case for Ophelia.

From the first to the final act of *Hamlet*, Ophelia transforms from a young woman confident in her love for and from Hamlet into a selfless wraith into a madwoman. Emilia Pia was on an equal footing with the men around her in her discussion circle. She could argue and debate ideas she felt needed further discussion, and we have already seen that Castiglione's peers viewed her as a source of wisdom as well as wit. Ophelia is not autonomous, Emilia is. Rather than finding herself a free agent at the Duchess' court, where young people seem parentless and free to pursue whatever leisure they deem courtly, Ophelia resides in a palace where her father, Polonius, her brother, Laertes, and even her lover, Hamlet, feel compelled and entitled to advise her on every aspect of her behavior. Ophelia's first reaction savors of Emilia Pia's dialogue with Unico: when Laertes warns her to protect her chastity in her relationship with Hamlet, Ophelia charges him not to "show [her] the steep and thorny way to heaven" while he honors a different standard (I.iii.48). She makes Laertes defend himself. However, when Polonius echoes Laertes' concerns, Ophelia becomes less confident, answering him, "I do not know my lord what I should think" (I.iii.104). Polonius' approach is very different from Unico's. While Unico tells Emilia that "to avoid such grievous errors... perhaps it was well to teach [women] first how to make choice of a man who shall deserve to be loved, and then how to love him" (226), Polonius' reaction to his sense of Ophelia's naiveté in her relationship with Hamlet is a condemning dismissal: "Puh! You speak like a green girl, / Unsifted in such perilous circumstance" (I.iii.101–2). Polonius does not assume that Ophelia's "self" can be enlightened. She is what she is, and what she is to him is a "green girl" whose inexperience leaves her open to manipulation, both by Hamlet and by himself. Polonius' concern is clearly not for Ophelia's self, but for his own: "Tender yourself more dearly," he advises her, "Or... you'll tender me a fool" (I.iii.107–9). If Ophelia has, as Hamlet does, "that within that passes show," Polonius and Laertes do not seem to recognize its authority.

Indeed, Ophelia's function within the hierarchy of the Danish court is not as an individual, a teacher like Emilia Pia, but rather as a pawn, a symbol of her family's honor and a bargaining chip. Polonius uses Ophelia as bait to watch Hamlet's behavior and "of their encounter frankly judge" whether or not Hamlet's madness is based on love (III.i.34). Ophelia, previously assured of Hamlet's affections, now obeys without argument (I.iii.99–100). Her self, intrinsic and unchangeable as Hamlet's philosophy would define it, has been overthrown and obscured, its colors cast off and replaced with those provided by the demands and expectations of others. Her lack of self-determination is clear when, in the mousetrap scene, Ophelia answers Hamlet's joking: "I think nothing my lord" (III.ii.104). It is not that Ophelia's self ceases to be defined, but that she ceases to have any say in its definition. Rather than choosing who she will become, Ophelia defines herself by what Polonius expects. Thus, when Polonius dies and Ophelia goes mad, it is not ironic for Laertes to remark, "is't possible a young maid's wits/ Should be as mortal as an old man's life?" (IV.v.159–60). Polonius defined his daughter according to his own identity: the *Dramatis Personae* introduces Ophelia from the beginning as merely "*his daughter*," a stark contrast to the introduction Castiglione gives Emilia Pia. Ophelia literally loses her sense of herself when Polonius is no longer around to direct her.

Emilia Pia's last words are a challenge to the man who has been most critical of women: "if my lord Gaspar wishes to accuse women...he shall also give bond to sustain his charge, for I account him a shifty disputant" (306). Emilia calls on Gaspar to convince her of the legitimacy of his claims. Ophelia, on the other hand, departs from the earth singing songs about her father's death. In her world, the self is not something created through interaction with courtly society. In her world, the self is something inherent to each individual, but something vulnerable to the manipulation of others. Urbino's embrace of a flexible self-determination allows Emilia to both offer and receive advice about what sort of self to be. It is not that men are less critical of women in Urbino, but that the women have enough influence to answer for themselves. While Emilia receives praise for her judgment and wisdom, Ophelia exists only in her relationship to Polonius, a relationship that shatters her self-confidence and draws her into madness when that source of self-definition is gone. In Ophelia's Elsinore, a more rigid idea of self-differentiation and a more linear power structure create an atmosphere in which one is either handling or handled in quest of greater political standing, and Ophelia is a casualty of such manipulation. Her self wilts under the pressure of others' expectations, others' ideas of who she is, and when she has no way to assert her own authority, her destiny is inevitable. In another time,

another place, Ophelia might be an Emilia Pia, empowered by the courtly system at its most liberating, but caught in the tide of Denmark's political turmoil, Ophelia reveals the court system at its most confining. ◆

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WINTER 2008 HONORABLE MENTION

Varun Sivaram

INSTRUCTOR'S FOREWORD

MOST PEOPLE DO NOT THINK DEEPLY about whether they are free. This may be for the best because of the three possibilities (determinism, compatibilism, libertarianism) each seems to have a devastating weaknesses when analyzed carefully. Despite this, Varun boldly seeks to demonstrate that there is a rational way to account for free will. Yet Varun also recognizes that proving the existence of free will is only the first of two large problems. The second is proving free will in a way that is compatible with the existence of moral responsibility. As he shows through the Arminian belief that complete indifference is necessary for free will, some conceptions of free will seem incompatible with the possibility of moral responsibility. His analysis of Jonathan Edwards' account is masterful. Edwards is an eighteenth-century American Calvinist theologian who believes that our common conceptions of freedom and moral responsibility do not presuppose free will and that libertarian free will is incompatible with the existence of moral responsibility. In addition to articulating Edwards' argument concisely, which is no easy task, Varun notes that Edwards is actually making a straw-man attack against the libertarian position. Yet with admirable charity, he reconstructs a stronger argument. Varun tears down the most powerful possible argument that Edwards can make. In its stead, he makes several novel moves. First, he seeks to construct a causally independent version of libertarianism. Second, he recognizes that this requires clarity between possibility and probability. Third, in perhaps the most creative of his moves, he collapses the distinction between willing and acting. It is conceptually difficult, perhaps impossible, to grasp how the distinction between willing and acting can be collapsed, but it is no more fantastic than existing rival means of avoiding the problems of free will. Furthermore, if it works, then it nicely escapes some of the traditional worries about free will. Perhaps more impressive, though, is Varun's ability to see the big picture. He is careful to appreciate the power of how language can muddy concepts in addition to clarifying them, and he is refreshingly forthright about the limitations of his thesis while both carefully limiting the scope of his project and anticipating further objections. Varun's skillful analytical engagement with the text, especially his anticipatory objections, serves as a beautiful model for IHUM essays.

—MICHAEL McFALL

Freeing Will

Varun Sivaram

A free will is something we take for granted. In fact, the very act of acknowledging free will presupposes a freedom inherent in that action; to oppose free will invites a sticky contradiction, because an unfree person does not have the freedom to oppose anything. Yet this has not deterred a popular school of thought that rejects free will by claiming that a single chain of causality runs through all events and human actions, strictly determining the future. Jonathan Edwards was one such determinist, arguing in *Freedom of Will* that perfect liberty does not exist (80–83). He contends that the conception of an independent free will held by libertarians, although crafted to protect conventional tenets of liberty and moral responsibility, in fact excludes any such responsibility or moral judgment. Edwards seems to fight contradiction with contradiction, conceding causal determinism but apparently still defending moral responsibility.¹ Methodically pursuing every strand of argument against libertarian free will, Edwards weaves a stifling blanket of logical paradoxes that would preclude pure liberty. Yet our nagging intuition that such unqualified freedom does somehow exist leads us to search for a hole in the fabric of determinism.

Edwards targets the model of free will held by the Arminians, a libertarian Protestant sect opposed to Edwards' Calvinists. In order to understand Edwards' attacks on libertarianism, we must first understand the Arminian conception of free will. Edwards correctly pinpoints the source of the free will debate as an apparently infinite chain of causality; in framing the discussion, he refers to "that grand contradiction of all, the determinations of a man's free Will being the effects of the determinations of his free will" (80).² In Edwards' opinion, for the libertarian to refute such causal determinism, an agent of causation must exist that causes but is not caused (as the saying goes, "the unmoved mover"). For the libertarians, this agent is the "Will" and freely determines an action. In order for the Will to act as an agent of causation, it cannot be caused or influenced by anything; the Arminians, Edwards

believes, describe such a Will as in a state of “Indifference.” From this indifferent state the Will makes a choice: this choice, the Arminians contend, is made through Liberty, because the Will was *not inclined* toward either alternative and therefore not caused by such an inclination to choose one option over another. Thus Edwards’ conception of Arminian libertarian thought attributes to a free Will perfect indifference so that it can exercise agency in a consequent chain of causality.

Libertarianism, by advocating the existence of free will, would appear to support moral responsibility; Edwards notes that for libertarians, “it be essential to a virtuous action, that it be performed in a state of Liberty” (81). Yet, while the common man would agree with this claim, Edwards attacks the libertarian definition of “Liberty”³ by contending that common sense implies a weaker definition. In Edwards’ opinion, common people never “ascend up in...reflections” about the “grand contradiction” of infinite causality. While they do intuitively believe in the existence of “a person’s *own deed or action*,” even that it is something done by him by *choice*,” they would disagree with the libertarian view that Liberty necessarily lies in indifference of the Will (80). Under libertarianism, “the greater indifference men act with, the more freedom they act with; whereas the reverse is true” in the eyes of common people: “the fullest inclination” is characteristic of “the greatest freedom” (80).⁴

Because of this discrepancy, Edwards argues, conventional morality does not presuppose libertarian Liberty. Common sense dictates that “the further [someone] is from being indifferent in his acting good or evil..., the more is he esteemed or abhorred, commended or condemned” (80). Predispositions, Edwards believes, form the basis of intuitive moral judgments; yet they exist at some point in time before the decision is considered, and therefore create an immediate, biased inclination to choosing one alternative over another. Because the libertarian believes that moral judgments can only be made about one’s exercise of Liberty—since one cannot be responsible for actions out of his control—“*dispositions and inclinations* of the heart” (83) are not part of the indifferent, free Will, and therefore not subject to moral judgment. Thus Edwards reasons if libertarian ideas of “Liberty and moral Agency be true, it will follow, that there is no virtue in any such habits or qualities as humilities, meekness, patience, [or] mercy” (83). He then offers a triumphant example to reinforce the absurdity of this libertarian claim—if inclinations cannot be judged, then Jesus Christ was not morally commendable because all of his acts were determined results of the “strong propensities in his heart” (82). Common moral judgments do not presuppose libertarian Liberty of indifference because praise and blame are commonly attributed to actions

that arise out of inclination and not solely out of indifference; put differently, common liberty includes inclinations, while libertarian Liberty does not.⁵

This first argument by Edwards appeals to intuition, discrediting libertarianism by proving it incompatible with everyday moral judgments. Edwards now seeks to attack the Arminians from another angle, aiming to conclude that no form of moral responsibility can be applied to libertarian indifference.⁶ He has already proven that habits and inclinations fall outside the libertarian realm of moral ownership, leaving only the decision of the Will to put itself out of equilibrium and indifference. This choice to act, to begin the causal chain, arises out of a perfectly indifferent Will, according to libertarians. Yet this implies that the Will, “as near to choosing as refusing, is as likely to commit [acts] as to refrain from them” (82). Therefore, if an indifferent Will chooses one option over the other, it cannot be blamed or praised for the choice, because through a simple “contingence” of likelihood, it indifferently chose this particular option. In Edwards’ words, “if there be no previous disposition at all... that determines the act, then it is not choice that determines it: it is therefore a contingence” (83). Edwards’ representation of the last stronghold of libertarian Liberty, the indifferent Will, resembles a simple two-faced coin: the flipped coin can equally produce heads or tails, but it cannot be held responsible for the specific outcome. This completes the overall argument against libertarianism, proving, in Edwards’ opinion, that no part of the decision-making process can really possess pure Liberty; therefore, moral responsibility is incompatible with libertarianism.

This last claim by Edwards is the most crucial part of his argument and the most susceptible to objection: his underlying premise appears to be that the Will has a deterministic existence. Such a premise would transgress logically into circular reasoning (or begging the question); for if Edwards believes that the Will is a determined entity, and then proves the same, he has assumed the conclusion. Of course, Edwards would retort that he has given libertarian Will its full due, conceding it perfect indifference and causal independence. Yet, by taking a look at Edwards’ language—“the probability of doing and forbearing are exactly the same” (82)—we are infused with the sense that the Will is merely a victim of probabilistic determination. So Edwards really is not proving that an indifferent but causally independent Will cannot have moral responsibility; his conception of the libertarian Will operates deterministically (under statistical laws) and is morally immune only because of this presupposition. Here we realize that Edwards has constructed a straw-man argument, knocking down a Will lacking in the causal independence that the libertarian model is based on. Edwards could retort that a non-deterministic Will is an oxymoron, thereby justifying an attack on liber-

tarianism that contradicts its foundation. Therefore, we now turn our attention toward finding a stronger, *causally independent* definition of libertarian Will that Edwards has neglected to address.

The distinction that a libertarian should make in response to Edwards is between probability and possibility. Edwards treats the libertarian Will as indifferent and therefore *equally probable* to pick one of two options (like the flipped coin).⁷ However, this is not a necessary conclusion—it may just be equally *possible* for the Will to choose one of two outcomes. This only means that the Will completely possesses the capacity to choose one or the other; yet, the specific choice will not just be a product of random selection following a probability distribution.⁸ In this respect, the Will is still indifferent—neither of the two options has been ruled out. However, the probability of the decision is not only unknown, but an irrelevant and misleading metric. The very concept of probability implies a lack of free will (because, just as Edwards argues, a probabilistic “contingence” is simply not characteristic of Liberty). So by making this distinction between probability and possibility of the Will’s decision, we define a Will that, up until the moment of the action, retains the possibility to either perform an action or refrain from it but does not operate under the deterministic laws of probability. The immediate corollary to this claim is that a decision is synonymous and simultaneous with an action (in other words, the distinction is trivial). This constitutes the second plank of our objection to Edwards, whose event-driven model of decisions perceives a temporal gap between the Will choosing and the act occurring.

In order to place this new conception of Libertarian Will within the larger framework of decision-making and (possible) moral responsibility, let us consider an example. Suppose John is deciding whether or not to copy his neighbor’s test. Let us further suppose that John’s parents raised him with the strict mandate never to cheat and that his school strongly discourages it. John’s predispositions and habits, therefore, will probably be biased toward not cheating. The Will of John is aware of all other information—his own inclinations, the circumstances, the possible advantages of cheating—and he must now make a decision. Our new representation of the Will still describes it as an Indifferent entity; despite all these pressures, it always retains both the possibility to copy and to refrain from it. Unlike in Edwards’ conception, the Will does not accidentally or contingently pick one or the other—it will instead consider the two options in some manner. Throughout this process⁹ of consideration, the Will still retains both options, in the sense that neither will cease to be a possibility. Thus the Will maintains its indifference, by keeping both options *equally possible*, up until either option is carried out in action (and not a temporal fraction before).

Edwards would easily parry this claim, contending that the moment the consideration is begun, the outcome may well be predetermined by the inevitable causal chain (and by implication, one of the two options has already been ruled out). But our definition of the Will's functioning refutes this; it is not a simple mechanism that processes inputs in a predetermined fashion. Instead, our Will may employ some reason or logic or irrational process and be on the verge of choosing one option over another *but still retain the equal possibility of choosing the other option*. While empirical evidence to back this up may be impossible to obtain, consider an intuitive example: John thinks of his parents, reasons that cheating is immoral, and then spontaneously looks over at his neighbor anyway.¹⁰ At no point does his Will, in its decision-making process, surrender the capacity to choose either option until the action itself has been committed. Again, in this view of the definition, the action and choice to act are simultaneous (in fact the "choice" is defined as the action occurring and thus ruling out the other option), and the "intervening" causes that Edwards might point out as causal determinants of the action therefore cannot exist.¹¹ John's "indifferent" will is in control of his action until he cheats or refrains, and he therefore bears responsibility for that action.

Recall that Edwards makes two claims about libertarianism: first, that it cannot coexist with common-sense morals, and second, that it cannot in fact be compatible with any system of moral responsibility. Thus far, we have only applied our objection to the second claim and guaranteed Liberty to our newly defined Will. But common intuition about morality implies more than the mere existence of Liberty—it ascribes liberty to inclinations and habits, which are outside of the libertarian realm of Liberty according to Edwards. Refuting Edwards here, proving that a moral rebuke is justified despite a thief's natural kleptomania, may be quite complicated; we would first have to pin down exactly how common-sense judges virtue and vice (or if there even is a consistent system). But we have shown that an indifferent Will still retains ultimate authority over all habits and inclinations (through the equal capacity to always choose one way or another). In this sense, it would seem foolish for the libertarian to confine moral responsibility to some artificial citadel of the Will, walled off from the rest of our internal forces.¹²

Maybe our redefinition of Willful indifference might convince Edwards even less than did the Arminian arguments that he reconstructed, because following deterministic canon, he would have had a ready response to every objection we offered to his arguments. But in our quest to recognize true Liberty and justify moral responsibility, we have first talked through the circles that have created this vicious paradox; then we discovered linguistic bias-

es that inherently preclude free will, like Edwards' instinctive use of "equal probability" that accompanied "indifference;" now we conclude with a rejection of the infinite causal chain between determination and action by removing the temporal span associated with it. The repudiation of these conventional assumptions underlying arguments such as those of Edwards leads us toward an optimistic outlook that preserves the intuitive existence of free will. We may need to further reflect in order to evaluate common-sense notions of morality, but at the very least we are now free to do so. ♦

NOTES

¹ Edwards, a Calvinist, believes in complete determinism of actions and existence; at the same time, even if actions are performed freely, their efficient cause is a person, and that is all that Edwards requires for moral judgment. I will not discuss the merits of this compatibilist view, however, since it is outside the scope of our excerpt.

² This problem has long been framed (Sextus Empiricus said this in 200 AD) as an infinite chain of regressive causes. Between an action and the will comes an intervening choice; between the choice and the will comes another intervening choice, to choose that choice, and so on. Thus, the chain should be more accurately visualized with infinite links, but of finite length; if causes keep intervening between the will and a choice, then the mathematical analogy would be to add $? + ? + \dots$ ad infinitum, which always approaches "1." Similarly, this causal chain has a specified, finite asymptote (the will), and tries infinitely to reach it. (Diagrammed in appendix)

³ Hereafter, libertarian Liberty will be denoted as such, while the "liberty of common sense" will be written in lowercase. Similarly, the libertarian conception of the Will will also be written with an uppercase "W."

⁴ Let us assume that for the libertarian, Liberty and "freedom" are synonymous.

⁵ There is an important distinction to be made here: Edwards is not saying that the libertarian Will is necessarily amoral under common conceptions of morality, but he claims indifference can be immoral, for example, if when asked to "blaspheme God," one is indifferent.

⁶ Edwards uses "indifference" and "equilibrium" interchangeably (almost with a sense of indifference); but this word choice implies a stance about indifference and equal probability that, as we will soon see, is not necessarily justified.

⁷ For the purposes of simplicity, let us assume throughout this paper that all decisions have only two options—performing an action or not.

⁸ To clarify, "unequally possible" means that one option is impossible while the other is possible. "Possibility" is a binary trait, with only two discrete states—"possible" or "impossible."

⁹ Another linguistic landmine—for lack of a better term, we must use "process" to describe the Will's consideration of a decision; however, "process" should not be construed to imply mechanical predictability or repeatability.

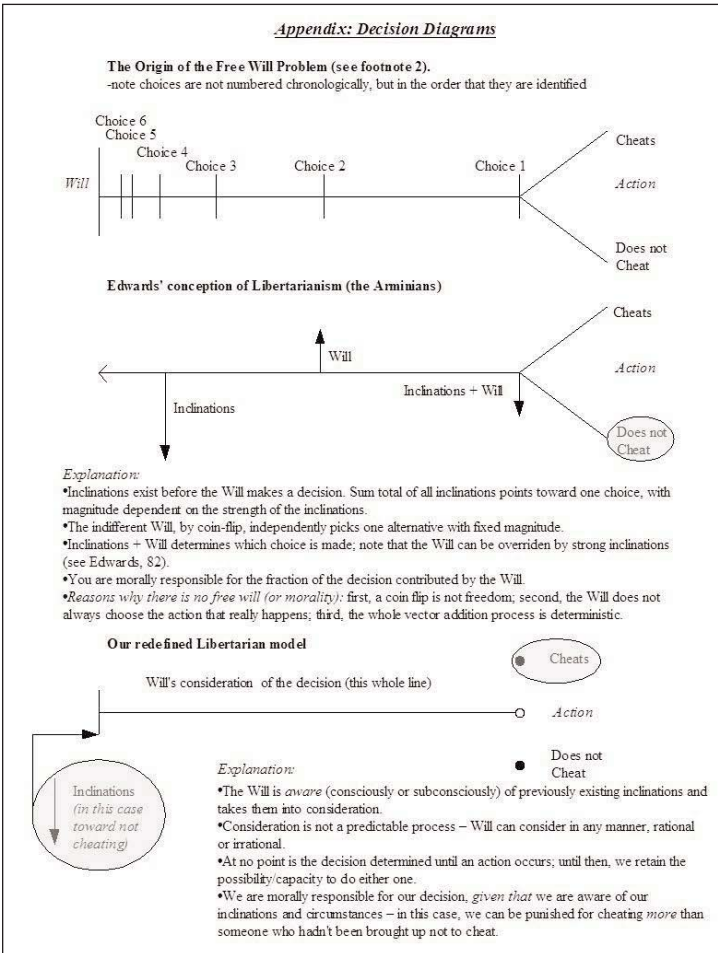
¹⁰ Then comes the inevitable counterargument—"Well, John may have been predetermined to spontaneously contradict his previous mental processes," to which I would argue, by the same token, that that counterargument was predetermined, and if all of thought is predetermined, then no useful, significant conclusion can actually be drawn because it would be impossible to ever conclude otherwise. These "meta" arguments in essence end by making the concept of

Truth an irrelevant distinction against Falsehood, one of which we are predetermined never to reach—we clearly cannot reason through such arguments in much the same fashion as how we cannot make any logical argument if we believe logic is a flawed construct.

¹¹One could argue that once the neural impulse has been fired, the Will cannot change its mind, so between making the choice and turning the head to cheat, the fired neuron intervenes and creates a causal chain; our theory refutes this, claiming that the Will still retains the possibility of not cheating, and even if an impulse is on the way, another can be sent to reverse the action without any noticeable effect.

¹²We may instead consider it a facilitator (with ultimate agency) of all other internal influences.

Appendix: Decision Diagrams



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