STUDIES

IN

POPULAR CULTURE

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Spring 2009

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Studies in Popular Culture

Studies in Popular Culture, a journal of the Popular Culture Association in the South, publishes articles on popular culture and American culture however mediated: through film, literature, radio, television, music, graphics, print, practices, associations, events—any of the material or conceptual conditions of life. Its contributors from the United States, Australia, Canada, China, England, Finland, France, Israel, and Spain include distinguished anthropologists, sociologists, cultural geographers, ethnomusicologists, historians, and scholars in mass communications, philosophy, literature, and religion.

Direct editorial queries and submissions to editor Rhonda Wilcox, Humanities Division, Gordon College, Barnesville, GA 30204. Telephone: 770-358-5296; email rhonda_w@gdn.edu. *Studies in Popular Culture* accepts submissions on all forms of popular culture (American or international) studied from the perspective of any discipline. Submissions relating strictly to American culture may be sent to the editor of *Studies in American Culture*, Rob McDonald, Virginia Military Institute, mcdonaldrl@vmi.edu.

Queries are welcome. Manuscripts should be sent via email as Microsoft Word attachments (author's last name in the file name). Essays should normally total, with notes and bibliography, no more than 23 pages double-spaced typescript, size 12 font (approximately 6500 words). *SPC* is indexed in the annual *MLA International Bibliography*, and MLA documentation is preferred, but authors may use documentation appropriate to the field *except* that notes should be endnotes, not footnotes, and should not be embedded. Authors should secure all necessary copyright permissions before submitting material. The editor reserves the right to make stylistic changes on accepted manuscripts. An interdisciplinary journal, *SPC* gives preference to submissions which demonstrate familiarity with the body of scholarly work on popular culture but which avoid the jargon associated with certain single-discipline studies.

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2008 Whatley Award

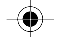
In memory of George Whatley, a founder and early president of the Popular Culture Association in the South, the editors and editorial board of *Studies in Popular Culture* annually recognize the article published in *SPC* that in their view best represents the scholarly values Professor Whatley sought for the organization and for the study of popular culture.

The 2008 Whatley Award winner is

Little America: R. E. M., Howard Finster, and the Southern "Outsider Art" Aesthetic

By

Matthew Sutton
The College of William and Mary



"The Material and Conceptual Conditions of Life"

I came to popular culture through the study of television—a branch of the drama, part of the great tree of literature (though television is both more and other than literature, of course). But popular culture encompasses more than the study of texts in the traditionally defined senses of the word. And so does this journal. This issue clusters together a number of essays that focus on subjects quite separate from the normal idea of text or narrative. Though two of the essays do examine stories or songs, most of the essays are about topics that former editor Dennis Hall (whom I quote) might have considered "the material and conceptual conditions of life." The array is quite varied, from fast food, to sex-toy marketing parties, to boy scout badges and radio, to world's fair press reports, to baby-naming.

For those of us who focus on narrative texts, we may conceive of the world as a narrative created in each mind. It is easy, therefore, to value the narratives originated (and sustained, in the case of some media such as television) by popular culture's creators. But this issue reminds us that we should explore popular culture (and, always, ourselves) in terms of objects and practices as well. Of course, we may find that when we do so, each object evokes a narrative; every practice tells a story.

In the first article of this issue, Minjoo Oh focuses on fast food—but not in the usual sense of the term. She invites us to broaden our conception and redefine *fast food*, moving through varieties of international food: the term includes not only McDonald's but, for example, Japanese *ekiben*. Our choices of fast-food eating practices also let us tell a story about ourselves: are we enjoying the contiguities of multiple cultures? If citizens of a developing country, are we proclaiming 'modernity' by choosing McDonald's? This article on "Fast Food Frontiers" surveys an internationally wide variety of options. In the second piece of the issue, "Sexed Appeals: Network Marketing Advertising and Adult Home Novelty Parties," Dawn Heinecken analyzes this modern variation on the Tupperware party with attention to both the economic and sociocultural implications. She points out the narrative of entrepreneurial independence that combines with advertisements of sexual liberation to involve the mainly female sellers of these products—and she describes the financial and cultural limitations in which the "passion" is embedded. Selling might be seen as the center of the next article as well. Kathleen Forni's "Popularizing High Culture: Zemeckis's *Beowulf*" does analyze the two different texts-- the medieval

poem and the twenty-first century film; however, it discusses the use of "high culture" to sell a product. Further, it examines the "conceptual conditions of life" in terms of the interplay among the various forces that work on an interpretation of the text such as that put forth by director Zemeckis, writers Roger Avary and Neil Gaiman, and all those who worked with them on this performance-capture film. And considering its many versions, what does constitute the text that is *Beowulf*? The next essay, by Stephen Bales and Charlie Gee, focuses on the press devoted to the 1982 Knoxville World's Fair, and reminds us that reports in the popular press are indeed significant texts in our lives—though not often consciously recognized as such; and they focus specifically on the cultural reinforcement of certain images of the "Other," particularly the outsider. In the fifth article, Noah Arceneaux explores an interesting root of radio: the early radio-building work of the Boy Scouts. Their encouragement of these practices especially because of wartime attitudes towards technology as defense is part of the overall historical context that Arceneaux carefully examines. They were, in fact, considered "Paul Reveres," expected to warn the nation of invasion via their amateur radios. And Arceneaux asks us to contemplate the interplay between users and technology on a broader scale as well. Ron Briley, in "The Legend of Sacco and Vanzetti," also looks at the interplay between reception and creation. In one of the two essays in this issue which do focus on (though they expand beyond) traditional texts, he discusses the literary, musical, and filmic representations of Sacco and Vanzetti's legend, with particular attention to the work of Upton Sinclair and Woody Guthrie. But he also asks us to consider the many attempts to find the historical truth of the story in the context of the democratic meaning of the legend. A different kind of meaning-making is the focus of the final essay, Claude "Jay" Smith's analysis of Americans' choice of names for our children. He canvasses statistical data on the shifts in naming trends; but he goes much farther in discussing the implications—the motives and consequences—that naming choices may have.

In all, these articles do explore "the material and conceptual conditions of life." For a text-centric editor (and perhaps some readers as well), they are a reminder of the richness of popular culture studies.

As always, great appreciation is due to those named on the editorial page and the inside back cover of this issue. In addition to the members of the editorial board, we owe thanks to the following for sharing their expertise as reviewers: David Broad, Alex Bruce, David Fritts, Donna Waller Harper, Ananya Mukherjea, John Sutton, and Ed Whitelock.

Rhonda V. Wilcox
Gordon College, Barnesville

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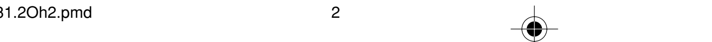
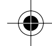
Minjoo Oh

Fast Food Frontiers: I've Got a Feeling We're Not in Kansas Anymore

My friend in Denver was biking to work the other day, shortly before noon, and he noticed a line of cars so long that it spilled out of a Taco Bell drive-through and blocked traffic. He marveled at the line, recalling that the "second-best tacos in the United States" are sold at a local mom-and-pop taco stand just six blocks away for about the same price. There's no drive-through, but the service there is fast, and the food is "a million times better than any Taco Bell." He wondered why all these folks weren't down at the local store, supporting that local mom-and-pop operation against the (inter-)nationalized chain.

His story made me wonder about fast food in general. Considering that so much of the cultural identity of fast food has to do not simply with the preparation but also with the corporate sprawl that dominates so many of our U.S. places, consumers seem to readily accept the sterile experience of fast-food chain restaurants even though an alternative with more personal attention, better quality food, even the same price — that local taco stand — is just down the road. But can the mom-and-pop operations properly be considered fast food? Is the question so easily divided between national chain and local store, particularly when that chain store is in fact a locally owned franchise? Perhaps the question isn't about the outlet as much as it is about the food. What is fast food anyway? Does it have a

popular definition? Does it have *any* definition? Perhaps more compelling: Where is fast food going? Where do we see the fast food frontiers?

The purpose of this article is to explore more carefully and to expand our definition of fast food. First I problematize the current notion of fast food and redefine it by suggesting that fast food is not a personal choice or lifestyle, but a societal condition. Second, I look into the international fast food scene beyond Taco Bell or McDonald's restaurants. These international examples from Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Japan, Paris, and back to New York City co-exist side-by-side with the standardized assemblyline fast food associated with global chains. From these examples, I suggest that we should shift our way of thinking about fast food and seek some new models for an expanded understanding of fast food's frontiers.

Thawing Fast Food

"Fast food" is often discussed from a single perspective that presumes that it is easily recognized as burgers, fries, soda, and similar items which are already prepared or quickly prepared for customers. The discussion then readily shifts to the purveyors of these products: multinational Western companies, such as McDonald's. For the scholars who utilize this perspective, such as George Ritzer (1993), every aspect of fast food is conveniently explained by reference to rationalization in modern society; companies selling fast food reflect the modern tendency of organizations to operate under rules that institutionalize predictability, calculability, efficiency, and control and that result in a homogenized experience.

Although this conception of fast food is useful, it is overly simplistic, and in a sense almost frozen. It fails to take into account the rapidly changing contemporary reality of the fast food scene. A discussion that assumes analysis of McDonald's as a conclusion, rather than as a starting point — one of many possible starting points — does not serve to develop a broader understanding of this eating practice of fast food and its social impact. Even if an analysis of fast food were to focus exclusively on the United States, this discussion ignores a reality in which the practice of fast food is expanding in ways sometimes contrary to McDonald's as a model: small, local shops also provide fast food, perhaps those same burgers and fries; individuals even create their own fast foods.

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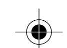
Fast food in other countries bears only a superficial comparison to the presumptive approach. For example, in Japan, people purchase *ekiben*, small lunchboxes available at railroad stations. These lunchboxes contain various foods all of which are part of traditional Japanese cuisine. The contents of *ekiben* vary seasonally and regionally, resulting in thousands of variations of this fast food.[1] While *ekiben* are fast and convenient like the food at a McDonald's, they cannot be explained only through a rationalization model of modern society, such as Ritzer's McDonaldization thesis. In Ritzer's rationalization model, a rich and individualized experience at fast food restaurants is almost impossible. The ultimate goal of rationalization is total control over natural (seasonal) and social (regional) environments, thereby ridding the process of chance: wherever you go, you have the exact same burger and the same eating experience. However, the logic of *ekiben* is based not simply on convenience, but also on creating regional pride, not system-wide uniformity.

An understanding of fast food must reflect the reality of a postmodern world in which eating practices are multiple and complex. One must acknowledge, at the outset, that there are no fixed reference points against which the many practices can be analyzed. Accordingly, a "global versus local" approach to fast food is not and, undoubtedly, never was adequate to explain these practices. Fast food arising from local or traditional practices coexists with its globalizing counterpart. The *ekiben* and the McDonald's — the two eating practices — each occupy a space — physical, organizational, social — in the world. By arguing that there are multiple fast-food eating practices and spaces, I do not argue that all are equally recognized or powerful around the globe. Clearly, McDonald's has had the corporate power to dominate space in a way that *ekiben* does not. And certainly one's ability to move between various experiences of fast food is shaped by where one lives (rural vs. cosmopolitan areas) and by one's socio-economic status.

But my main point is that these eating spaces are not insulated; rather they are contiguous: sitting side-by-side, parallel, overlapping, and even intersecting. One experiences each space not in isolation but in relation to the many other eating spaces. Eat the sushi on Monday and the burger on Tuesday. On Wednesday, grab some fast food from an eatery selling crepes. Each food and eatery resides in a space that brings its own context (e.g.,



cultural and social practices) but each also has a meaning given to it. Without these multiple spaces, which implicitly deny any fixed reference point, "fast food" has little broader meaning or existence as a distinguishable concept for analysis.

Yet the context and the meaning of the spaces are in flux and destabilized as one proceeds through the contiguous spaces. Between and around the existing spaces new contiguities arise with the generation of new spaces. The continuous (re-)generation of experience, eating practices, and, in turn, new context and meaning undermine the single perspective on fast food (e.g., Ritzer) alluded to earlier. The multiplicity of spaces and the instability of contexts and meanings are, like the world in which we form our identities, constantly in a state of becoming, constantly pushing the frontier, constantly uprooting the seeming comfort of the spaces that become familiar like home.

Swept from her own home by the storm, Dorothy is transported to the Land of Oz, which holds all sorts of fantastical creatures and monsters and magical sights. Dorothy says to Toto, "I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas any more." Her simple perspective on the world accurately portrays this uprooted social landscape that most contemporary people experience. At the end of the film, having made her way back to her simple and plain farm in Kansas, a jubilant Dorothy exclaims, "There's no place like home!" However, unlike the movie, in our modern reality, Dorothy wouldn't be able to return. The simple home space we perceive no longer exists, because we cannot avoid sliding through the spaces of the world, coexisting with the dangerous and safe, the monstrous and magical.

Walking down the street today, we encounter a movable feast of possible fast foods from local and national providers: tacos and burgers, coffee shops and bakeries, or falafel stands and sandwiches. A seemingly simple world of food has exploded beyond our imaginations. But what is that explosion and where does it carry us in this globalized world?

From Fat to Fast: Changing Popular Conceptions of Fast Food

The concept of fast food is being revised almost daily despite the routine academic critique that focuses on assemblyline burgers, fries, tacos, and other foods sold at McDonald's or Taco Bell. Throughout popular

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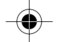
media — in magazines, on television, on webpages — the public has been changing the content of fast food and effectively subverting the academic discussion. This revision is (re-)discovering "new" fast foods in old places. The grocery store sells fresh fruit, a prepackaged organic soup, or a handful of simple ingredients that can be assembled in various recipes in just few minutes.

The common image of fast food generally involves a customer walking up to a counter or using a drive-through, reading the menu, placing and paying for an order, and in a matter of minutes receiving that order. The person usually takes the order out of the building or sits down and quickly consumes the purchase on premises. By this definition, the customer rarely lingers over the purchase — it is a speedy process. But is "speedy" the defining characteristic? What about my favorite gas station foods, such as pulled barbeque pork at Shell, tandoori at BP, or chicken-on-a-stick at Mobil? They are fast and — I've got to admit — delicious. Are these fast foods because they're purchased (and perhaps eaten) quickly?

Defining fast food itself becomes an interesting social practice that can be observed. Answers.com defines fast food by the type of food: "Fast foods are convenience foods that can be prepared and served very quickly . . . . Fast foods include salty french fries, beefburgers, fried chicken, and pizzas with a thick cheese covering."[2] This definition resembles one on upto11.net: "Fast food is usually *finger food* that can be eaten quickly and without cutlery. Fast food often consists of fish and chips, sandwiches, pitas, hamburgers, breaded chicken, French fries, chicken nuggets, pizza or ice cream . . . ."[3] These definitions, with an emphasis on "finger food"/ "fast food" criteria, would cover my friend's favorite local taco stand.

A different website, eHow.com, offers a complementary but competing understanding. "Expand your definition of fast food: sub sandwiches or wraps with lean meat (no cheese, no mayo), burritos (no cheese, no sour cream), Greek kebabs or pitas, and Japanese *bento* boxes (ask for low-sodium soy sauce) are tasty, convenient alternatives to the usual burgers and fries."[4] The website goes even further: "stock up on 'fast food' while grocery shopping: cottage cheese, yogurt, minicarrots (peeled and washed), and fresh fruit." Now fast food sounds more like "convenience food," which is designed to save consumers time in the kitchen by requiring minimal preparation, typically just heating. Some of these are packaged for a long



shelf life with little loss of flavor and nutrients. For eHow.com, foods such as canned soup, TV dinners, macaroni and cheese, an oven-baked whole chicken, and pre-washed salad packages are all fast food.

The (re-)definition of fast food even comes from some of America's best-known chefs such as Jacques Pépin, with his 2004 PBS-TV series and companion cookbook, both entitled *Jacques Pépin: Fast Food My Way*.[5] For Pépin, fast food is very simple cuisine. In one of the interviews, Pépin contrasts his fast food to conventional fast food:

> Conventionally, fast food is associated with processed food. My food is usually easy and fast to prepare, but it is not processed food; I use fresh and, occasionally, canned ingredients but certainly never processed food full of all kinds of chemicals. I try to use organic ingredients whenever possible. A simple tomato salad with fresh basil and red onion, for example, is a fast-food recipe as I define the term.

Another Pépin example of fast food is a black bean soup: "emulsifying a can of black beans in a food processor with garlic, olive oil and Tabasco sauce and then finishing it with a garnish of sour cream, cilantro and some sliced banana or crushed tortillas." Pépin says that this black bean soup is a great, *very fast*, cold soup. He even recommends that we stock our pantries with cans: "canned white beans, anchovies, tomatoes or peaches can be put to good use in creating countless recipes."

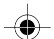
The recommendations from eHow.com and Pépin seem to represent the current fad. Popular health experts such as the Mayo Clinic and the National Institutes of Health emphasize that "fast food" is no problem if consumers choose nutritious, healthy fast food.[6] Were those lines at Taco Bell about healthy choices when inexpensive, fast, and good tacos were just blocks away? From this perspective, the Taco Bell consumers are lazy and ignorant, and they need the experts' advice: choose grilled over fried, exercise, don't use so much salad dressing. In this current rhetoric of "healthy fast food," then, the key to answering my initial question (why do people readily accept the sterile experience of fast-food chain restaurants while an alternative with more personal attention and better quality, and perhaps even more nutrition, yet the same price is just down the road?) is to make a wise "personal" choice.[7]

McDonaldization: fast food as a general process of rationalization in modern society

George Ritzer (1993) pointed to a much bigger picture around the fast-food phenomenon, a picture that goes beyond an individual choice. For Ritzer, what happens in fast-food chains (in terms of speed and convenience) is a part of what happens in modern society in general: a relentless process of rationalization. Borrowing Max Weber's concept of a rationalization process, Ritzer coined the term "McDonaldization," where predictability, calculability, efficiency, and control are the rules of any modern social organizations. And the fast-food industry has become both a model of and a metaphor for this general process. Ritzer's understanding of fast food challenges the idea of an individual's "ignorant" choice of unhealthy fast food. With structural and relentless standardization, people become passive consumers: millions buy fast food daily without considering where this food came from or how it was made. Eric Schlosser, in his book *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (2001), describes a ubiquitous U.S. fast-food scene — the "rush of cold air…the backlit color photographs above the counter" (Schlosser, 2001:4) — which has become ordinary. "The whole experience of buying fast food has become so routine, so thoroughly unexceptional and mundane, that it is now taken for granted" (2001:4).

That standardized experience has spilled over to social relations: employer-mandated, scripted interactions at the fast-food counter convey the illusion of quality service to the customer, while allowing employees to maintain social distance and impersonality (Leidner 1993). Comparably, Chen and Wang (2002) argue that both workers and customers are socialized in now-standard consumption behavior: the moment we step into a McDonald's outlet, customers are welcomed by "standards": standardized service, even standardized smiles and greetings from the crew. From floorplan to recipe, fast-food outlets are thoroughly calculated and standardized to conform to motion studies of workers in food preparation. In return, customers follow the exact standardized script: queue up to order, take the food to the table, and clean up before leaving.

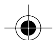
For these authors, to understand fast food, we must account for the general process of standardization and socialization which constructs not



only fast food norms of what a proper and pleasant meal experience should be, but also the mechanisms to measure and sustain those norms. The formal rationality that promotes efficiency, continuity of operation, speed, precision, and calculation of result does not allow for any other form of fast food such as the local or mom-and-pop outlets. For Max Weber, this process is so effective and convenient for all of us that it will eventually dominate the entire culture and become the only remaining and valid norm for all organization in modern society. This frame for understanding fast food suggests that the controlling (or the standardization process) mechanisms reduce the diversity of local cuisine and eventually kill all local fast-food eateries.

Arguments about homogenization or the McDonaldization of culture, including eating practices, appeal to people who have experienced the tremendous changes in eating habits over the last three decades. The McDonaldization thesis highlights the growing sameness of cultural practices around the world, how cultural practices have been submerged by consumerism, and how practices follow the circulation of capital, channeled through multinational corporations. The picture of sameness has been eloquently drawn by Schlosser. "Over the last three decades," Schlosser writes, "fast food has infiltrated every nook and cranny of American society. An industry that began with a handful of modest hot dog and hamburger stands in southern California has spread to every corner of the nation, selling a broad range of foods wherever paying customers may be found" (Schlosser, 2001: 2-3).

All U.S. malls and main streets, Schlosser continues, feature the same eateries, coffee shops, shoe stores, car repair places, optical chains, department and specialty stores, and hotels. "From the maternity ward at a Columbia/HCA hospital to an embalming room owned by Service Corporation International — the world's largest provider of death-care services, based in Houston, Texas, which since 1968 has grown to include 3,823 funeral homes, 523 cemeteries, and 198 crematoriums, and which today handles the final remains of one out of every nine Americans — a person can now go from the cradle to the grave without spending a nickel at an independently owned business" (Schlosser, 2001: 6).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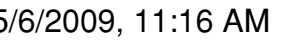
Spicing up the conception of "fast food": the international scene

Although speaking specifically about the United States, Schlosser's depiction seems to be increasingly common around the world. A new form of capitalism that is supranational in scope and organization but relentlessly U.S. in style and power is turning the world, to use Benjamin Barber's formulation, into a "global theme park, one McWorld tied together by communications, information, entertainment, and commerce. Caught between Babel and Disneyland, the planet is falling precipitously apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment" (Barber, 1996: 6). This disheartening and bleak picture surely is what most of us experience when it seems that the monstrosity of the world is about to overwhelm us. Barber's argument is not just of a new world "coming together" but one of convergence without a difference. He does not think that, in the long run, the warring tribes ("Jihad") can hold out against McWorld (Barber, 1996: 9).

As strong as the arguments about homogenization and McDonaldization are, the realities of postmodern culture and eating practices are far more subtle and complex. In fact, the fast-food chains that Schlosser and Barber paint are not the only — or even the primary — sources of fast food in most of the world. Rather, alternatives such as an individual mom-and-pop store or a street-cart are the eateries that often provide the fast food. The diversity of these fast-food outlets complicates and challenges the simple version of fast food associated with international companies.

For instance, Giselle Yasmeen (2000) provides a different picture of fast food, giving a brief overview of the erosion of traditional eating habits and the growth of new practices of food preparation and consumption in Thailand. Yasmeen describes how urbanization, the spread of capitalist practices, and the growing proportion of men and, in particular, women in the paid labor force prompted a shift from family-based food production and consumption into the commodification of food through new forms of retailing and new spaces and practices of eating. Practices of "public eating" and the spread of "prepared foods" substitute for the traditional practices of private eating and in-house food preparation. The result is the emergence and growth of a "fast foodshop sector where food is available anywhere,



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anytime – an important attribute in a city [Bangkok] where traffic is gridlocked during rush hours" (Yasmeen, 2000: 367).

> Women can be seen stopping at a food shop in the evenings on their way home from work to pick up dinner for the family, main courses are placed in small plastic bags with rice being prepared easily at home in a rice cooker... For typically middle-class Bangkokians — particularly women who tend to be impeccably dressed — frequenting cool, comfortable establishments is the most desirable option. Their male cohorts [...] enjoy 'slumming' in stalls and outdoor restaurants where they can sit at long tables, eat spicy dishes and drink vast quantities of whiskey. Working-class men, such as tuk-tuk drivers, do the same but are limited to less expensive venues. Since 'proper' Thai women do not drink alcohol in public, they engage in a slightly different pattern. Their habit is to go out with a group of friends, women or mixed-company, to a suan ahaan or a restaurant in a shopping centre. The urban masses are, for the most part, of humble economic means and purchase food on the streets and *soi* [sidestreets] from vendors both mobile and stationary, and small food-shops specialising in noodles, curried dishes or other fare. (Yasmeen, 2000: 367-8)

Yasmeen draws a picture of a myriad "small ubiquitous fast food-shops" spread throughout Bangkok, and which can be seen throughout the country's cities. Stationary carts, bicyclists with roaming mini-kitchens, and individuals with baskets fill the alleys, empty lots, and streets. These vendors serve everything one might want: golden crepes, coconut hotcakes, hot-and-sour soup with noodles, or, more complex to prepare, a dish like stewed pork-leg served over rice with pickled vegetables.[8] Even along the waterways, vendors in boats sell noodle dishes.

It is a picture visible not just in Thailand's capital but, according to Yasmeen, in most large cities of Southeast Asia. Indonesia has a wide variety of street foods similarly sold from carts, baskets, and small stalls: *bakso*, served in a bowl with noodles, tofu, eggs, and some fried meat; a simple fried tofu; or *gudeg*, made from jackfruit and using traditional Javanese cooking. Another food, *soto*, is a soup-like dish of broth and vegetables, and includes meat such as beef or chicken; *soto* varies regionally and ethnically across the country.[9] In the streets of Vietnam, one can buy a wide range of foods, such as *pho*, a beef noodle soup; *bate gan*, a pastry filled

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with minced pork; or simply fresh fruits. Some vendors have not only the baskets of ready-made foods and pastries, but also mini-kitchens with soup stock, noodles, meats, and vegetables, plus all the typical herbs and spices, all of which they carry around in a search for customers.[10]

These images of fast food on the busy streets of Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam take a different appearance in the train stations of Japan — one in line with the traditional food practices of the Japanese. Paul Noguchi, in an article suggestively titled "Savor Slowly: 'Ekiben' — the Fast Food of High-Speed Japan" (1994), examines the emergence and growth of a specific type of Japanese fast food mentioned above: railroad station box-lunches. These lunches consist of small boxes containing a variety of food items, all part of traditional Japanese cuisine, sold in railroad stations and trains all over the country. One of these boxes, called *makunouchi*, contains, for example, "every single item of cooked food considered necessary or representative of Japanese taste: small pieces of fish and beef, baked or fried, seasoned with soy sauce; omelettes; well-cooked seaweed and vegetables; cucumber or radish pickles; and a sliced piece of an apple or an orange," all complemented with white rice (Noguchi, 1994: 318).

While *ekiben* come in countless styles and ingredients, they are mostly in the style of the basic *bento*, lunchbox, which is sold at convenience stores, supermarkets, and kiosks. The basic *bento* looks like a shallow box divided into sections with different kinds of food along with a portion of rice. *Ekiben* is a kind of *bento* sub-genre. The *ekiben* tradition originated in the late 1800s as the rail network spread throughout Japan. Local stations competed to offer *bentos* to the passengers and to show off their local delicacies. Passengers looked forward to the different flavors as a major part of the adventure of travel. Originally, they were sold by peddlers to passengers who called out to them from the train windows. Later, speed became the focus of the train schedules, and it became impossible to stop long enough to buy the local *ekiben*, but the station continues. Express trains and *shinkansen* bullet trains serve them on their snack trolleys. Some say that *bento* has been served as the fuel that drives Japan and a solution to the problem of dining on the run.[11]

Still today, the contents of *ekiben* vary according to the geographical location where the boxes are prepared and to the changing availability of food throughout the year. For instance, *ika-meshi*, squid (*ika*) stuffed with

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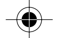
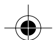


rice and then simmered in a sweet and salty broth, is sold at the Hokkaido station. *Shamoji kaki-meshi*, stewed oysters on rice served in a rice-paddle-shaped container, is available at the Hiroshima station. The myriad combinations remain a culinary adventure: *Shumai Bento*, steamed dumplings and stewed bamboo shoots at the Yokohama station; *Masu-no-zushi*, pressed shushi topped with trout and wrapped in bamboo leaves at the Toyama station; *Kani-meshi*, crab on rice flavored with crab juice at the Fukui station; *Gyu-tan meshi*, slices of grilled beef tongue and pickles on rice at the Sendai station; *Hamaguri don*, stewed hamaguri clams on rice at the Chiba station; *Yukidaruma bento*, egg and minced meat over koshihikari rice at the Niigara station. *Hippari-dako mesh*i, steamed octopus in a container shaped like an octopus pot at the Nishi Akashi station.

Noguchi contrasts *ekiben* with the U.S. version of fast food. Like fast food everywhere, Noguchi notes, *ekiben* affords "accessibility, quick service, relief from having to cook at home, reliability, and low cost" (Noguchi, 1994: 317). But while U.S. fast food is a "gastronomic atrocity of empty calories, provided in antiseptic settings by depersonalized service" which result in a uniform eating experience, *ekiben* are "tasty as well as nutritious" (Noguchi, 1994: 317). Furthermore, the regional variations of the box-lunches "invite the enjoyment of local topography and culinary art via travel by train, offering the opportunity to enjoin the sensory appreciation of eye and palate with place" (Noguchi, 1994: 318). The consumption of these box-lunches is widespread. During the late 1970s, Japanese men and women consumed about two million boxes a week. By the mid-1980s, the number had grown to twelve million boxes daily, sold in 1,600 different varieties; and by the early 1990s, 2,200 varieties in 360 stations (Noguchi, 1994: 319).

Clearly, the picture that unfolds from the train stations in Japan differs from the one that emerges in the lanes and sidewalks of Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam. But as ideas of fast food, the street fast food and train station fast food involve a very similar form. These styles incorporate and maintain variety, diversity, and a strong connection to traditional, local practices. The multiplicity and diversity of fast food in these examples contrasts with the regularity and homogeneity of the pervasive fast-food chain restaurants in the United States. Variations in food preparation from small shop to small shop or from rail station to rail station in the Asian cities — Bangkok,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Ho Chi Minh City, or Jakarta — stand out in their varieties in sizes, looks, furnishings, service and offerings.

The settings are not the antiseptic and depersonalized establishments in the main streets and malls of U.S. cities, nor the total estrangement from region and from seasonal rhythm. Virtually nothing resembles the rationalization of multi-corporation globalized fast food. The comparative eating experiences in the different places are almost diametrically opposed. A grassroots element continues to pervade the new practices of eating in the large Southeast Asian cities, an element absent from the U.S.-based fast-food industry.

This difference in actual experience does not mean that local and multinational corporations have no influence whatsoever. Large, but not necessarily U.S., multinational corporations dominate both the production and the wholesale distribution of food. Yasmeen mentions the dominance of a Thai-based multinational corporation, Charoen Popchand, in the production and supply of meat. The corporation's reach stretches to many neighboring countries including China. Moreover, small retailers increasingly use ingredients prepared by large conglomerates, a practice that helps the retailers gain time and money.

These examples of fast food in Asia reveal a very different view of "fast food." It is in some ways congruent with the image of fast food that Schlosser and Barber painted. Yet in many ways it is different, perhaps even completely at odds with their images of McDonaldization and homogenization. The picture of fast food in Southeast Asia is not simply that of "tradition" fighting for its survival in the face of the imperialism of multinational capitalism. They are certainly not the forces of jihad waging a war against McWorld; nor are they an expression of "ethnic revivals" witnessed today around the world, although they are inevitably a little of those, too. Rather, the picture is of a different form of fast food generated by both local and global corporations — a form that follows a different line of development, one connected to local practices and traditions, yet which is equally tied to late twentieth-century capitalism. The practices express a different line in the development of capitalism, one that generates a practical reality that has little in common with the one that emerges in the United States; yet a reality that equally follows from a logic of capital and that, in Japan, exists side by side with, not in opposition to, the U.S. practices of fast food. And

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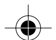

indeed, instead of negating one another, the two pictures and the two realities exist side by side.

For what we have in view is the co-existence and co-presence of multiple social spaces, each entailing very different cultural and social practices — and evincing very different experiences — of eating fast food. Indeed, U.S.-style fast food, from McDonald's to Starbucks, is by no means absent from the landscape of Asian cities in general. Yasmeen, for instance, reports on the spread of U.S.-style fast-food eateries in the malls and office centers in and around Bangkok — places patronized mostly by middle-class, female office workers. But these eateries have *not* eclipsed the multiplicity of small food-shops where the practices of eating out among Bangkokians take place. They have surfaced alongside the native forms of fast food, bringing in new foods, new tastes, and new ways of eating, as well as the tendencies to homogenization, uniformity, and depersonalization of U.S.-style fast food.

The diversity and contiguity of eating practices is definitely not exclusive to East Asian cities. All of these, though again with unique manifestations, can be seen side-by-side when we take a walk through the streets of Paris or New York City. McDonald's is there, but so is the French counterpart, the small, ubiquitous food-shops such as one encounters in Bangkok. As one strolls through the Parisian boulevards, little stalls selling crepes or all kinds of sandwiches in baguettes pop up here and there. Fast foods are everywhere, from the small patisserie to the chocolate and candy bars. Restaurants that resemble temples of food follow one another. Traditional foods, in the boulangeries and patisseries, in the bistros, and in the food markets, are as alive as they have ever been. And new combinations emerge: French mall-like food-courts have a cosmopolitan aspect that brings together a unique mix of cuisines and customers. One can take a break from a visit to the Louvre museum to have lunch in the underground mall. There, one will find a mix of fast-food stores quite unlike the ones in the United States, Bangkok, or Tokyo: coming together are the pizza and Mexican food, Spanish tapas, Moroccan couscous, or French pâtés. And as one sits in the crowded dining space, one virtually shares one's food with people from around the world: Germans, Italians, Spanish, Greek, Japanese, Chinese, Argentineans, Senegalese, Nepalese, and even a few French. Yes, indeed, it is a different experience of fast food.

This Parisian fast food scene bears a resemblance to many cosmopolitan cities such as New York City or Tokyo. On a recent trip to New York City, I noticed these so-called international scenes here in the U.S.[12] New York's financial district is often a chaotic market of vendors, workers, and tourists, all from around the world. There are the storefronts with, for example, a McDonald's and a Starbucks on nearly every block. Numerous international restaurants (Cuban, Asian and south Asian, Greek, etc.) and delis with international fare that must meet the mealtime deadlines of this busy district are squeezed into a few small blocks.

And even in late December's cold, there are carts available offering a wide variety of foods. Some carts arrive at 3 a.m. to set up breakfast fare, including coffee, tea, donuts, danish, bagels, and similar foods. They are gone by 10 or 11 a.m. But in the interim, the main shift (so to speak) has arrived and is selling breakfast foods for the later arriving workers and preparing for the lunchtime crowd.

In the space of one small Broadway block, more than a dozen vendors are lining the sidewalks, displaying LED signs flashing "open" or umbrellas announcing specific hotdog brands. The fare is largely identical across the carts, as are the menu-like pictures displayed, suggesting a single supplier, even if not a single owner. Middle-Eastern or Mediterranean dishes are common: falafel sandwiches or platters; gyros with lamb, chicken, or beef; grape leaves; chicken with rice or kebobs with various meats, or more descriptively on some carts, "chicken on a stick." A few vendors prominently inform customers that they sell halal (food permissible under Islamic law) meats. Mixed in amongst the offerings at carts are the seemingly "usual" fast foods: hamburgers, Philly cheesesteaks, or hot dogs and sausage.

On the other side of the Broadway block is a lone cart selling Mexican foods, such as nachos, quesadillas, or burritos, and posting a sign for "veggie lovers." Another cart sells prepackaged lunches: sandwiches, parmagianas, eggplant, or baked ziti. Several carts also specifically sell fresh fruits, smoothies, or power fruit-drinks with special additives: bee pollen, protein, B-vitamin complex, or ginseng. You can even decide in advance what you want from the cart's website.

Despite the lunchtime rush of workers and tourists, some carts have short or no lines; others have twenty-person lines waiting for service. There

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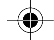
clearly are favored vendors who know their customers by face, if not by name. One cart displays newspaper articles about new companionship between falafel competitors after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. The owner of one cart, who has been on the block for seventeen years, displays an article identifying it as one of the twenty-best food carts in the city; there's a long line of customers chatting together or on cell-phones, or reading a report for an after-lunch meeting.

Anthony Bourdain, a well-known TV chef, talks about the best restaurants in New York City in his recent book, *The Nasty Bits*. He started with pastrami sandwich at Katz's Deli, pizza at Di Fara, and sushi at Yasuda. But for Bourdain, "the ultimate New York dining experience, however, may not be in a restaurant at all" (2006: 80). Rather, it is at home in his apartment: "I'll eat directly out of that classic New York vessel, the white cardboard [Chinese] takeout container, and watch a rented movie from nearby Kim's Video" (Ibid.). Even a bad hot dog with a warm, watery beer can be delicious if you are at Shea Stadium and the Mets are winning.



Each of these eating places and practices — from the *soi* of Bangkok to New York's Wall Street — reflects a space, physical, organizational, and social. The spaces all contribute to our understanding of fast food. In some ways they also undermine the effort to capture what fast food is. How we understand their similarities and differences, their overlapping and separate practices, when experiencing the realm of fast food eating practices is the key to unlocking the future of what fast food is.

Resetting the table through contiguity

Perhaps the notion of *contiguity* offers an apt metaphor for conceptualizing fast food. Contiguity is about spaces of discontinuity and heterogeneity, bringing together meanings from sometimes incommensurable social experiences, from unsettling or ambiguous social spaces. The existence of each space "sets up unsettling juxtapositions of incommensurate objects which challenge the way we think, especially the way our thinking is ordered" (Hetherington, 1997: 42). As we see from the variations of fast foods — the fatty vs. the healthy, the corporate sterility vs. the street cart — each effort to define what fast food is omits something. Yet, each effort also exists side-by-side in a condition of simultaneity.

Michel Foucault articulates these spaces where multiple and yet contradictory dimensions co-exist. To quote Foucault:

> We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment. . . when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects point and intersects with its own skein. (Foucault, 1986: 22)

The features of Foucault's epoch —"simultaneity" and "juxtaposition," the "near and the far," the "side by side," and the "dispersed" — all apply to the nature of the experience of contemporary eating practices of fast food. The multiple, unstable, non-linear realities of eating practices of fast food emerge from their contiguity to postmodern realities.

According to Foucault, then, spaces are not fixed; just as the context and meaning of one eating space can be in flux, these spaces always have multiple meanings for multiple agents. In this sense, eating practices can be taken as sites in which new ways of experimenting with ordering a society are tried out. They are thus arenas in which the new emerges. And they also are a means by which we create an "otherness," which does not exist in itself but rather as a relation between, a contrast against, different spaces.

Contiguity should not be confused with hybridization: the combination of cuisines. Contiguity is the co-existence of multiple cuisines, while hybridization involves a process of merging foods from different places to generate a new cuisine. The combination of European and Asian spices in California cuisine, the preparation of sushi with non-Asian ingredients, or the preparation of sandwiches on French croissants, are examples of hybridization. In hybridization, one experiences a combination of tastes, a mixing of flavors, definitely an expansion of gastronomical experience, which extends boundaries but hardly reshapes their markings. In contiguity, one experiences fragmentation, contradictions, and contestations in their meanings, which challenges the notion of fast food itself. In this globalized world, eating (and social and physical) landscapes have become more indeterminate in their meanings.

Ultimately, my own set of examples above — McDonald's and minicarrots, *ekiben* and Middle Eastern — has to be modulated. For, as I have already alluded to, we should not assume that any of the spaces that I have described or mentioned has any more of a permanently fixed eating

practice than it does a context or meaning. Juxtaposition of multiple eating practices challenges the meanings of those features to which they refer in the surrounding society. The direction that I take here in looking at the future of fast food stresses the properties of contiguity and juxtaposition as discussed above.

Fast Food Frontiers: I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore

A particular type of "fast food" has no fixed meaning or importance in itself — its meaning derives from its position, timing, and frequency in a succession of eating practices. While for one person fast food can be experienced as a simple parenthesis — an escape from healthy eating or an occasional "treat"—to another it can represent a sign of weakness. (Guilty pleasures!) In the context of a regimented diet, fast food can become an act of subversion, a vehicle of resistance or rebellion. The meaning of a home-cooked family meal to a person accustomed to eating alone is different from its meaning to someone who is used to eating out with her family and still different from the meaning to someone who eats at home with her family every evening. Any change in the sequencing, rhythm, or frequency of the practice would inevitably destabilize its accepted meaning. For instance, for many people in underdeveloped countries, McDonald's becomes, among other things, a symbol of insertion into the world, in which case the experience of eating at McDonald's generates a sense of "being modern." McDonald's helps to shape an identity as "modern individuals" — identity that clashes with a multiplicity of other identities that constantly contest and subvert it.

I suggest that, in modern societies, the differences between fast-food and traditional- (or local-) food eating practices no longer signify a simple division. The wide range and quality of stylistic modes and the broad array of choices afforded to us nowadays display an openness and fragmentation unprecedented in the history of global food conventions. The differences no longer separate self from other, or center from margins. An identity formation for fast food is a function, in part, of multiple subject positions that

cohere in contradiction and, in part, of continuous mirroring effects afforded by context.

At the same time as this relevance is rising, however, there is reason to be concerned that the practical and theoretical understanding of eating practices in fast food is being muddled and misconstrued either by the baggage of tradition, by older definitions that no longer fit the changing contexts of the contemporary moment, or by faddish buzzwords that substitute an apparently current relevance for deeper understanding. Thus it becomes urgent to open the topic to creative redefinition and expansion in new directions and to resist any attempt to narrow or confine its scope.

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Endnotes

1. The website EKEBEN ROOM, http://www.nre.co.jp/english/ekiben/index.htm, (last visited June 5, 2008) contains a clickable map showing what kinds of lunchboxes are available in each railroad station in eastern Japan. For example, when we click on the Nagaoka station, we can see several different kinds of seasonally available lunchboxes, including squid, two different kinds of crab, and two different kinds of fish.

2. http://www.answers.com/topic/fast-food?cat=entertainment (last visited July 14, 2008).

3. http://www.upto11.net/generic_wiki.php?q=fast_food (last visited July 14, 2008).

4. http://www.ehow.com/how_108891_buy-healthy-fast.html (last visited July 14, 2008).

5. Gordon Ramsay, a famous TV chef, urges preparation of fast food at home in his new cookbook *Fast Food: Recipes from "The F Word"* (2007): "Throw away the takeaway menus, ready meals and convenience foods!" He claims that these days everyone wants fast food but at the same time they want to eat well. So, his cookbook offers all kinds of fast food recipes, from five-minute snacks to ten-minute main courses. Ramsay claims that his cookbook is "for the way we live today."

6. Despite an emphasis on "healthy," some people would still reject the concept of "fast food" simply because it embodies a lifestyle deemed unhealthy. The Slow Food movement, which is both an organization and a philosophy, promotes

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ideals and principles which run counter to the frequently heard U.S. attitudes toward both food and life. Slow Food emphasizes literally "slowing down" at every step of the process of growing, cooking, and eating food. This slowing down begins with products from organic farms utilizing sustainable farming systems. The products are then sold locally at farmers' markets for preparation of fresh, home-cooked meals. The Slow lifestyle discourages highly processed foods or foods whose origin is not local or regional. Standardization and homogeneity are to be shunned, while diversity, regionality, and authenticity are to be embraced. In short, the Slow Food philosophy has the goal of a healthier state of being for mind, body, Earth. To quote Carlo Petrini in *The Case for Taste* (2001: xii), "here at the table lies the template for the preservation of human rights and the environment."

7. The recent mega-hit documentary, "Super Size Me" (2004), walks through a similar line of argument: "If you determine to change your lazy lifestyle, you can also be healthy." While it might not be the filmmaker's intention, the film certainly leaves room for such interpretation.

8. Kasma Loha-unchit, Thai Fast Food: Crowded Sidewalks and Waterways, http://www.thaifoodandtravel.com/features/streetf.html (last visited June 9, 2008); Michael Babcock, Eating Out in Thailand, http://www.thaifoodandtravel.com/features/eatout.html (last visited June 9, 2008).

9. "Indonesia Street Food," http://www.my-indonesia.info/page.php?ic=1127&id=3244 (last visited June 9, 2008).

10. Sheridan Rogers, "Vietnamese Street Food," http://www.travellady.com/Issues/Issue80/80O-vietnamese.htm (last visited June 9, 2008).

11. See website Ekiben Room, http://www.nre.co.jp/english/ekiben/index.htm (last visited June 5, 2008). Anthony Bourdain (2006:14) also makes a similar argument: "But is fast food inherently evil? Is the convenient nature of the beast bad, in and of itself? Decidedly no: fast food — which traditionally solves very real problems of working families, families with kids, business people on the go, the casually hungry — *can* be good food. If you walk down a street in Saigon, or visit an open-air market in Mexico, you'll see that a quick, easy meal, often enjoyed standing up, does not have to be part of the hideous, generic sprawl of soul-destroying sameness that stretches from strip malls in San Diego, across the U.S.A. . . . ."

12. Author's field notes, December 2007.

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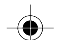

PCAS/ACAS 2009 Conference Call for Proposals

2009 Conference
Wilmington, North Carolina
October 1-3, 2009

The Popular Culture Association in the South and the American Culture Association in the South meet every year to present and discuss ideas about popular culture—regional, nationwide, and worldwide. This year, presentations pertaining to gender in film, horror and fantasy on television, comic-book movies, the legacy of Updike, and the era of Obama are of particular interest. Suggestions for thematic panels are welcome; contact the Program Chair for further information.

Please send your proposal title, an abstract of 200 words or less, and requests for audiovisual equipment (overhead projector or DVD/ VCR/monitor only; no LCD projectors available) to the Program Chair, Jonathan Lampley, at pcasacas@gmail.com. Papers and presentations are limited to a maximum reading/presentation time of 20 minutes. The deadline for submissions is Monday, June 1, 2009.

Submissions from graduate students and undergraduates are welcome. Prizes are awarded for the best student paper in popular culture studies and American culture studies. Submissions for these prizes are due in advance of the conference; see website for details. For further information on this or any registration/participation question, please contact the PCAS/ACAS executive secretary Diane Calhoun-French at diane.calhoun-french@kctcs.edu.

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Dawn Heinecken

Sexed Appeals: Network Marketing Advertising and Adult Home Novelty Parties

The Avon Lady. Pink Cadillacs. Tupperware parties. These iconic images instantly bring to mind images of nineteen fifties' mid-American life (Wilson 404).Yet network marketing firms (NMOs) like Avon and Mary Kay remain a powerful economic force today. In 2005, direct sales businesses generated over $30 billion in sales in the U.S., servicing 13.6 million direct home consumers. Home parties, one of the mainstays of direct sales, are responsible for about 26% of U.S. sales and are not only a profitable, but trendy, cultural activity today (Direct Sales Association; Farnham; Turner). One form of party— known as a "fantasy" or "passion" party—has become a commonplace female bonding ritual in neighborhoods across the US (Ikenberg; Rose). Such parties are for "personal care" products that your twin-set and pearl clad Avon lady probably never mentioned—vibrators, dildos and other "adult novelties."

The promotional discourses surrounding adult novelty parties are of interest for several reasons. They are part of a recent, and expanding, effort to market and to make fashionable women's consumption of sexual commodities (Attwood; Heinecken; Lara). They are also of interest because of the heavily gendered nature of network marketing itself. The overwhelming majority of the 14.1 million people currently working in direct sales—an estimated 85%—are women (Direct Sales). The fact that adult

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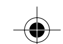

novelty home parties also restrict attendance to "adult women only" defines them as uniquely female sites of cultural production and economic exchange.

While the role home parties play in the lives of the real women who attend them is important to consider, of greater interest is how adult novelty NMOs market themselves to their sales force of distributors. Distributors are actually the primary consumers of NMO merchandise, purchasing products directly from the organization before reselling them to customers in their local markets. Thus, it is necessary to examine how company marketing discourses work to define particular social realities and identities for their consumer/sales force in ways that attract their membership and further the company's economic goals (Kong 475-476).

This paper examines promotional materials like company websites, brochures, press releases and other materials sent to prospective distributors by leading adult novelty NMOs like Passion Parties, Pure Romance, Slumber Parties and Athena Home Novelties. These company-produced texts seek to market organization membership and represent a uniform, coherent discourse that works to "enunciate the collective knowledge of the organization" (Carl 22-23). These texts function as implicit directives to distributors as to how they should understand the nature of their services as well as how to promote them to their own customers in turn. Materials such as newsletters are also the most regular and common form through which these organizations communicate with their distributors (Kong).

The marketing discourses of adult novelty organizations have a twofold function: they must instruct potential consumers on the benefits of organization membership at the same time they present their products as necessary items fulfilling women's sexual needs. This essay will examine the ways that both goals are met by adult novelty NMOs' rhetoric of empowerment. Organization membership is promoted as a means to demonstrate one's status as a liberated woman, freed from the constraints of traditional forms of female sexuality, and as a means to achieve economic and personal freedom.

However, as this essay will show, both the economic and sexual forms of "empowerment" promised by NMO membership are constructed around a traditional narrative of femininity defined primarily by childrearing and marriage. This narrative, rather than signaling the widespread acceptance of feminist values within larger culture, actually helps to normalize women's

subordinate status at home and in the public work sphere. By doing so, women are urged to maintain their location within an economic underclass – a position that leads women to NMO membership in the first place.

The companies under examination were all founded in the early and mid-nineties and are among the most successful firms of their kind. Pure Romance, Slumber Parties, and Passion Parties all claim sales ranging from $45-60 million dollars and boast between ten to twelve thousand consultants. Athena's (the only company to feature male distributors and offer "couples" parties) has over 1400 consultants and $7 million in reported sales (Jefferson; Lew; Sanchez; White; Woosley).

Each of the companies utilize strategic appeals designed to speak to the concerns and aspirations of their target audience, a vast majority (76 percent) of whom are married and relatively well educated, with over a third possessing college degrees and another third having some college or technical training. Notably, a full 54 percent are between the ages of thirty-five and fifty-three, with almost a quarter between the ages of eighteen to thirty-four (Direct Sales Association). As suggested by their educational and marital status, a significant percentage of women involved in NMO sales are likely to identify with middle-class aspirations of economic and personal success at the same time they are likely either to be caring for small children or to have children still in school.

Previous studies of NMO discourses have focused on ways they present themselves as alternatives to bureaucratic corporate business practices that "stifle initiative and fixes earnings" (Wilson 405). NMOs have relied upon an egalitarian ethos in which their sales force of "distributors" or "consultants" are cast as independent business owners, limited only by the effort they are willing to put into work. Among their primary marketing tactics is to stress aspects of network marketing itself —the flexibility of scheduling, the low time commitment, and more "friendly" manner of selling —as among the primary ways individuals benefit from NMO membership (Kong 474-493; Wilson 404-406).

These discourses are all apparent in adult novelty NMOs. For example, a testimonial in Athena's company newsletter, *Happy Buzzing*, provides a blistering critique of current corporate practices which are anything but family friendly. The writer describes her grueling schedule: rising at 5:30 a.m. and working all day before picking the kids up from school and waiting

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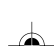
for her husband, who works the opposite shift, to arrive home at 11:30 p.m. "I just feel *my* family deserves more quality time together. There has to be more to life than just hustle and bustle day in and day out [emphasis original]" (8). The solution to such stress is offered on the back page of Pure Romance's recruiting brochure. It depicts the legs of a woman dressed in business attire, with copy that reads "Let's just call it a permanent vacation from Corporate America…who says you have to put up with long hours and small paychecks? Not us. At Pure Romance, You're the Boss."

Adult novelty businesses make overt reference to women's historic economic marginalization at the same time they promote themselves as a means by which women can attain economic success, self-actualization and empowerment and "eliminate the glass ceiling" (*Pure Romance*). They also underscore the fact that women dominate every aspect of the business, reassuring the new distributor that she has "the help of our sisterhood…You have support; most women do not have that at their jobs!" (*Pillow Talk*) Distributors are thus promised a network of social support at the same time they are presented with a vision of entrepreneurial freedom.



This promise of social support is notable in the face of a large number of testimonials that speak to the stress and uncertainty many women experience due to social and family obligations. For example, one writer reports: "I'm a mother of five children, a wife, I work full time as well as volunteer as a fundraising 'team mom' and I care for my Grandpa. My list just goes on and on." Yet, after an NMO meeting with other distributors, "I had this sense of true happiness, confidence that I have not felt for sometimes [sic] as well as a sense of belonging…I just felt so good, so sexy, like a woman should feel! It was very empowering!…What a great feeling, to be accepted as who I am…Having that kind of support is so powerful" (*Happy Buzzing* 13).

Another Athena's distributor says that up until the moment of a NMO meeting "I thought my only purpose in life was to become a mother. I never thought that there could be *another* purpose [emphasis original]" (*Happy Buzzing* 12). Her fellow consultant notes that "I felt that a large piece of what was keeping me from fully pursuing my dream was not sure that it would fit into my husband's dream and what that might mean if it didn't." The meeting gave her confidence to talk to her husband, and now "We're making a plan towards shared dreams" (13).

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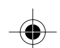
Whether or not they accurately represent the unedited words and feelings of real distributors, the inclusion of testimonials into company newsletters and websites is strategic. The personal address creates a sense of intimacy, while the narratives speak to the female consumer who sees in them aspects of her own life. Given the stressful family roles many women must fulfill, it's not surprising that a major selling point is the support they will receive and the sense of "belonging" given by NMO participation. As one Athena distributor writes in the company newsletter that "As you grow up and out of the 'fuzzy purple robe' that is your childhood, you have fewer and fewer opportunities to feel special…Athena slips that fuzzy robe on my shoulders…I am special, I am worthy and I am beautiful" (*Happy Buzzing* 12).

Such testimonials call to mind Janice Radway's explanation of women's consumption of romance novels. Radway draws from Nancy Chodorow's theories on the psychological development of women to argue that, because of their family histories, women most often perceive themselves as selves-in-relation. As a result, they "tend to experience an ongoing need for nurturance and attachment well into their adult lives" (Radway 137). Yet given the asymmetrical psychological development of men, who tend to define themselves by autonomy and independence, as well as the everyday demands of family life which require women to nurture others rather than themselves, women are very unlikely to have this need met. Radway thus argues that the popularity of romance novels is due to their promise of filling women's emotional need for connection and nurturance (135-137). Adult novelty organizations base much of their marketing around similar promises.

They are also presented as a means by which to mark one's distinction. "You *Are* Special [emphasis original]" reads a headline in *Pillow Talk*, Slumber Parties' monthly newsletter. "You believed in yourself enough to get a kit. *That* means you are special! You have an inner desire to change your current situation and help others…You are different, you are unique and you are needed! Slumber Parties and the world are happy to have you" (19). Women will receive public affirmation, and be offered an identity built on American notions of individual success and difference rather than simply being defined by their family roles.



Yet similar strategies are employed by most NMOs. What sets adult novelty businesses apart from other organizations of this kind is the sexual nature of their commodities. In addition to promising support and public recognition, adult novelty companies are able to draw on the meanings attached to sexuality that have been promoted and made available to middle class white women over the last thirty-odd years. These discourses are a major means by which adult novelty organizations signal their status as a company *uniquely* concerned with the empowerment of women.

While never explicitly invoking the term "feminism," the promotional materials of these organizations evidence how feminist discourses of the 1970's have shaped contemporary representations of sexuality, in particular for the ways they link the selling and consumption of sex toys to notions of agency, self-actualization, and "sisterhood." According to June Juffer's history of pornography, the second wave of the feminist movement redefined the cultural meaning of masturbation. Because it illustrated the independence of female orgasm from the penis and/or men, women's masturbation came to be understood as "a political act of individual liberation from the confines of the home, marriage, and family" (72). Accordingly, women's consumption of erotic products began to be seen as a means to practice resistance against male dominated expressions of sexuality and to signal one's "liberated" status (Hall 3).

This theme of liberated resistance continues today as a primary sales tactic of adult novelty NMOs. The companies stress their differences from male-dominated adult stores, commonly describing themselves as "founded by women for women" and operating under the principle of "women helping women" ("About"). (In fact, according to Burbank, Passion Parties was actually founded by two men). Like other adult stores for women, they typically depict themselves as offering "safe" "comfortable" and "confidential" spaces where women can educate themselves about their bodies, and "become sexually empowered" (Heinecken). Similarly, Jennifer Sanchez reports that Passion Parties' President Pat Davis says the company's success "stems from women taking responsibility for their own sexuality," while one distributor explains that she is "a pioneer ready to kick down the boundaries imposed upon us by the evolution of a sexually restraining culture" (*Happy Buzzing* 33).

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Like other stores selling sexuality to women, NMOs render the selling and consumption of sexual commodities as an upscale and affluent activity (Attwood; Hall; Heinecken). For example, Athena's FAQ page says that it is the company for "discerning women" whose logo "reflects our panache for elegance. While we do offer sexual products, our logo does not in any way reflect the stereotypical image that sex is sleazy. Our mission is to take the 'sleaze' out of sexuality." The page for Passion Parties has a link addressing the question "What will people think of me if I sell these products?" which then goes on to reassure the reader as to the acceptability of sex toys ("Common Questions"). Pure Romance is described in its brochure as "A classy and sophisticated company needing a classy and sophisticated name." Selling sexual commodities is thus transformed into a highly desirable activity, reflective of one's sophistication and political awareness.

Kong has observed that, linguistically, the discourses of network marketing organizations are more similar to those of charitable and religious organizations and other "belief driven" activities than those of traditional businesses, creating an ideology that the company works in the best interest of others (488). Adult novelty distributors are similarly presented, not as selling, but as "sharing" or instructing others about the benefits of membership. However, for adult novelty distributors, this "sharing" is framed as an explicitly feminist act, as they are encouraged to see themselves as helping to liberate women who are not yet sexually aware.

One Pure Romance testimonial, for example, describes the experience of a consultant who "decided to try Pure Romance because I had always been intrigued by the double standard that women were faced with when it came to female sexuality…I was able to empower women and give them the tools and education to take ownership of their intimate lives—some of them for the first time!" ("See What Our Consultants Are Saying"). An Athena distributor writes that "as we bring our expertise into the homes of women and couples, each of us has the potential to use our knowledge to transform lives for the better" (5). Athena likewise writes of its parties "We educate our Goddesses on issues of sexuality that our customers desperately want (and need!) to hear" ("FAQ"). "Transformation Equals Liberation" reads the headline of another article in *Happy Buzzing*.

Yet it is not only party-guests that are liberated and transformed, but the distributor herself. A key identity offered to the potential distributor is

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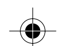

that of expert educator. Distributors are expected to inform and advise their customers about the workings of their bodies, and told to teach them about sexual and relational health. The companies bolster the notion that the distributor plays an educational, therapeutic role by promoting their association with famous sex educators like Jennifer Berman and Sue Johanson. Pure Romance and Passion Parties offer advice columns on their websites, via which women can find information on sex and health related questions, while Pure Romance sponsors a National College Health Tour and special programs geared to help women regain their sexual selves after breast cancer ("Sex Toy Company Puts New Twist on Sex Ed"; "Sensuality, Sexuality, Survival Fact Sheet").

While other NMOs also present sharing or "educating" others about their products as a vitally important gift, similar statements about cooking tongs, candles or blenders would be debatable. But the historical suppression of female sexuality globally and in the U.S. remains fact. Especially in an era of abstinence-only sexual education, the insistence on female pleasure and the educational mission promoted by adult novelty organizations actively advance a political and feminist agenda.

However, discourses around sexuality play another role as well, working to locate women's sexual "empowerment" specifically within the context of heterosexual practices and lifestyles. In doing so they help to reinforce identities defined by women's enactment of traditional roles within the family. For example, Passion Parties' "Our People" web page says that the company offers "ordinary women the opportunity to live extraordinary lifestyles." Consultants, we are told, are very diverse, coming from "all walks of life." Consultants are "Married. Mothers. Housewives. Grandmothers." Curiously, all of these "walks of life" seem to involve husbands and children.

Similarly, NMO websites, catalogs, and newsletters promote the notion that the major benefit women gain from using these products and knowing about their bodies is that it will enable them to maintain relationships. Passion Parties' home page informs us that company's "sensual products" are designed to "promote intimacy and communication between couples" ("Home"). Athena likewise instructs distributors that party guests should be encouraged to ask questions about "how these products are used and how they relate to a couple's intimate relationship" ("Host a Party").

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Yet it is also clear from press releases and news stories sent to prospective Athena distributors that these relationships should be relationships with men. For example, one news story in Athena's promotional packet tells us that even though "After a party like this guys may be worried that they will be seeing less of their girlfriends," according to the Athena distributor interviewed, this will not be the case, since she does not believe "anything can replace the real thing" (Finity). An article profiling a distributor for Passion Parties likewise reassures the prospective consultant that "toys are never meant to replace a guy, but to enhance relationships" (Truman-Cook).

Accordingly, it is important to observe that one of the benefits of home parties frequently described in the testimonials is that they save *marriages*. "It feels great to be able to help so many women change their lives for the better. I've helped women fall back in love with their husbands" ("See What Our Consultants Are Saying"). A Passion Parties' consultant writes, "I love the end of those parties when I have that one lady who thanks me for keeping her marriage together. *This* is what it's all about! [emphasis original]" ("Your Passion Consultant"). Athena's founder Jennifer Jolicoeur similarly describes her work as helping to ensure that "mommies and daddies stay in love forever" (qtd. in Berard).

It's not just the marriages of customers that are saved, but those of distributors. One story in *Happy Buzzing* is peppered with pictures of the author in her wedding gown and is titled "Making Dreams Come True." The story describes how Athena's helped her achieve her goal of getting her boyfriend to "marry me in less than seven months" (10). Athena's promotional packet includes a color brochure titled "Wedding Bells, Without the Bills," urging one to "join Athena's and earn the money you need for the wedding of your dreams." The copy is in the form of a personal letter from company president, Jennifer Jolicoeur, to the "Bride-to-Be." It congratulates the bride before listing all the things she will "have" to consider now about her wedding. "As a bride, you are going to want to have the best of everything and you deserve nothing less!" It goes on to mournfully list the $26,327 cost of the "average" wedding (for 150 people)! Yet instead of proposing the prospective bride elope, the suggested alternative is to pay for the wedding by becoming a consultant. All of this is offered to the bride-to-be because "at Athena's our mission is to empower women to make their

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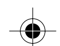


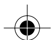
dreams comes true." But the dream is based on a very traditional narrative of female success (not to mention excessive consumption).

The emphasis on marriage is even more evident at Passion Parties, whose press materials often highlight the fact that company president Patti Davis has been married for over forty years. The company's on-line FAQ page likewise reminds potential distributors that "we stress monogamy, safe sex, and the importance of keeping a relationship exciting." Its home page is dominated by images of white roses, underneath pictures of three heterosexual couples, and foregrounds a link to a "7-Day Passion Challenge" in which one can enter to win a 7-carat diamond ring. The couples are all dressed in white, including one (the only African Americans represented on the site) in bridal gown and tuxedo. The text and copy are clearly meant to suggest weddings. Perhaps these will be sexually-active marriages, but it's clear that traditional power dynamics are to be maintained: in each picture, the man is positioned as physically dominant, looming behind the woman, or protectively encircling her with his arms.

In some ways it is quite progressive to present sexual commodities within the context of "normal" heterosexual life. However, this presentation is teamed alongside other framings which help reinforce notions of female sexual passivity and marginalize women's sexual autonomy. A case in point is the way the companies all delineate certain occasions as appropriate for their home parties. Athena's homepage lists the occasions consumers might want to host a party. They are suitable for events such as: "Girls Night Out. Bachelorette Party. Bridal Shower. Housewarming Party. Football Widow Parties," among others.

As I have written elsewhere, such events are a form of carnival, moments in which women's resistance to normative sexual behaviors are encouraged with the implicit understanding that the resistance is only temporary, a form of play (Heinecken 133-134). Athena's logo, a close-up of a woman's face and winking eye, similarly underscores the carnivalesque nature of the parties. The winking eye, functioning as a sign of secret complicity and as a means of underscoring a joke, instructs consumers to understand the nature of the party as being "just in fun."

The consistent description of these parties as places where women can "laugh" extends this notion. Sex, in all its legislated, social and individual forms, has afforded millions of women great pain. Laughing at sex certainly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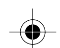
is a means by which to express discontent, rage, pain and criticism of gender/sexual norms. However, laughter, the heart of carnival, does little to challenge the social norms that envelop us. In addition, laughter is also a means of expressing shock, disbelief, and disapproval, a key method of drawing the line between what is normal and what is not. The emphasis on the potential humor of the parties by all of the companies is an assurance that certain products and the sexual activities and identities they represent are not meant to be taken seriously. What, after all, actually *is* so funny about a big purple dildo or anal beads to begin with?

Similarly, the promotional materials often reinforce notions as to the still-marginal nature of female sexuality. For example, in its pages dedicated to Patti Davis's guide to sexuality, the Passion Parties' website describes the book as "flavored" with real-life stories and "confessions" from Passion Party-goers around the country, once again presenting sexual expression as a secret transgression best relegated to the confessional. The fact that three of the four companies emphasize their "confidentiality" and restrict attendance to women likewise speaks to the need to keep sexual discussion confined to an isolated space—and, indeed, distributors are instructed to sell their products in a separate, private space after the larger "public" presentation.

Certainly, the promise of real-life stories is a means to reassure women as to the normality of female desire. They are also probably sales tactics appreciated by women who remain uncomfortable with overt sexual discussion. The point, however, is that despite the apparent messages that sexuality needs to be "brought out of the closet," the emphasis on privacy and confessions suggests it's only appropriate to know and speak about sex in jokes or whispers.

This attitude is echoed by the figure of the "Passion Diva," a term coined by Passion Parties' President Patti Davis in her book "Passion Parties Guide to Great Sex." The national company website dedicates a number of pages to touting the book, informing us that "every woman has a Passion Diva" inside of her," a "sparkling, sexy, lusty creature just waiting to be let out," whether one is a "boardroom superstar or a stay-at-home mom" ("Guide").

Yet the opposition of two types of women here is telling, as is the use of the term "diva." In recent years diva has become a popular way to



describe a powerful or outrageous woman who defies cultural convention. In this case the diva is obviously meant to be perceived as "cool," a term used to mark a woman's distinction in a positive way. Still, it's important that sexual agency for women remains framed as essentially transgressive, as this reading depends on an understanding that the diva is *unlike* other women. Additionally, the term diva is just as often used to signal a woman whose actions are perceived as despicable, like Naomi Campbell or Britney Spears. Like the figure of "the unruly woman" discussed by Kathleen Rowe, the diva is thus a deeply ambivalent figure, whose sexual agency remains tied to a range of negative connotations.

Yet any rebellion signaled by the figure of the diva is undercut by reassurances that despite appearing to be "naughty" the diva really is a "nice" girl. After all, a woman's inner Passion Diva is not fully in her control, but is a "creature just waiting to be let out" ("7daypassionchallenge"). Passion Parties stresses that great sex "is not about becoming a sexpert or even the world's greatest lover" (something which would indicate a level of knowledge and skill on the part of the woman) but about "the ability to let go and enjoy everything you do together."

Even the way products are advertised in the on-line catalog stress the passivity of the female consumer, presented as something that consumers "experience" rather than use. RomantaTherapy, Passion Parties' exclusive line of products, was designed to "prepare our mind and body to receive loving attention from a caring partner." The product itself is only something that will "prepare" us. The ultimate goal is clearly the "loving attention" of a partner, rather than the sexual pleasure taken directly from the product. And, once again, women's sexual pleasure is framed as a *reaction* versus an *action*.

It is also critical to consider the products being sold on the site. Actual sex toys account for only 17% of Passion Parties sales—the rest are lotions and potions and lingerie (Lew). Most of the featured products are creams, vaginal "intimacy" wipes, bath oils, and perfumes. The sexual pleasure at offer here is one built around an insistence on vaginal cleanliness and pleasant bodily aromas, in which women's natural smells and fluids are banned. It is also one built around the penis and penetrative intercourse. For example, the product category "For Her," features only two products designed to arouse a woman's clitoris, while a product called "Tighten Up"

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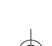
promises to "increase that snug feeling." Even Ben–Wa Balls are sold alongside blurbs stressing the health benefits of strengthening one's Kegel muscles while "improving sexual performance," hinting that women should be more concerned about giving than receiving pleasure.

Certainly not all products for sale on the various sites are designed exclusively for heterosexual couples desiring "vanilla" sex. Athena's online catalog has pages dedicated to gay and lesbian consumers and more "alternative" sexual practices. However, representations of heterosexual pairings dominate the marketing materials. Women who might want to experience forms of sexual pleasure other than penis/vagina are largely excluded within the discourses at work in the Passion Parties' online catalog.

Company materials thus provide powerful ideological instruction supporting the existing sex-gender system by locating female sexual liberation specifically within the boundaries of heterosexual marriage. They suggest that female pleasure is inherently tied to sexual relations with men, who will be able to unleash female desire in appropriate ways. Any other notion of sexuality is acceptable only because it is done "in fun." While this does not guarantee individuals encountering these texts will unquestioningly share this attitude, such framings are still likely to shape the practices of actual consultants and party guests, who are offered the chance to adopt a pleasurable identity of sexual rebel and liberated woman without actually threatening the status quo.



It is important to observe that heteronormative discourses coincide with those designed to advocate women's NMO participation, in which a key selling point is how membership enables women to perform traditional roles within the family and preserve existing relationships between men and women. For example, one Athena distributor reports that she wants to work for the company because it will allow "me to be home with my children, take better care of my home, and most of all, spend more time with my husband…to have a life where hot cookies I've made are waiting for my kinds after school…where I greet my husband (with my face full of fresh make-up and wearing a sexy little outfit)…[and to be] more available to my most precious treasure…*My family* [emphasis original]" (*Happy Buzzing* 8). Selling sex toys to other women will allow her the life of Donna Reed.

In particular, organization membership will enable *mothers* the time and money to stay at home with their children. For example, Pure Romance's

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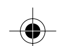

brochure opens with a letter from company founder Patty Brisben. The letter includes pictures of Brisben kneeling with her young children, while telling the reader that "I was determined to be around for every childhood activity, from my kids' first steps to football games and PTA meetings." (Brisben was apparently so successful as a mother that her children never left; she later writes that all four of her children now work alongside her. Passion Parties' website similarly boasts that Patti Davis works with her adult son.)

One distributor writes that she joined Athena's because she "desperately needed to do something that would make me feel like a grown up again but also allow me to do the soccer mom thing" (20). A Pure Romance testimonial reports that "I am able to be a stay-at-home mom for my three girls" and, in addition to being able to afford "a nicer home in a great neighborhood," the flexibility of her schedule means that "my girls don't ever have to spend time in daycare" ("See What Our Consultants are Saying"). Indeed, news reports of NMOs often present them as "the solution" for harried moms, "allowing a career at home as they raise a family. NMOs are means by which "women are redefining what it means to be a stay-at-home mom…whether you call her homemaker or entrepreneur, mom is making money" (Trinidad).

The representation of NMO membership as "the solution" for mothers is important for a number of reasons. For example, the ability to stay home with children is often listed alongside other benefits of working as a distributor, such as access to fancy cars, vacations, jewelry and other luxury items. The construction of stay-at-home parenting as a luxury speaks to the ways in which nuclear family arrangements are no longer possible. In part because of the decline in real value of men's wages, most married women now must work out of economic necessity. The traditional stay-at-home mom of the fifties is actually quite rare; estimates are that only about 15% of U.S. families now meet that model (Worley and Vannoy 166). Within this context the ability to stay at home becomes a symbol of one's higher economic standing and a key marker of empowerment.

Yet within adult novelty home party discourse, a woman's desire to be at home is presented as an individual choice, solely motivated by a woman's personal pleasure in being near her kids. This skirts over the fact that many women look for work which will enable them to stay home during the day

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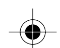
because that is the only way they can *afford* to work in the first place. As Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels have observed, because our nation lacks affordable, quality daycare, many mothers who need a salary or who simply want to work "feel they have no choice but to quit their jobs" because the cost of paying daycare is greater than the income generated by work (Douglas and Michaels 266). While many women might prefer working a full-time job outside the home, these organizations construct an understanding that women engage in part-time labor by choice rather than because it is the only viable work available to them. The resulting suggestion is that they are guided more by their mothering instincts than by any economic necessity.

Certainly, testimonials that boast about never having to put children into daycare recirculate the anti-daycare propaganda that has existed for years in the U.S. Despite much evidence to the contrary, the suggestion is that putting one's child into any form of daycare at all is a sign of bad parenting and even harmful to the child (Douglas and Michaels 236-266). The ability to stay home with children thus becomes a sign of personal integrity and individual success, reflective of one's standing as a parent.

Furthermore, while many women would argue the ability to provide fresh cookies for their children is simply a reflection of their personal desires, narratives that stress women's desire to be stay-at-home moms (even as they work) reinforce a traditional division of labor in which childcare has been and remains the primary responsibility of mothers. These marketing discourses never question that dad might or *should* stay home, or reveal how women's work for the NMO has enabled a male figure to stay at home and care for children full time.

It is clear by this that adult novelty companies participate in what Susan Douglas and Meredith Michaels call "the new momism"— a media rhetoric of "intensive mothering" that is built around the notion that women should have choices and be "active agents in control of their destiny." Yet though it seems on the surface to "to celebrate motherhood," the new momism ultimately dooms women to failure by creating unachievable standards of perfect parenting (5). Similarly, even though these organizations acknowledge women might want and need to work, they also suggest that a successful woman will never leave her children in the care of others. This



presents women a Catch-22—unless they sell adult novelty products via home parties.

As Ara Wilson has discussed, the discourses of network marketing organizations construct particular identities for consumers that work in the best interests of the company. Accordingly, these companies present a form of sexual liberation premised around the maintenance of a heterosexual identity that is not only located within the boundaries of marriage but dependent upon men for pleasure. This heteronormative identity is echoed by other appeals that reinforce women's role as primary caretaker.

The construction of identities built around motherhood and marriage to men is in the best interest of the company, since the maintenance of patriarchal family relations helps channel women into the NMO in the first place. As discussed earlier, women's traditional role as primary caregiver is an obvious motivation for membership: these companies fill a real need for many women who require flexible work schedules that enable them to meet their family obligations while gaining an income.

Yet the fact that women have this need in the first place is symptomatic. NMOs both benefit from and perpetuate social arrangements that negatively affect many women. Women remain primary caretakers (even when working outside the home) as a result of unequal power relations built into traditional family and social structures. For example, due to factors such as the low pay of many female-dominated jobs as well as the fact that women still perform the majority of childcare and household labor, women tend to have less economic power than their male partners (Worley and Vannoy). Since the partner with greater external resources tends to have more power within the relationship and is able to set the terms of how household tasks will be divided, women tend to do even more chores like childcare, further reducing their labor force participation and negatively impacting their ability to earn wages (Coltrane and Adams 145). Hence, one reason women occupy the position of an economic underclass is a result of their relatively low status within the traditional family structure.

At the same time, however, discourses emphasizing marriage are also a key means by which to target women whose roles as wives actually enable them to join the NMO workforce. While women need not adopt heterosexual identities to experience economic discrimination, it is clear that married women—a full 76 percent of distributors—are a key NMO

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market. It is likely that the relatively high percentage of married people is at least partly due to the fact that few individuals can actually make enough money to live on via direct sales. According to the Direct Sales Association, the median income of distributors is only about $2,400 a year (Harris 104). A full 90 percent of distributors make less than five thousand dollars a year and 89.9 percent sell only on a part-time basis (Direct Sales Association; Walsh). Even of those few selling full-time, only six percent earn more than a middle-class income of $50,000 (McQueen 96).

While there are probably many women who work other jobs and even full-time as well as selling part-time for the NMO, it is clear that women who lack the economic support of a partner need to make a living wage. Without a safety net they are less likely to opt to work as a "self employed" NMO distributor due to the relative (un)likelihood of earning such a wage via NMO sales, as well as the lack of benefits and the possibility of a heavier tax burden.

Yet the part-time nature of the work means that for most participants, their earnings are functioning only as supplemental income. Although the extra income might provide a necessary economic boost for individual families, such part-time labor will hardly be "the solution" for women's economic or personal problems. Women whose only work outside the home is part-time NMO sales remain economically reliant on their partners; while women who perform other work in addition to selling for the NMOs do so because of larger economic structures that make it so difficult to make ends meet with only one job.

Obviously, most network marketing organizations similarly target a part-time, female market. However, the discourses of adult novelty NMOs stand out for the way they attach their rhetoric of individual, economic empowerment to issues of sexuality, explicitly drawing upon the language of feminism and female liberation in their marketing of sexually-related materials. But to what end? One consequence of this rhetoric is to suggest that since women are now "empowered" to consume sexually-related material, they are also now "free" from exploitation in the personal realm and economic sphere and have already achieved the feminist dream of female liberation.

But the ability of individual women to achieve better orgasms, feel more romantic with the husbands, or even be able to afford to send their

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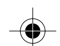

kids to a better school does not mean that larger feminist goals have been achieved on a wide-scale social and cultural level. While these companies do bring attention to the important issue of women's access to knowledge about their bodies, as well as their right to sexual pleasure, such attention should not be accepted uncritically. The forms of sexual agency most often represented by NMOs are extremely limited, contained within a (white) heterosexual framework that remains rigidly patriarchal and that does little to disrupt inequalities in existing sexual, family, social, or economic systems. Selling sex toys to other women may be fun, even gratifying, but it is not the same thing as working to gain social, political, or economic power for all women.

It is useful here to point out that one reason NMOs are doing so well is that they have been able to take advantage of events in the global economy. Women's move into the work force over the last 30 years or so is a result not just of feminist inroads allowing women to enter the public sphere, but is also due to the decline in real-world wages of male workers, a deterioration that coincides with the shift from a manufacturing-based to an information-based economy, the decline of labor unions, and an ever-widening gap between the wealthy and the poor in the U.S. More people have to work *more* simply in order to make ends meet. The historically low wages of women in comparison to men, tied to the under-compensation of female-dominated jobs as well as forms of more direct discrimination against female workers, only furthers the need for supplemental income for many women and their families.

Hence, while NMOs provide one means by which individuals may feel better about themselves while navigating the demands of surviving in this new economy, those concerned about the feminist principles of empowerment for *all* people might place more emphasis on getting government and businesses to adopt policies and practices supporting a living wage for workers, equal pay for equal and comparable work, affordable health and day care, and other courses of action directed towards the goals of social and economic justice, and less emphasis on buying and selling the newest model of vibrator, dildo, or kitten whip.

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Book Reviews

An invitation to reviewers

In forthcoming issues, ***Studies in Popular Culture*** will continue to include reviews of books in the field. Any scholar who wishes to review a book should contact the Book Review Editor, David Janssen, at djanssen@gdn.edu. Those whose work is unfamiliar to the editor may wish to send a CV.

Reviewers may suggest a book to be reviewed or request to be assigned one from among those sent to the editor. Reviews should be approximately 500-800 words long and should (like article submissions) be emailed to the editor as an attachment of a Microsoft Word document. Queries are welcome.

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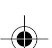
Kathleen Forni

Popularizing High Culture: Zemeckis's *Beowulf*

''...This should stir some debate in academia." Robert Zemeckis

The much awaited and decade-in-the-making, mega-budget ($150 million) *Beowulf* (Paramount 2007), directed by Robert Zemeckis and written by Roger Avary and Neil Gaiman (and simultaneously released with a triple-A video game), once again reinvents the myth for a modern popular audience.[1] Joining an increasingly crowded field of recent Beowulf film adaptations—including John McTiernan's *The 13th Warrior* (1999), Graham Baker's *Beowulf* (1999), and Sturla Gunnarsson's *Beowulf and Grendel* (2006)— this latest manifestation will be remembered for its use of performance-capture technology and its contribution of Beowulf's paternity of the dragon to the poem's popular cultural mythology.[2] Although heavily publicized to educators (via e-mail announcements and mailed study guide materials provided by Young Minds Inspired), presumably for use in the classroom, the film is no substitute for the poem, but it does nonetheless have pedagogical uses. In brief, as film adaptation theorists such as Robert Stam and Thomas Leitch suggest, it seems most constructive to approach the film as an interpretation of the poem, or, as James M. Decker suggests, as "an 'edition' or 'version' of a text" (143). That version, a pastiche of modern genres and sensibilities, represents a case study in how literary classics are reinvented for popular consumption. Avary and Gaiman's reading



seems clearly to be influenced by the popular reception history of Beowulf and by the pressure to make a commercially viable product. Although claiming to have restored some of the "critical elements" that "had been left out, edited by the passage of time" (Gaiman and Avary 5), the various changes made to the original poem reflect an effort to make high culture accessible and relevant to a modern mass audience, by satisfying "audience values and wishes" (Gans 76). The result is a disquieting fusion of graphic violence and moral conservatism. The writers seem to be juggling a number of themes, including "the sins of the fathers," late adolescent Oedipal anxieties, and the burdens of fame. But the lingering message, reflecting both a cultural belief that threats to society stem from a failure of family values, and Gans's contention that "lower-middle culture" prefers "a modern version of the morality play" (112), is clearly aimed at teens: a single pre- or extra-marital sexual liaison can ruin your life.

The task that faced the creative team was how to make a commercially viable version of what Avary anachronistically describes as "a sword-and-sandal hoity-toity lesson in ancient literature" (Gaiman and Avary 11). The film falls somewhere between what Geoffrey Wagner categorizes as a "commentary," in which "an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect," and an "analogy," in which there is "a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making *another* work of art" (223; 227). There are some clear departures from the original (Hrothgar has no heirs; Hrothgar kills himself; Beowulf inherits Hrothgar's kingdom and queen) for the sake of what Avary calls the "Beowulf Unified Field Theory" (10)—that is, to provide the unity and continuity between the two halves of the poem that has bedeviled Hollywood adapters. Nonetheless, the narrative retains the three-act structure of the original. The film opens during one of the Danes' sybaritic celebrations in the meadhall, complete with belching, public urination, drunkenness (the shooting script describes one of the revelers as a "SHIT-FACED THANE"), maiden-fondling, and Hrothgar relieving himself by letting "loose a RIP ROARING FART." The "deafening" noise really bothers Grendel (Lesson #1: loud parties annoy your neighbors), whose extreme sensitivity is suggested by his lack of epidermis and exposed eardrums. Beowulf (driven by "Glory, not gold!"), delimbs the Anglo-Saxon-muttering monster with leverage supplied by a chain and door. He is less successful with Grendel's mother, a shape-

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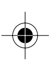
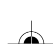
shifting amphibious seductress ("Stay with me. Love me") who, in exchange for a gold drinking horn and "a son," promises Beowulf temporal power, the same deal, it transpires, that Hrothgar had made in a similar moment of passion (Lessons #2 and #3: beware of aggressively seductive women and casual sex). Beowulf returns with Grendel's head, and lies about his victory over his mother (Lesson #4: don't doctor your resume). Hrothgar, even though the "curse" has been lifted, throws himself from the anachronistic battlements, having conferred his throne and queen on Beowulf. Time passes and the Danes appear to convert to Christianity; the gold drinking horn is inadvertently taken and a now cynical Beowulf, who can never live up to the "Song of Beowulf" (Lesson #5: fame, in Heorot or Hollywood, is a burden), insists on fighting the angry dragon alone, and, in a nice gesture providing some form of atonement, sacrifices his own arm in the process. Set adrift on a flaming burial ship, he is embraced by Grendel's mother who then begins an attempted seduction of Wiglaf (leaving open the possibility of Beowulf: Part 2).



Critics gave mixed reviews, enjoying the novelty of 3-D, objecting to the aesthetic efficacy of performance-capture technology, deploring the sometimes clichéd dialogue ("It's the frican' monster!"), and almost unanimously decrying the *Austin Powers*-esque naked fight scene with Grendel in which Beowulf's genitals are cleverly screened. Most seemed little bothered by the departures from the original, praising the creative team for its commercial savvy, the chief standard, from an industry perspective, by which the product is judged (as of January 31, 2008, Beowulf has grossed almost $200 million in domestic and foreign markets). Justin Chang, for instance, admires its "commercially shrewd combo of revisionist mythology and gory mayhem" and Kenneth Turan describes the film as a "Fan Boy Fantasy that panders to the young male demographic with demonic energy." Available in some theaters in 3-D and IMAX 3-D, the film used motion-capture animation not only because of the problem of "how to age Beowulf" (Gaiman and Avary 135) but also, I suspect, to capture the coveted and lucrative PG-13 rating while offering adolescent males Angelina Jolie nude and extreme graphic violence (Grendel chews on a head; Beowulf rips out the dragon's heart with his hand) which in live action would have earned a hard R rating.

Fans of the Anglo-Saxon poem may have different reactions, focusing no doubt on the considerable liberties taken with both the letter and the spirit of the original. Having been subjected to some what Leitch describes as "standard tactics of adaptation" ("selecting some obligatory speeches, characters, scenes, and plotlines and dropping others...streamlining the narrative by eliminating digressive episodes; reworking dialogue so that it is either more epigrammatic or more severely functional" [129]), what goes missing, and this is a partial list, are such things as the fundamental bonds of *comitatus*; the tribal history, functioning not simply to catalogue lineage but to provide models of behavior; Beowulf's belief in *wyrd* (fate) as a force rivaling God's providence as well as his belief in fame as a form of immortality; the complex systems of inheritance; the poignant sense of doom and transience.[3] There are, nonetheless, several things that the film gets right that other cinematic incarnations have not. For instance, Beowulf clearly comes to Hrothgar's aid as a form of reciprocity for Hrothgar having helped his father when in need; Beowulf boasts with full gusto ("I am ripper and tearer and slasher and gouger...Mine is strength and lust and POWER!" [40]) in an attempt to capture the sociocultural function of the boast (a bit of Anglo-Saxon dramatic realism that many film critics found off-putting); and, as in Gunnarsson's *Beowulf and Grendel*, there is some effort to represent the fusion of a Germanic heroic ethos and the Christian monotheism found in the original. Best of all, bits and pieces of the Anglo-Saxon poem are recited at the Danes' feasts.



But simply discussing the changes made doesn't get one very far and film theorists generally (and rightly) denigrate talk of fidelity when it comes to discussing film adaptations of literary texts. As Stam not unreasonably insists, the term "fidelity" itself is prejudicial, acting as a metaphor that simply reinforces "the unstated doxa which subtly construct the subaltern *status* of the adaptation": "When we say an adaptation has been 'unfaithful' to the original, the very violence of the term gives expression to the intense sense of betrayal we feel when a film adaptation fails to capture what we see as the fundamental narrative, thematic, or aesthetic features of its literary source" (14). Stam suggests a couple of new concepts which would lead to more constructive discussions about adaptations of literary texts. First, and most importantly, he suggests that the adaptation be approached as a "reading, rewriting, critique... resuscitation... reinvisioning"

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of the source text: "The trope of adaptation as a 'reading' of the source novel suggests that just as any text can generate an infinity of readings, so any novel can generate any number of adaptational readings which are inevitably partial, personal, conjectural, interested" (25). Similarly, in *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents*, Leitch suggests that we "dethrone evaluation as the unmarked or central activity of adaptation study" and focus on "the status of adaptations as examples of rewriting" (21). Second, Stam suggests that "film brings out the Darwinian overtones of the word 'adaptation' itself, evoking adaptation as a means of evolution and survival" (2-3). Thus, rather than acting as a parasite that kills the host text, the film version is a "mutation" that helps its source text "survive": "Do not adaptations 'adapt to' changing environments and changing tastes, as well as to a new medium, with its distinct industrial demands, commercial pressures, censorship taboos, and aesthetic norms?" (3).

In this case, Avary and Gaiman's interpretation or rewriting seems to have been influenced by three factors: the popular reception history of Beowulf; other popular film genres with which audiences might be familiar; and an effort to appeal to an adolescent male demographic. All come under the umbrella of the intertextuality that characterizes popular adaptations and all have to do with satisfying audience expectations. First, several of the changes made seem clearly influenced by other popular versions of the poem. In other words, the interpretation of the poem is partly a product of its popular reception history. Most conspicuously, Hrothgar's paternity of Grendel is taken from Graham Baker's science fiction *Beowulf*, as is the characterization of Grendel's mother (played by a former Playboy Playmate in Baker's version) as a predatory, shape-shifting seductress (with the concomitant notion that female sexuality is monstrously destructive). John Gardner's *Grendel* (1971), which Livingston and Sutton accurately describe as "a watershed moment" in the popular reception of *Beowulf* (3), clearly influenced both Baker's and Gunnarsson's conception of Grendel as a wronged outcast. (In Baker's *Beowulf*, Grendel is a shunned illegitimate, locked in the basement, and in Gunnarsson's *Beowulf and Grendel*, Hrothgar needlessly murders Grendel's father.) Similarly, in Zemeckis's film, Gardner's influence may be responsible for Grendel's emotional sensitivity and infantile dependence on his mother, as well as the dragon's brief lecture about the emptiness of temporal power ("...you're nothing. an empty nothing").

And Michael Crichton's *Eaters of the Dead* (a.k.a. McTiernan's *The 13th Warrior*) may partly account for both the vigorous heterosexuality and dipsomania of Zemeckis's Scandinavians (although both may simply draw on a popular cultural stereotype), as well as their vaguely Neanderthal facial features (in Crichton's novel, Grendel is the "Wendol," a surviving cell of matriarch-worshipping Neanderthal cannibals). The trend in the three films is to usurp Hrothgar's integrity and to suggest that he is to blame for Grendel's murderous raids, either because of his unacknowledged paternity of the monster (Baker) or, in Gunnarsson's case, because he murdered Grendel's father. Beowulf becomes progressively less heroic, both in terms of sexual abstinence (he resists Grendel's mother's advances in Baker's film, sleeps with a witch in Gunnarsson's version, and succumbs to Grendel's mother in Zemeckis) and in terms of the conviction that his violence against the monsters is just. In Baker's version, the hero is a lone mercenary, and in Gunnarsson's commentary on contemporary American international political policies, Beowulf has fundamental misgivings about the legitimacy of Hrothgar's leadership. In Zemeckis's version, the man originally described as "mildust ond...lithost" ("the mildest of men and...the gentlest") has become, in his own words, not only "fallible and flawed" but a self-described "monster." Indeed, the films reflect Livingston and Sutton's assertion that since the publication of Gardner's *Grendel*, popular versions of the poem tend to "muddle the moral clarity of good hero against evil monster," reflecting "complicated and problematized" notions of "black-and-white morality" in "our postmodern, post-Vietnam, post-9/11 era" (10).

In addition to the influence of some of its popular precursors, the team's interpretation seems to have been informed by their effort to make a commercially viable product, that is, by an effort to turn high art into popular culture: "No one wants to be reminded of high school English, and this was a major strike against getting the material to be taken seriously as a Hollywood movie" (Gaiman and Avary 11). As Gans suggests, "The popular arts are, on the whole, *user-oriented* and exist to satisfy audience values and wishes" (76). The easiest way to appeal to a heterogeneous audience is by emphasizing content "that will be meaningful to as many in the audience as possible," namely "formulas and stereotypical characters and plots" (32). *Beowulf* casts its net wide and seems to be a generic hybrid, borrowing aspects from epic films (the historical setting, sweeping musical score,

panoramic backdrop, and portentous thematic allusions); action/ adventure (focus on the individual efforts of the superhuman hero, a linear revenge plot, extensive action sequences); horror (in which the monsters force the protagonist to recognize his own potential for monstrosity); and fantasy (with the hero undergoing some kind of mystical experience and receiving supernatural aid). Similarly, the creative team might have retained the Hrothgar paternity angle (and upped the ante with Beowulf's own sexual melodrama) because, as Gans suggests, "lower-middle" and "low" culture products tend to prefer "familial dramas" or "familial problems" that "deal primarily with the problem of upholding tradition and maintaining order against irrepressible sexual impulses" (111). The preferred formula is "the morality play, in which characters sin and therefore come to an unhappy end" (112), and the emphasis is "on demarcating good and evil" (116). The point here seems to be that threats to society stem from a failure in family values; extramarital liaisons and unacknowledged offspring wreak civic havoc. Indeed, for Brandon Fibbs, "At the very heart of this new Beowulf is the theme of sin and consequence. The film reveals that the temptations we give into, however small, harmless or pleasurable they may seem, often return when we least expect them, rabid and famished for blood." The assumption that great men are destroyed by sexual desire is of course a reflection of current socio-political tabloid scandals, the dramatic fall of the governor of New York, via his involvement with an escort service, being the most recent example.

Several additions also seem to have been made, consciously or not, in an effort to make the poem relevant specifically to a young male audience, particularly those experiencing either libidinal anxieties or a reemergence of the Oedipal complex during adolescence (see Laufer and Laufer). For instance, during their rough sea passage to Denmark, Beowulf calms a nervous warrior: "Ha! The sea is my mother! She will never take me back into her murky womb!" (20). The line seems rather odd but nonetheless innocuous until, responding to Unferth's challenge, Beowulf recalls his swimming contest with Breca in which "A BEAUTIFUL GOLDEN WOMAN...not human but some sort of Mermaid-form, with sea kelp hair...She has a striking resemblance to Grendel's Mother" attempts to seduce the warrior, an encounter that he must force "somewhere deep into his subconscious" (39-40). Moreover, a detail is added to Beowulf's retort

to Unferth's taunt not found in the original: "they say that you killed both of your brothers when you caught them having knowledge of your mother, 'Unferth Kinslayer'" (40). And in place of scop's songs of creation or tribal history, we have the sophomoric balladic chant: "Their mother was from Iceland,/ And she was mighty hot!/ She'd need a whole damn iceberg,/ To cool her burning tw—" (40). The common thread seems to point to at the very least adolescent anxieties or uneasiness with maternal sexuality, if not a full-blown Oedipal drama with the obscure implication that Beowulf sleeps with his own mother. I find it difficult to account for this subtext, although Zemeckis has visited this terrain before (*Back to the Future*, 1985), and the poem has been read as a psychological allegory (Hill, Morgan), with at least one scholar finding a sexual charge in Beowulf's visit to the mere (Nitzsche).

Gans suggests that although popular culture products are primarily "user-oriented," "popular culture creators also try to impose their own taste and values on the audience" (34). Mick LaSalle, commenting on "the allures of fame, sex, treasure and glory" that ostensibly test Beowulf's integrity, concludes, somewhat wryly, that the film is really about "the soul-threatening challenge of becoming a big shot." Indeed, Gans suggests that creators of popular culture often model their heroes "on the creators themselves" (102), and the film is very much a product of a self-reflexive Hollywood sensibility insofar as its axiomatic assumption seems to be that fame is a burden. Beowulf is plagued by the hyperbolic "song of Beowulf" and his reputation as the "monster slayer"; suicidal or egomaniacal, in an encounter with a hostile Frisian, he informs the warrior that he can't be killed "Because I died years ago...when I was a young man" (84). This scene is not in Avary's first script, included in *Beowulf: The Script Book*, which chronicles "our story of getting the film produced" (3). Vital to the narrative is Avary's affection for his original creation, "The First Draft," which comes under the metaphorical chapter heading, "The Spring" ("The First Draft" is more faithful to the original poem). Intent on directing the script himself ("I'm following my muse. If I don't direct this film, I'll die" [137]), Avary meticulously documents the process by which Zemeckis acquired the script, predictably, by making Avary an offer he couldn't refuse. "The Winter" comprises the shooting script, which, for the sake of all-important continuity necessary for commercial film, has Beowulf "inherit Hrothgar's

kingdom, riches, and women" and substantially lengthens the battle with the dragon into the kind of climactic scene those familiar with the action/ adventure genre expect. Avary resists but finally embraces the collaborative nature of the final product, but the overall message is one of lament and loss; having compromised his artistic integrity, he has sold out for gold, an affliction that plagues his hero, who is similarly seduced and compromised by the promise of "glamour" and power that the golden horn represents.

Finally, Gaiman and Avary's interpretation, reflecting at least some awareness of the larger critical context of the poem (or perhaps the lingering influence of high-school English), does make an effort to address what some see as an uneasy fusion of the pagan and Christian elements in the original. Richard North suggests that one of the mistakes in the film is that "the Christians are in Denmark too early (507 AD?)" but the same anachronism could be charged to the original poem which has a sixth-century pagan setting and reflects pre-Christian beliefs and practices (funerary rights, a belief in fate) but unmistakable biblical allusions (a monotheistic God, references to the creation story, Cain, Noah's flood), perhaps reflecting the manuscript's tenth-century cultural milieu. Scholars have attempted to deal with the apparent incongruities of a poem that seems to celebrate a heroic aristocratic warrior ethos but that is infused with Christian language, and this long-standing critical debate has trickled down to become a staple topic in secondary-level discussions of the poem (see Irving). The film addresses this apparent incongruity by making explicit and overt what is more subtle or latent in the original text. For instance, neither a Norse god nor Christ is ever mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon poem; here, the characters are more vigorously pagan or Christian, swearing by Odin ("Odin's swifan balls!!!!" [100]), wearing crosses like talismans, and celebrating "the birth of Christ Jesus" (which comes the day after the celebration of "the Saga of Beowulf" when he "lifted the darkness from the land" [85]). The tension between the two religions is put in terms of a Christian passivity and pacifism and a robust and militant paganism ("Well, answer me this...who do you think would win a knife fight, Odin or this Jesus Christ?" [7]), which Raymond Ibrahim finds endemic in Hollywood's treatment of Christianity. Ruminating on the apparent inefficacy of animal sacrifice to "Odin and Heimdall" (the latter being a god of Norse myth, but also, closer to home, a character out of the Marvel Comics universe), Unferth wonders whether it

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might be useful to "pray to the new Roman God, Christ Jesus?" (22), to which Hrothgar replies, "No, we need a hero" (22). Similarly, reaching a Nietzschean crescendo, Beowulf laments that "The time of heroes is dead...The Christ God killed it...leaving humankind nothing but weeping martyrs and fear...and shame" (81). While Ibrahim goes too far in suggesting that the movie attests to Hollywood's "crusade to defame Christianity," a hint of cynical secularism (or paganism?) is surely there and he is accurate in his observation that "Unferth, the only advocate for Christianity in the movie, just so happens to also be the only one in the pagan kingdom who not only keeps, but constantly beats, a slave."

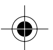
Thus, as an interpretation and popular adaptation, Zemeckis's *Beowulf* seems to be a pastiche of modern genres and sensibilities, and I mean this in no pejorative way. Beowulf has become a brand name, and, as Leitch suggests, "Because a well-known literary property has considerable power to pre-sell spin-offs like adaptations and sequels even to viewers who have never read the property," the "primary motive for fidelity in the most widely known adaptations is financial, not aesthetic" (128). The product is both intended and expected to be what Leitch calls a "colonizing adaption" in which the "progenitor" text is treated as a vessel "to be filled with new meanings" (109). The intention was that teens would "get their rocks off with this film" (Turan) and Angelina Jolie nude clearly serves this purpose better than Wealtheow quietly dispensing mead. And why not? As North quips, "Garish and over the top as it is, if this movie can make 'Beowulf' more widely known, any sex is welcome." Using Stam's evolutionary metaphor, one can view the film simply as a "mutation" that helps its source text "survive." Similarly, looked at using David Cowart's biological metaphor in *Literary Symbiosis*, one could say that the "parasitical" adaptation attests to the continuing vitality of the "host" text, making future students, who have seen the film or played the Xbox 360 video game, perhaps more receptive to the study of the translated Anglo-Saxon poem in the classroom. At the very least, such films can, as John Aberth contends, despite their numerous inaccuracies and anachronisms, nonetheless "spark audiences' interest in and enthusiasm" for the past (ix).

On the other hand, some viewers, especially those with scholarly knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon poem, educational responsibility for its transmission, or simple affection for the original narrative, may feel some sym-

pathy for what Gans calls the standard "mass culture critique": "that popular culture borrows content from high culture with the consequence of debasing it" (38) and that such borrowing is "culturally destructive, impairing people's ability to partake of high culture" (41). Similarly, using Cowart's metaphor drawn from biological symbiosis, one could view the "guest" text (the film) as a "parasite" that "benefits at the expense of the host" (4) and promotes "the host text's demise" (6). *Beowulf* seems firmly ensconced in the secondary level curriculum, so we need not worry that its cavalier treatment in popular culture will affect its canonical status. Viewers may conclude that Beowulf is about some lurid Oedipal drama or that sixth-century Scandinavians lived in stone castles and celebrated Christmas. But such inaccuracies can be ameliorated by exposure to the original poem. My reservation, therefore, is with the study guide distributed to educators by YMI (Young Minds Inspired) which "aligns with National Standards in English for Grades 9-12."[4] Intended to "help students explore the background, characters, and themes of this timeless story now told onscreen," the "educational program" can help "draw students into an epic that has been passed down for centuries through oral storytelling, written verse, and now film." Nowhere is it suggested that the original poem be read. While there is single concession in the "College Extension" exercises that *Beowulf* (the poem) be compared to "the family dynamics, relationships, and rivalries" found in other epics, in every other activity the film is the primary text used to gauge historical conceptions of heroism and "society's view of monsters throughout history." But the film represents modern assumptions about heroes and monsters, not historical ones. In other words, even in the classroom, the educational program simply reinforces Frederic Jameson's contention that "...for whatever peculiar reasons, we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past" (194). The "peculiar reasons" here are clearly economic as the study guide (sponsored by Paramount Pictures and Shangri-La Entertainment) simply serves to promote the film; the intention is to pack theaters, not to explore the complexities of Germanic or Anglo-Saxon culture.

John Aberth suggests that cinema "depends on fiction and invention"; scholars, therefore, "should acknowledge the different rules of the game" (ix), and I have tried to avoid falling into the trap of privileging the original text. But in the promotional materials, the original is nonetheless

continuously invoked. For instance, according Stephanie Zacharek, Avary and Gaiman were asked "why their script was so exciting when the poem was so boring": "They explained that the poem was written somewhere between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, although its story had been passed along verbally for hundreds of years. Since the only people who knew how to write in those days were monks, Avary and Gaiman figured these reputable men of the cloth would have edited out all the juicy bits, so they added some back in." Those "juicy bits," of course, are a projection of modern values and assumptions about heroism, sexuality, fame, and monstrosity. And Zemeckis, whose proclamation serves as my epigraph, posits that the film will "stir some debate in academia" (Turan, French). One film critic (Turan) found the latter claim to be "delusional" and some may find it reckless or naive. While such statements are probably primarily promotional chatter, what is striking is that the original text is frequently invoked to muster interest in the film. In other words, the film was partly sold as a new reading of the poem, which obviously begs comparison with the original. While it may be, as Stam suggests, using Derridean terminology, that "the prestige of the original is *created* by the copies, without which the very idea of originality has no meaning" (8), the commercial prestige of the film is similarly predicated on the cultural prestige of the Anglo-Saxon poem. In any case, regardless of one's judgment or evaluation of this adaptation, it joins the various versions of the text, what Livingston and Sutton felicitously term "Beowulfiana," that in the cultural mythology of the popular imagination constitute the work that is known as Beowulf.



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Notes

1. For an up-to-date, valuable survey of manifestations of *Beowulf* in modern popular culture, focusing on the influence of John Gardner's *Grendel*, see Livingston and Sutton. See also Osborn for various versions up to 1997.

2. *The 13th Warrior* (Buena Vista 1999); *Beowulf* (Capitol Films 1999); *Beowulf and Grendel* (Truly Indie 2006). Scott Wegener's *Beowulf: Prince of the Geats* (David Garrison Productions 2007), an all-volunteer feature whose proceeds will benefit the American Cancer Society, was due for limited release in December 2008.

One could add to this list Nick Lyon's made-for-television *Beowulf* (NBC/ Universal/ Sci-Fi Channel 2007); two animated versions, Alexander Stitt's animated *Grendel, Grendel, Grendel* (Satori 1981) and Yuri Kulakov's *Beowulf* (Christmas Films 1998); the *Star Trek: Voyager* episode in which Ensign Kim becomes a holographic version of Beowulf who fights Grendel, a form of photonic energy from a nearby protostar (Episode 12, 1995); and the appearance of Beowulf and Grendel in several episodes of *Xena: The Warrior Princess* ("The Rheingold"; "The Ring"; "The Return of the Valkyrie," Season 6, Episodes 7-9, 2000). One should also mention Mik Cribben's *Beware! Children at Play* (Troma Entertainment 1989), in which an orphaned teen who calls himself Grendel kidnaps local children and initiates them into the pleasures of cannibalism and the Beowulf legend. See Forni, Magennis, and Vallis.

3. The best edition for scholarly citation remains *Klaebur's Beowulf* (see Fulk); Greenfield offers an excellent translation. Citations to the poem are from these sources.

4. Young Minds Inspired describes itself as an "in-school marketing vehicle" with a "targeted distribution system" and a "custom database of teachers from preschool through college." It offers clients the opportunity to "***Integrate your brand*** into lessons and activities that students will spend *hours* interacting with in a positive and meaningful way"; "***Give your message special credibility and importance*** to young people as well as their parents, by having teachers they admire and respect present these materials in the classroom"; and "***Deliver the message that your company values learning*** and cares about families." See www.youngmindsinspired.com.

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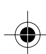

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Announcing the formation of

The Whedon Studies Association

The Whedon Studies Association is a newly formed non-profit organization devoted to the study of Joss Whedon and his collaborators. Among other enterprises, the association plans to continue the biennial conferences begun in 2004. We invite all Whedon scholars, whether writers or readers, to join the organization. Membership is free, though donations are appreciated. Please send your name and email address to the WSA's secretary/treasurer Professor Tanya Cochran at wsamembers@gmail.com. Further information about the organization (begun by members of PCAS) may be found in issue 7.3 of the Whedon Studies Association's journal, *Slayage* (http://slayageonline.com).

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Stephen Bales and Charlie Gee

Fear and Loathing in Knoxvegas: Representations of the "Other" in the Official Press Before and During the 1982 Knoxville World's Fair

I. Come Gather Round People

In 1982, Knoxville, Tennessee hosted the Knoxville International Energy Exposition (KIEE), an expo offering "the citizens of the world a greater comprehension of the effective use of energy and energy resources in the physical field and a more discriminating appreciation of the creative energy in the artistic field."[1] A Southern city of 180,000 and MSA (metropolitan statistical area) population of 566,000,[2] Knoxville was an unlikely choice for a World's Fair. Knoxville was not prominent in the world consciousness; people knew it largely as the home of the University of Tennessee and as headquarters of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). One notorious Wall Street Journal article outraged locals by terming Knoxville a "scruffy little city."[3] However, from May 1 to October 31 of 1982, the scruffy little city entertained millions of tourists, exhibitors from twenty-two nations, and multiple international corporations.

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During the transitional period preceding the World's Fair, as well as the six-month period the Fair's gates were open to the public, the city experienced radical changes in terms of the social and cultural milieu, changes which were both anticipated and chronicled in the local newspapers.

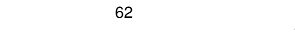
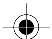
The world came to Knoxville, and Knoxville made its debut to the world. For many locals, the Fair brought abrupt and sweeping changes that resulted in feelings of uncertainty resulting from gaps in knowledge. Local media and information outlets, such as area newspapers and the public library system, served as both a means of informing the local populace on issues concerning the Fair and a force for shaping community perceptions and meanings; sources that bore the seal of "official" legitimacy.

This cultural study analyzes portrayals of outsiders in two area "official" newspapers during the 1982 World's Fair,[4] the *Knoxville News Sentinel* and the *Knoxville Journal*, to answer the question: how did print media portray outsiders coming into Knoxville because of the World's Fair? Doing this will allow for developing an understanding of how the official press reinforces hegemonic ideals through normalizing dominant cultural values and it will inform counter-hegemonic attempts to educate in similar situations.

II. Method

This study employs a grounded theory research methodology to address the above research question. Source materials include area and national newspaper articles as well as ephemera from the World's Fair period. We gathered sources from vertical files located at the Knox County public library (KCPL), the McClung Historical Collection (the KCPL's sister institution), and the John C. Hodges and Special Collections Libraries at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. We consulted a variety of secondary sources to establish context and gain further insight into the event.

After gaining historical perspective concerning the World's Fair, we drew a sample of 35 newspaper clippings depicting outsiders moving into the area because of the Fair from local morning and evening "official" daily papers. All articles were from January 1981 through December 1982 (articles were located at the KCPL in vertical file folders marked "Knoxville International Energy Exposition"). All articles came from the two major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daily Knoxville papers, the *News-Sentinel* (the morning paper, owned by Scripps), and the *Knoxville Journal* (the evening paper, sold in 1981 by the Lotspeich family to Gannett). At the time of the Fair, the papers participated in a joint operating agreement and "combined their advertising, circulation, and production departments into a single operation."[5]

Strauss & Corbin's qualitative coding procedures served as a guide for systematically analyzing the textual data.[6] We examined each article for "patterns, similarities, and differences within [the] patterned material."[7] This approach allowed us to develop theoretical categories grounded in the data. We coded the articles using activist imagery, employing gerunds to describe concepts (italicized in the following report). Seven articles (20%) were cross-coded to insure inter-coder reliability. Coding the articles was an iterative process, with constant comparative analysis allowing for the development and refinement of concepts. Our own experiences of Knoxville during the World's Fair served as both a touchstone for personal reflection and added a criterion measure of reliability. According to Creswell (2003), researcher reflexivity allows for recognition of (the researcher's) personal meanings that enter into the research, furthering increased "honesty and openness to research."[8]

Following the preliminary conceptual ordering of categories, we considered the emerging theory in light of cultural studies perspectives. We argue that the "official" print press in Knoxville was complicit in perpetuating a power structure that supported local authority and dominant cultural viewpoints.

III. Paris on the Tennessee

Knoxville, the "gateway to the South," has developed its own particular character and culture. To understand the actions of the official press during the World's Fair period, one must first come to grips with the development of this city's unique cultural milieu.

Founded in 1792, Knoxville began its existence as a small town planted in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains. The city ballooned in size and regional influence, largely due to the city's railroad connections, plentiful natural resources, and abundant labor pool.[9] While these three factors, as well the presence of the state's land grant university, contributed to

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the city's status as an economic and cultural hub in the South East United States, Knoxville has remained characterized by its proximity to Appalachia. The result is a city with a "style and tone that is culturally and politically different from other areas."[10] This individuality is apparent when comparing the city to western Tennessee. Knoxville has maintained a strongly conservative bent, at odds with the democratic tendencies of peer cities such as Nashville or Memphis.

Knoxville, however, is a crossroads for commerce, and a "New South city." By the mid-twentieth century, Knoxville had developed into an industrial city struggling for identity. The city's image suffered with this shift towards manufacturing. Knoxville then was criticized for lacking distinctiveness or recognizable regional flavor. The national press also characterized the city as being ultra-conservative politically and for environmental pollution. Wall Street Journal reporter Susan Harrigan's sarcastic take on Knoxville's non-image became a popular topic in the local press and a sore spot for the local citizenry.[11]

The most memorable attack, however, came from travel writer John Gunther (1947), a jab that irked many Knoxvillians for half a century following its original publication:

> Knoxville is the ugliest city I ever saw in America, with the possible exception of some mill towns in New England. Its main street is called Gay Street; this seemed to me a misnomer… Knoxville, an extremely puritanical town, serves no alcohol stronger than 3.6 percent beer, and its more dignified taprooms close at 9:30 P.M.; Sunday movies are forbidden, and there is no Sunday baseball. Perhaps as a result, it is one of the least orderly cities in the South—Knoxville leads every other town in Tennessee in homicides, automobile thefts, and larceny.[12]

While these insults smarted, Knoxville's citizens were generally resistant to change, reflecting the conservative values of the city's elite.[13] The 1960's, however, saw the rise of a "business developer's bloc" disappointed with the city elites' aversion to change. This was a group with the brashness and backing to initiate sweeping change.[14] W. Stewart Evans, a member of this newly empowered group, smelled opportunity when learning of the Spokane WA World's Fair's success in revitalizing that city, and Evans sought to replicate this success in Tennessee. Knoxville had found its "quantum jump," an International Energy Exposition that promised revital-

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ization of the inner city and international exposure.[15] The Knoxville World's Fair opened its gates in the spring of 1982. People flooded in from across the U.S.A. and world. Knoxville's citizenry anticipated, watched, reacted, and participated.

Before the Fair's permanent closing in October 1982, 11,128,000 people had walked through its gates, exceeding the projected eleven million visitors.[16] In addition to tourists, the influx of outsiders included the staffing required for twenty-two national pavilions as well as various corporate and religious installations.

The Fair radically altered the makeup of the urban cultural landscape almost overnight. It introduced outside groups, altered the composition of area demographics, and created divisions within the citizenry that often played out in the local media. Downtown Knoxville saw new business ventures by both local and outside merchants, with downtown space sold to twenty-two licensed vendors.[17] The Fair employed more than 3,500 workers as well, from Knoxville and elsewhere.[18]

In addition to the rapid makeover of the city's urban composition through a flood of new people, existing residents experienced deep divisions over the Fair. Attitudes ranged from the "quantum jump" cheerleaders to those adamantly opposed, the latter consisting of a very vocal minority led by University of Tennessee history professor Joe Dodd.[19] While Dodd's opposition represented a skeptical view of the motives of Fair promoters (especially those of Fair chairperson and area banking magnate Jake Butcher), a review of local publications suggests an undercurrent of ambivalence existing within the local community arising from general uncertainty coinciding with the Fair.

Repeatedly, local newspaper articles appeared referring to dangerous, undesirable outsiders poised to *invade* Knoxville (martial language appearing frequently in both the *Sentinel* and the *Journal*). Vigilante groups such as the Guardian Angels and Dragons of Justice threatened to set up camp in Knoxville and dish out their own brand of street justice. [20,21] Knoxvillians were warned of an onslaught of bikers "in the thousands,"[22] possibly Hell's Angels (it never happened). The *Journal* warned, in ominous and vague language, of an influx of "bus loads of hookers" and their big city pimps, which was likely to result in a violent turf *war* over downtown Knoxville.[23] On a more practical (and realistic) level, many residents

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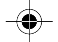
shared an apprehension over potential traffic logjams and parking problems caused by the massive influx of outsiders. [24,25] One anonymous wag summarized the feelings of antipathy, unease, and fear of the unknown attached to the World's Fair with a reworking of the "Night before Christmas" found affixed to area telephone poles.

> T'was the night before Expo
> And all through the town
> The cost of construction
> Was getting us down.
> Jake and Randy could find
> No sleep in their beds
> While visions of dollar signs
> Danced in their heads
> The hookers were waiting
> On their corners with care
> Hoping the Vice Squad
> Would not be there.
> And we in our city
> Have this mess in our lap
> How long must citizens
> Put up with this flap?[26]

IV. Textual Analysis

Knoxville's official print news media played an important role in the shaping of these attitudes before and during the city's massive demographic reconfiguration. Norman Fairclough wrote that texts "have causal effects—i.e. they bring about changes."[27] Texts mediate social life;[28] they organize and define cultural "realities." Knoxville's official press influenced locals' perceptions of outsiders coming to the city during the World's Fair period. Textual analysis is an appropriate tool for better understanding how the press formed and reinforced these perceptions. The method facilitates researchers' ability to "pin down [the empirical material's] key themes and, thereby, to draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen."[29]

Preliminary analysis of 35 articles drawn from the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* and the *Knoxville Journal* dealing specifically with outsiders com-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ing to Knoxville as a result of the World's Fair revealed four categories of outsider: (1) *workers* relocating to Knoxville to work at the Fair, or at businesses hoping to profit off of the Fair (such as construction companies and downtown vendors; (2) legitimate *entrepreneurs* coming into the area; (3) both U.S and international *tourists*; and (4) *undesirable others,* consisting of a variety of outside groups portrayed in a negative manner and often described as putting unwanted stress on community values and local infrastructure.

We derived five categories from the data that represent phenomena material to Knoxville "official" press depictions of people entering Knoxville entering the area because of the World's Fair: (1) *Importing outside values*; (2) *Testing local culture*; (3) *Testing community infrastructure*; (4) *Validating local authority*; and (5) *Reinforcing cultural norms.* These five categories, detailed below, provide valuable insight into how Knoxville's official press served to structure its audience's perception of outsiders.

(1) Importing Outside Values

The articles depict outsiders as possessing alien or exotic values or perspectives, and as importing these values into the Knoxville community. Outsiders do this through (1) persuasion and diplomacy (often seen in articles directly referencing particular Fair exhibits), (2) aggression, or as setting themselves up in marked contrast to locals through (3) *refusing to assimilate*. Chinese workers, for example "[all wear] identical-dark blue, loose outfits," do not understand much English, are fortunate to have their own chef, don't go into town, and stick to Chinese cigarettes because "they are a bit stronger."[30]

Articles describe undesirable others as intentionally *importing violence and criminal behavior*—they are *invading from the outside*. The press describes prostitutes and their pimps as *battling for dominance*; Lt. Donnie Cameron remarked, "It's going to be a territorial war, that's what it's going to be… And I expect some of them (prostitutes) will be killed in the wars."[31] These wars, however, extended beyond the criminal element and involve the community: "The pimps have been picking the girls up and dropping them off in different locations because they know the heat is on."[32] This new criminal element, furthermore, represented something outside of the usual, *contrasting local with outside culture*—these are "rough type prostitutes" used to doing "quite a bit of robbing and cutting and [Sgt. Ed

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Sisk of Memphis] know[s] of some that packed up and headed for Knoxville."[33]

Instead of remaining aloof, as with the Chinese workers, undesirable others are portrayed as actively seeking to indoctrinate locals into their group culture through *defining potential recruits,* and *recruiting locals.* In an article concerning the possible establishment of a Guardian Angel (a New York based "safety patrol"[34] often described as a vigilante group) chapter in Knoxville,[35] Curtis Sliwa, Guardian Angel founder, is quoted as seeking local recruits based "on the will of the people." Legitimate tourists, however, are distinguished from undesirables through the legitimacy of their intentions (intentions that a majority of *Journal* readers are likely to identify with). One Knox County Police Department remarked:

> *There are a lot of people that come to World's Fairs. Most of them are tourists—like those who will go to the Smoky Mountains. They are coming into town on a vacation or on leisure travel. They're not as apt to commit crimes…*[36]

Those "apt to commit crimes" are "shady characters like panhandlers, pickpockets and con artists."[37]

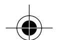
(2) Testing Local Culture

The "official" print press portrays the influx of outside values as *testing local culture* through *alienating residents* and *increasing uncertainty* about the future, manifesting in a fear of outsiders:

> *… [the] Tennessee Valley Authority board [was asked] to help area authorities police a TVA campsite where nearby residents fear motorcycle gangs will camp during the World's Fair… 'We're not talking about 25 or 30 motorcycles. We're talking through the rumors that have come through the sheriff's department, of motorcycles in the thousands.*[38]

Through portraying outsiders as actively *expressing interest in the locals*, the news reinforces ideas of culture conflict, with encroaching undesirables *recruiting (often undesirable) locals* into their counter or deviant subcultures (swelling their ranks). Brian Sanderson (leader of the Young Dragons, another New York based "safety patrol") remarked: "We don't want criminals, but it depends on the crime. I say give the guy a chance to prove himself."[39]

This active interest in the "locals" is reflected in the newspaper articles' general portrayal of outsiders as intentionally *scouting the city* for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opportunistic purposes: undesirables are *colonizing (the cultural landscape)*. The articles even depict local left wing political activists as seeing outsider activists as *serving their own agenda* and *colonizing* at the hometown crew's expense. The predicted appearance of the All-People's Congress, a national umbrella group for "civil liberties, anti-war, labor and social organizations," at an anti-nuclear power rally is portrayed as causing consternation and resentment among local activist groups and creating an unwanted expansion of political projects beyond the local community.[40]

(3) Testing Community Infrastructure

The official press represents outsiders as a challenge to Knoxville and its surrounding areas because of the stress that these groups supposedly place on the integrity of community infrastructure. News articles describe tourists and undesirable others as *taxing community resources*. They repeatedly refer to tourists in terms of sheer numbers. When the press does not portray tourists as clogging the highways in the articles about area traffic problems, it projects tourists as health problems:

> *We know campgrounds are going to be full. We hope a lot of people will use self-contained units (such as camping trailers), but there may be primitive camping and people opening up their farms for camping vehicles. This is going to require a plan...* [41]

Outsiders will "use streams and ditches if proper facilities are inconvenient,"[42] and Knoxville will suffer a general up-shift in stress on its civic infrastructure. Mayor Randy Tyree said to the *Journal:* "There's gonna be more trash to pick up, there's gonna be more police calls to answer, more traffic accidents perhaps."[43]

Undesirable others are described as actively testing community infrastructure through nefarious means, such as *importing* and *hiding crime* (e.g., pimps relocating their prostitutes to avoid detection by the local authorities);[44] or, as is the case with displaced outsiders, vagrants, and transplanted drug addicts, through *seeking help* by approaching both official and other sources of charity:

> *Coughing and wheezing, perhaps a victim of alcoholism or some other illness, he wandered about looking for an empty doorway or a handout... [Knox County Sheriff Joe Jenkins says] 'if they don't have anywhere to go, they'll end up in jail. Many are older people and are sick. It's just a pitiful situation.'*[45]

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Predictions of the stress on Knoxville brought by outsiders are reflected in several news articles describing the lack of resources (housing, security, etc.) and the need for additional jail space, social services, and police personnel. And, while articles express concern for locals and the outsiders, Margaret Hoffman (*News-Sentinel* columnist) betrayed the prevailing "us versus them" mentality when she asked:

> *…what about the folks at home? What about the city hosts who have sat more or less patiently in traffic lines on the demolished interstate and screened their eyes from the dusty glare of the construction? Expo will provide much to those arriving in Knoxville during the six-month stretch in1982. It seems appropriate to ask what advantages are provided to those here before and after.*[46]

(4) Validating Local Authority

In the process of *identifying outside threats,* the official press validates local civic authority through *defining their sphere of control*. Repeatedly articles identify problems relating to outsiders entering the area while emphasizing local authorities' (particularly Knox County police and sheriff's departments, but also including social service agencies' and local government's) ability and readiness to manage an alien—and potentially hostile—situation through *identifying, planning for,* and *combating problems*. This paternal watchfulness required that the civic authorities counter outside groups' active interest in Knoxville with equally active (if not more active) programs for *gathering intelligence*. The *Journal* describes how police Lt. Phil Keith monitors "yippies" and other activist groups interested in the Fair from "an intelligence standpoint."[47] Police also kept a watchful eye on both the Guardians and the Dragons.[48] One *Journal* article touts the city's "new plan [that] makes optimum use of the flexibility provided by the department's new sector team policing concept."[49]

Moreover, while several articles describe the budget problems and labor shortages encountered by local law enforcement, there is a continued emphasis on the police *maintaining a presence* and *asserting normalcy:* "The Fair's force will operate on a low level, similar to officers at theme parks."[50] The watchfulness of Knoxville's authorities is portrayed in terms of *guarding the city* (two articles focus on rapid response SWAT maneuvers[51] requiring authorities to stay ever vigilant (or maintain the image that they are staying so).

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(5) Reinforcing Cultural Norms

The preceding conceptual categories outline ways in which the media potentially develops readers' ideas concerning outsiders' values and motives, as well as validates community responses to these values and motives. One emerging category for such an active community response (as portrayed in the press) is the reinforcement of cultural norms.

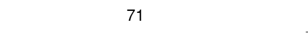
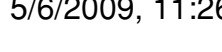
Articles portray explicit themes of typical "Southern hospitality," with locals *providing for guests* (in the case of tourists) or *giving comfort* (in the case of undesirable others). Locals are "not the money grubbing type," but show concern for outsiders, are welcoming, and often "simply want to give visitors a taste of this part of the country."[52]

Displays of accommodation and cultural ambassadorship, however, are imbedded in a rhetoric of cultural separation. While the press validates local cultural norms like hospitality, it establishes boundaries between community and the outside world through *distancing local culture from outside culture*. Bill Wyman, TVA director, made sure to note that, while he was monitoring the potential hoards of incoming bikers, he was "not on a first-name basis with any of those folks."[53] There are no calls for assimilation.

V. Discussion

The undesirable other is prevalent in Knoxville's two "official" daily papers immediately prior to and throughout the 1982 World's Fair. Articles describe undesirables as supporting alien, unwanted agendas, agendas often indicating active planning on the part of these outsiders. The articles portray undesirables as a threat to culture and community infrastructure. The press reinforces the legitimacy and separation of local culture and validates local authorities by setting up a relationship of struggle between "legitimate" local power structures and the "invading forces." The press repeatedly describes this cultural conflict in military terms. Factions conduct surveillance, collect intelligence, recruit, and invade and battle over territory.

Undesirables take on the characteristics of invading armies (hoards might be a more appropriate term). They are often faceless groups such as pimps, whores, bikers, vigilantes, or vagrants. When the news does mention

individual representatives for these groups, it is through a single spokesperson like Curtis Sliwa. The rank-and-file members, however, remain largely anonymous.

The articles use few photographs to depict undesirables. Those that do depict undesirables display them in active, violent postures. The *Knoxville Journal* for example, portrays Sliwa in paramilitary garb and in the process of shouting, while Sanderson demonstrates stick-fighting techniques. Although the sample is of limited size, and alternative data sources should be sought out for comparison, these images and text embody an emerging *regime of representation*, where the "repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which difference is represented at any one historical moment."[54] Image and text set up the undesirable in opposition to the "culturally acceptable" local through the application of "sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes—good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive…."[55]

Exploring these emerging themes concerning outsiders allows for identification of a social narrative in the official press, what David L. Altheide described as reflecting the "social order and communication process."[56] These "frames" symbolically mine

> complex and often ambiguous events and concerns for moral truths and understandings that they presume the audience holds, while the repeated presentations of similar scenarios 'teach' the audience about the nature and causes of 'disorder'… and promote the mythic view that the past was better than the present.[57]

The representation of others in the Knoxville official press provides "clusters of ideas, images and practices that provide frameworks for understanding what knowledge is useful, relevant, and true in a given context."[58]

The construction of a social narrative, furthermore, may act as a means of facilitating control by traditional authorities. Altheide contended that social control agencies, such as the police, comply with the media to combine objective news with attempts at social control in order to,[59] as observed by Ericson, Baranek, and Chan, "sustain the view publicly that they are operating with procedural regularity, and are therefore accountable."[60] Through employing a rhetoric of fear this mass communication "power bloc" defines problems and sets political agendas[61] while maintaining its own legitimacy and necessity.[62] In the process, views of the "other" are disregarded or devalued while hegemonic structure is maintained through the reinforce-

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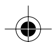

ment of dominant (and comfortable) cultural values. Through constructing an "us versus them" narrative that validates local authority as paternalistic culture warriors, the *News-Sentinel* and *Journal* insured the maintenance of prevailing social structures.

Through analysis of a subsection of the historical record, this study reveals an emerging substantive theory of the official press's representation of the other during a time of great change. Comparative analysis with other local information sources from the World's Fair period will allow for saturation of the emergent categories. The findings from this study may be further expanded to include outside groups encountering similar change (from varying contexts and time periods); this will allow for a better understanding of category dimensions, as well as provide further insight into the relationship between culture and media depictions of the "other."

Stephen Bales
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Charlie Gee
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Notes

[1] U.S. Department of Commerce, *Knoxville International Energy Exposition: Final Environmental Impact Statement* (Spokane, WA: Haworth & Anderson Inc: 1977), i.

[2] Greater Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, "Community Profile: Knoxville—America's Most Livable City," in *Knoxville: Take A Look* (Knoxville: Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, 1990), 6.

[3] Susan Harrigan, "What if You Gave a World's Fair and Nobody Came?" *Wall Street Journal*, December 29, 1980 [Note: some page numbers on newspapers were not available because of Lawson-McGee's and the McClung Collection's filing systems.]

[4] John Fiske describes official news "the news of the 'quality' press and network television… It presents its information as objective facts selected from an empiricist reality wherein lies a 'truth' that is accessible by good objective investigation. Its tone is serious, official, impersonal and is aimed at producing understanding and belief. It is generally the news which the power-bloc wants the people to have." In "Popularity and the Politics of Information," in *Journalism as Popular Culture,* eds. Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks (London: Sage, 1992), 46.

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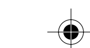

[5] *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, "Knoxville News-Sentinel," http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=K024 (accessed Oct 2, 2007).

[6] Anselm Strauss and John Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1998).

[7] Ian Hodder, "The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture," In, *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* 2nd ed., eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 711.

[8] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2003), 182.

[9] Michael J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 16.

[10] Ibid., 5.

[11] Susan Harrigan, "What if You Gave a World's Fair and Nobody Came?" *Wall Street Journal.*

[12] John Gunther, *Inside U.S.A*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 761.

[13] McDonald and Wheeler, *Knoxville, Tennessee,* 16.

[14] Ibid., 143.

[15] Tom Sweeten, "World's Fair 'Quantum Jump' for Downtown," *Knoxville Journal*, April 30, 1982, sec. A, p. 11.

[16] United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition. *Final report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition - Energy Expo 82- to the President of the United States* (Oak Ridge, Tennessee: Technical Information Center, 1982).

[17] "Attempt to Keep Vendors Away From Downtown Opposed," *Knoxville Journal*, April 25, 1982, D1.

[18] "Agency Gives 3500 Work at Fair," *Knoxville Journal*, May, 28, 1982.

[19] In his expose of the Fair, Dodd wrote "Expo was deceit. Expo was hypocrisy, Expo was a blitz that bypassed the people. Expo was manipulation of the press. And Expo was money." In Joe Dodd, *World Class Politics: Knoxville's 1982 World's Fair Redevelopment and the Political Process* (Salem, Wisconsin: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1988), 105.

[20] Roger King, "Vigilantes to Test City," *Knoxville Journal,* January 18, 1982.

[21] Roger King, "Young Angels, Dragons May Fight Crime at Fair," *Knoxville Journal*¸ January 25, 1982.

[22] "Residents Fear Cycle Gangs at Campsite," *Knoxville Journal*, April 22, 1982.

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[23] Steve Ray, "Police Told of Incoming 'Bus Loads' of Hookers." *Knoxville Journal,* April 22, 1982, D1.

[24] Cynthia Moxley, "City Briefs Merchants on Traffic During the Fair," *Knoxville Journal*, March 25, 1982.

[25] "UT Evening School Students Worried About Parking Situation During Fair," *Knoxville Journal*, April 29, 1982.

[26] "The Night Before Expo," Vertical File, Lawson McGhee Public Library, Knoxville, Tennessee.

[27] Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 8.

[28] Anssi Peräkylä, "Analyzing Text and Talk," In *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd eds., Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 870.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Joe Krakoviak, "A World Away: Chinese Workers Adjust to Knoxville," *Knoxville Journal*, April 30, 1982.

[31] Ray, "'Bus Loads' of Hookers."

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] The Guardian Angel's Web site describes the organization as "a voluntary, weapon-free patrol of [initially] 13 [formed] to take the subways, the streets and the neighborhood back from crime." From "About the Guardian Angels," http://www.guardianangels.org/history_full.html (accessed Oct 2, 2007).

[35] King, "Vigilantes to Test City."

[36] Terry McWilliams, "Fair Not to Escape Increased Crime, Traffic," *Knoxville Journal*, May 13, 1981.

[37] Ibid.

[38] *Knoxville Journal*, "Residents Fear Cycle Gangs at Campsite."

[39] King, "Young Angels."

[40] Ernie Beazley, "Anti-Nuclear Activists Plan May 1 Picket," *Knoxville Journal*, April, 15, 1982.

[41] Ken Renner, "State Wants Health Plan for '82 Fair," *Knoxville Journal,* July 31, 1981.

[42] Terry McWilliams, "Fair Health Worries a Witchhunt," *Knoxville Journal,* August 8, 1981.

[43] Cynthia Moxley, "Reagonomics to Hurt Fair, says Tyree," *Knoxville Journal,* December 17, 1981.

[44] Ray, "Bus Loads of Hookers."

[45] Carolyn Greer, "Social Agencies Gird to Handle Influx of Vagrants Lured to Fair," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, February 17, 1982.

[46] Margaret Hoffman, "It's a World's Fair: But What About the Folks at Home?" *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, January 27, 1981.

[47] Beazley, "Anti-Nuclear Activists Plan May 1 Picket."

[48] Ibid.

[49] Cynthia Moxley, "Police Will Use Existing Force, Budget During Fair," *Knoxville Journal,* 27 April, 1982.

[50] "Fair Security to be Low Key, but Everywhere," *Knoxville Journal,* April 24, 1982.

[51] Police Chief Robert Marshall says "We have men that can even jump out of helicopters should a situation warrant that type of action." In Steve Ray, "Police Girding for World's Fair," *Knoxville Journal*, January 1, 1981.

[52] Hoyt Canady, "Homes, Rooms Sought for Fair Visitors," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, November 8, 1981.

[53] "*Knoxville Journal*, "Residents Fear Cycle Gangs at Campsite."

[54] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Hill, 1997), 232.

[55] Ibid., 229.

[56] David L. Altheide, "Children and the Discourse of Fear," *Symbolic Interaction* 25, no. 2, (2002): 231.

[57] Ibid., 232.

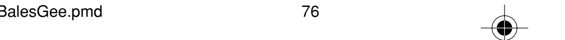
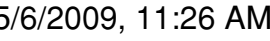
[58] Celine-Marie Pascale, "There's No Place Like Home: The Discursive Creation of Homelessness," *Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies* 5, no. 2, (2005): 251.

[59] Altheide, "Children and the Discourse of Fear," 232.

[60] Richard V. Ericson, Patricia M. Baranek, and Janet B.L. Chan, *Negotiating Control: A Study of News Sources* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 92.

[61] Stuart Hall explains that the people versus the power bloc is "rather than 'class-against-class', is the central line of contradiction around which the terrain of culture is polarized. Popular culture, especially, is organized around the contradiction: the popular forces versus the power bloc." In "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," In *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader,* 2nd ed., John Storey, (London: Prentice Hall, 1994), 452.

[62] Altheide, "Children and the Discourse of Fear," 232.

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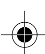

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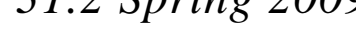

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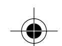

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Noah Arceneaux

Paul Reveres of Early Radio: The Boy Scouts and the Origins of Broadcasting

The image of a Boy Scout, complete with kerchief and short pants, patiently tapping out Morse code on a radio transmitter may seem incongruous to some. After all, isn't Scouting about young boys pitching tents and building campfires in the wilderness, activities that in the popular imagination represent the antithesis of cutting-edge technological practices? The first edition of the Boy Scout Handbook in 1910, however, taught boys how to transmit Morse code, and building a radio receiver was once deemed an obligatory Scout skill. In the early 1920s, when radio stations and transmitting towers sprouted across the United States, this same organization popularized the emerging technology. In both a literal and figurative sense, Boy Scouts served as ground troops helping to bring the new medium of "broadcasting" into the American mainstream.

The purpose of this article is to outline the promotion of wireless communication by the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) during the first decades of the 20th century, the period in which radio broadcasting developed and became an established technological and cultural practice. Other radio historians have briefly mentioned Scouts in relation to some other topic, though the radio-related activities of this organization have not been examined in detail (Bartlett, 2007; Boddy, 2004; Briggs, 1961; Douglas, 1987 and 2004). This research thus highlights a previously overlooked aspect early radio, and in doing so, sheds light on the complex, multi-faceted process of

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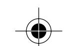

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social construction that ultimately produced the American system of radio broadcasting. By placing Boy Scouts at the center of the historical narrative, some key influences upon early radio come into stark relief, specifically the role of the military upon the technology's development, the heavily gendered nature of the early industry, and the educational role of juvenile literature of the time.

Using the specific actions of the Boy Scouts as an empirical base, this study argues that broadcasting did not originate solely in the thriving community of amateur operators, bubbling up from below as it were, nor was this practice imposed upon the populace by powerful corporations and commercial interests. The origins of broadcasting should instead be understood as a process that owed something to both sets of complementary forces. This argument holds much contemporary relevance, as the introduction of new forms of communication has become a ceaseless staple of modern life. The introduction of radio to American communities inspired utopian hopes and bold predictions, while similar euphoria is bestowed upon the latest technologies of today, including Apple's iPhone, Twitter, or some future innovation that doesn't exist at the time of this writing. If we wish to understand how new communications technologies are developed, diffused, commercialized, and integrated into daily life, the origins of American radio offer an instructive case study.

Scouts as Soldiers

In 1910, a "battalion" of Boy Scouts marched in New York City's Memorial Day parade with "their full field equipment, including wireless outfit" ("Boy Scouts in the Parade," 1910). At the time, wireless telegraphy was used for point-to-point communication, following the same model as the telephone and telegraph. The absence of a physical connection made wireless ideal for maritime use, and the Navy and shipping companies were the principal users of the technology. Land based companies, however, saw little value in wireless telegraphy, while a disparate group of amateur operators, using makeshift equipment, experimented with this new form of communication outside of the corporate realm. This Scout parade, then, symbolized the intersection of two of the earliest adopters of wireless telegraphy, amateurs and the military. As young boys working with the technol-

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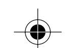
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ogy, Scouts had much in common with the active community of amateur enthusiasts, though the organization was also aligned with the military.

Robert Baden-Powell, a British Army officer, founded the first Scout organization in 1908 (MacDonald, 1993; Rosenthal, 1984). Baden-Powell's brainchild came in response to a perceived weakness in the British Empire, namely, that it was losing its global superiority due to a lack of disciplined, healthy young men. Urbanization and industrialization made romanticized village life largely a thing of the past, while immigration brought new, and potentially suspect, faces into the country. The Scout organization was a training ground for the next generation and was "from the very beginning conceived as remedy to Britain's moral, physical, and military weakness" (Rosenthal, p. 3).

A veteran of the Boer War, Powell released *Scouting for Boys* in 1908. The book offered a series of practical tips about rope-tying, woodcraft, hygiene, and personal conduct, supplemented with "yarns" about Powell's exploits in the military (Baden-Powell, 2004). Wireless technology is absent from the book, though mentions of Morse code and telegraphy are present. In one passage, Powell described how his men were able to eavesdrop on enemy communications by tapping into a telegraph line (pp. 176-177).

Following the publication of *Scouting for Boys*, organized troops began to appear across the England and other countries. In 1910, the movement came to the United States, the Boy Scouts of America. Analogous to England's Empire anxiety, America was undergoing its own crisis of masculinity (Mechling, 2001). Some critics fretted that industrialization produced an over-abundance of leisure time, while others lamented the feminizing influence of mothers and teachers. In response to this crisis, "parents began to support organizations like the YMCA, the Boys Scouts of America, and the Knights of King Arthur, which used strenuous outdoor activity to teach toughness and self-reliance" (Watts, 2003, p. 30). Much of President Theodore Roosevelt's popularity, for example, can be attributed to the rugged "cowboy-soldier" image that he projected, the same image of masculinity that the Boy Scouts sought to emulate. Viewed in conjunction with the YMCA and other organized youth activities, the BSA can be seen as part of the larger Progressive movement, with various government and community groups attempting to reform public behavior at the dawn of the 20th century.

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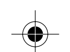

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Outdoor activities, such as camping in the wilderness, were crucial to the Boy Scout mission. In contrast to the man-made urban environment, which presumably made young boys soft and weak, the uncivilized aspect of the wilderness was essential to transforming these youth into sturdy, self-reliant men. The Scouts, however, were not complete Luddites in their outlook, realizing that the inchoate technology of wireless communication could be valuable in emergency situations, or for coordinating the movements of distant campers.

The first edition of the BSA Handbook in 1910 included instruction on Morse code along with other techniques for signaling over long distances, such as semaphore (Snowden, 2009). In the 1911 edition, six pages of instructions in wireless telegraphy were added. These instructions taught Scouts how to rig an aerial and construct a receiving and transmitting set. The rest of the handbook was devoted to more familiar Scout activities, such as knot-tying and camping.

In 1912, a large contingent of Scouts honored the originator of the global movement, Baden-Powell, when he visited New York ("5,000 Scouts for Baden-Powell," 1912). As part of the assembly, the army of young boys entertained spectators with marching, military drills, fake combat, demonstrations of rope-tying, and other feats of skill. A wireless tower was constructed and a 14-year-old operator from New Rochelle telegraphed a personal greeting from Baden-Powell to President Taft in Washington, D.C.

A book published in the same year, *Stories of Boy Scouts and Girls' Open Air Clubs*, contained a fictional story about a group of young male campers who manage to save a doomed ship (Russell, 1912). In the tale, Scouts suspend an aerial, (referred to as an "anemone"), from the treetops. After building a wireless receiver, the boys soon receive a distress signal from a sinking vessel. Thanks to their quick wit and technical expertise, an appropriate rescue effort is put into action.

This collection of Scout stories was related to a particular genre of juvenile fiction that was popular during the early decades of the 20th century. In a comprehensive analysis of "technological fiction" series written during this time, (a.k.a. "boy inventor stories"), Molson (1999) identified radio fiction as its own distinct sub-genre. *Tom Swift and His Wireless Message*, published in 1911 by Victor Appleton, is the most famous example of this genre. In radio fiction tales, young boys would invent some

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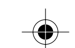

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new wireless device, or a new use for the technology, including devices that transmitted moving images as well as sounds. The resulting invention would then be used to enact a rescue, call for help, or otherwise save the day. In a blending of fact and fiction, the 1919 novel *Jack Heaton, Wireless Operator* related how a group of boys were able to listen to the real-life 1909 rescue of passengers from the *Republic*. Wireless operator Jack Binns, (who was himself a relatively youthful 25 years of age), transmitted the wireless distress call during this disaster, and was subsequently catapulted to national fame. In the 1920s, no less than six series of novels focused on radio-heroes; the *Radio Boys* was the most famous of the group. Jack Binns wrote a foreword for each *Radio Boys* adventure, explicitly encouraging young boys to take up radio as a valuable hobby. Radio fiction titles, according to Molson, were thus more then escapist entertainment, as they educated and inspired young readers to become involved with radio (1994, p. 43).

In the years leading up to World War I, many teenage-boys across the country, not simply fictional protagonists, were indeed active in wireless communication, fascinated by its ability to transmit messages over the airwaves. Operators of Naval radio stations and commercial wireless stations, however, perceived the amateurs and their sometimes-mischievous behavior as a problem (Douglas, 2004, pp. 59-60). Amateurs could cause interference for other users, and at times deliberately sent false messages. When questioned by radio inspectors, the amateurs often claimed that they were using simple "toy apparatus" for experiments. According to a 1916 letter, by contrast from the Bureau of Navigation, "these so-called boy experimenters use transmitting apparatus which compares favorably with that used in a large number of the commercial stations and has sufficient power to cause serious interference" (Pratt, 1916). The Bureau of Navigation was not without heart, though, in its desire to silence the amateurs. After a teen-aged boy from Brooklyn was caught sending false distress signals, the Bureau suggested the official charges be dismissed, stating that to "imprison and deprive this young man of his citizenship would be a punishment more severe than the Bureau would like to see imposed on such a youthful offender" (Bureau of Navigation, 1917).

In contrast to the popular vision of the technically savvy, though rebellious, young boy stood the upright Boy Scouts. This organization actively

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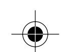

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promoted the technology of wireless communication before WWI, though it did so in close cooperation with established organizations and the government. In 1914, the *Washington Post* reported that the U. S. Army Signal Corps had established a formal class to teach Boy Scouts about wireless communication, along with other activities such as "flag signaling, installation and use of field telegraph and telephone lines…and scout work in the destruction of wire systems of the 'enemy'" ("Boy Scouts Begin…," 1914). The same account of the class noted that similar classes had been underway in Great Britain "for some time."

In another attempt to use wireless communication for national defense purposes, Scouts worked with the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) to commemorate Washington's Birthday in 1916. The ARRL sent a coded message from Illinois that was relayed by a series of amateurs throughout the United States. The message, which encouraged members of a democracy to arm and discipline themselves, was "read by Boy Scouts at Mount Vernon and on the battlefield of Bunker Hill" ("Air Bears Message of Preparedness," 1916).

In April 1917, the U. S. government shut down or assumed control of all radio transmitters in the country (Sterling & Kittross, 2002, p. 48). This was no small task, given the enormous number of radio amateurs; Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels later thanked the Boy Scouts for locating some of the illegal wireless operations. Armed with their wireless knowledge and a large number of receivers, Scouts were no doubt of great value in locating those surreptitious transmitters that remained in operation. Daniels praised the Scout contribution in a 1918 telegram, calling them "chivalric young crusaders" ("Boy Scouts' Work in War," 1918).

A newspaper account from 1919 also praised the Scouts' contribution to the war, claiming that the first American artillery shell fired at the Germans had a "Boy Scout emblem pasted on its point" ("Boy Scouts in War and Peace," 1919). The same story related an anecdote about a former Scout who received a battlefield promotion aboard a Naval vessel when his knowledge of signaling and telegraphy was revealed. The U. S. Army and Navy had a pronounced demand for soldiers with this expertise during the war, and it is entirely believable that a number of Scouts, with skills honed at campgrounds, found new uses for their knowledge once America entered the global conflict.

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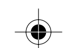

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Paul Reveres for the 20th Century

Following the war, the U.S. military sought to encourage radio amateurs, and Boy Scouts in particular, recognizing that they could function as a valuable resource during some future crisis. The result was a Radio Amateur Bureau in the Third Naval District that broadcast a daily message in code; the encryption key was furnished to those amateurs registered with the Bureau. The military then teamed with the Boy Scouts, “the largest uniformed force, civilian or military, in the United States” (Perry, 1923, p. 276). Local Scout troops were intended to function as the reception points for important messages. The messages could be then distributed locally, and the system relied upon the half a million Scouts spread all across the United States. A new position, Sea Scout Radio Commodore, was created as a liaison between the Amateur Bureau and the BSA (Perry, 1923).

Armstrong Perry, the aforementioned Commodore, and Hiram Percy Maxim, the leader of the ARRL, lavished praised upon the system in the *New York Times* (“Boy Scouts,” 1922). Maxim’s praise is not surprising; the ARRL’s transcontinental message from 1916 had demonstrated a similar concept, also relying upon Scouts as the final link in the chain of communication. Under the system, every night at a designated time, the Naval Radio Station in New York, NAH, would transmit coded messages, with many of them directed to Scout troops. The U.S. Army also supported the effort and offered to train amateurs for free at its summer camps. The 1924 edition of the BSA Handbook encouraged boys to register with the Radio Amateur Bureau and monitor the NAH broadcasts; “This is a high honor” (p. 314).

This particular system functioned as a real-world training exercise for Scouts, giving them hands-on experience deciphering Morse code transmissions. But these young men were not merely playing with coded messages, as someone might play with a decoder-ring that had been given away by some radio promotion, since they served as a potential dissemination method for critical information. A 1922 newspaper article outlined one nightmarish scenario (“Boy Scouts,” 1922):

> Suppose a hostile power before declaring war should send an aircraft carrier, containing a flock of airplanes, to the coast of the United States to wait there until the declaration of war was made.

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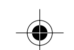

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> It would be a matter of minutes after the declaration of war to send these airplanes flying over the country with poison gases and high-explosives, and they would be able to do terrific damage before a warning could be given by telegraph in the usual way.

Decades later, the government established the CONELRAD system and then the Emergency Broadcast System to warn Americans about military attacks from the sky (Sterling & Kittross, 2002, pp. 784-785). The military-BSA arrangement can be seen as a precursor of these warning systems, and was also a clear example of a sociotechnical system, one that derived its functionality from both human actions and physical hardware (Bijker, 1995). Downey (2002) documented a similar sociotechnical system in his study of telegraph-messenger boys. With the distribution of telegrams in the late 19th/early 20th century as well as the Navy's Radio Amateur Bureau, a nation-wide system of electronic media ultimately was dependent upon the foot (or bicycle) speed of young boys for the final step in the communication process.

Scouts and the Broadcasting Boom

In 1919, the BSA introduced the Wireless Merit Badge to formally recognize Scouts who had acquired a particular level of proficiency ("Merit Badge History.") Four years later, the name was changed to the Radio Merit Badge. The early 1920s were a pivotal period in the development of the technology, and this name change neatly brackets the years in which "wireless telegraphy" transformed into the practice of "radio broadcasting." The transition was not instantaneous, nor did the major corporations who controlled the patents for wireless communication foresee its explosive growth. During the war, the military's concentrated control of wireless had produced a number of technical advances. Following the conclusion of the war, and after amateurs were allowed to resume operation, the sound of the human voice and strains of phonograph music could be plucked from the airwaves, along with the continued dots-and-dashes of Morse code. This development was greatly aided by the large number of vacuum tubes that had been produced during the war—a hardware innovation which improved both the transmission and reception of wireless messages. Starting

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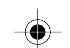

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in 1920, a handful of radio stations began the practice of broadcasting, no longer sending messages to isolated ships or specific individuals, but broadly disseminating music and news to anyone who had a receiver.

Young boys were at the forefront of the broadcasting movement and were frequently credited with introducing the technology into their households. Given the scarcity and expense of factory-ready receivers, the boys' primitive crystal sets, often made by wrapping wire around an empty Quaker Oats can, were no longer seen as trivial toys. At the opening of the First National Radio Conference in 1922, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover directly acknowledged the "genius of the American boy," and observed that many of them possessed the requisite knowledge to create a radio station ("Minutes of Open Meeting," 1922, p. 2). Two years later, Pierre Boucheron, an editor for the journal *Radio News*, praised boys – and Scouts in particular – as instrumental to the spread of the medium: "It stands thoroughly proved that the American boy is father to the radio man" ("Advances in Radio Art…" 1924).

In 1921, Scout troops in a handful of cities went so far as to establish their own experimental radio stations (Fig. 1). These operations were quite literally on the cutting edge of the boom, as national interest in broadcasting would not reach full steam until the spring of 1922. San Diego, in particular, was a hub of activity and had several Scout stations in 1921; no other city boasted more than one (Bureau of Navigation, 1921). British Boy Scouts, meanwhile, were also involved with the beginnings of radio broadcasting in their country. Briggs (1961) detailed a speech from the Prince of Wales in 1922 that was broadcast for the benefit of Boy Scouts across England (pp.76-77). The first instance of a member of the royal family speaking on the radio, it was "regarded as an unqualified success" (p. 77).

The number of radio stations across the U.S. began to increase, slowly at first, then reached full-fledged boom status in 1922 when dozens of new stations appeared each month (Barnouw, 1966, p. 91). Despite the technology's twenty-year gestation, newspapers and magazines treated the phenomenon as an overnight sensation. In the spring of 1922, the *New York Times* wrote that broadcasting had become "the most popular amusement in America," and further noted "if every boy does not possess a receiving outfit, it is because he lacks either imagination or money" ("Radio Telephoning," 1922). For proponents of broadcasting, the new medium offered

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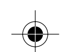

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countless benefits; it could ease the loneliness of rural life, disseminate political messages, teach English to immigrants, and bring the benefits of high culture to all segments of society (Wurtzler, 2007).

Crystal receiving sets were the most common kind in 1920, though they could not receive distant signals. Within a few years, the industry began to produce more reliable, pre-made receivers, and in 1923, superheterodyne tube receivers allowed for greatly improved reception (Sterling and Kittross, p. 90). These improvements expanded the size of the listening audience, and radio began to lose its mystique as a male-oriented hobby. More and more people were drawn into the audience, and the industry actively courted women with decorative receivers that would not seem out of place in the parlor, along with daytime programs devoted to stereotypically feminine pursuits (Hilmes, 1997; Smulyan, 1993).

The Boy Scouts' expertise in building radio receivers was widely acknowledged and exploited by radio retailers as they sought to promote the new technology. When Bamberger's department store established its own station, WOR, in February of 1922, the store sponsored a "radio construction" contest for New Jersey residents. Along with such categories as "smallest working set," the contest had separate categories for "best set made by a Boy Scout" and "bet set built by a Scout Troop" (Wiesenberger, 1922, pp. 15-16). Presumably, Bamberger's deemed Scouts so accomplished that it would have been unsportsmanlike to lump them with the run-of-the-mill amateurs. A few months later, the Gimbel's store in Philadelphia also launched a station, WIP, and sponsored a construction contest with an identical list of categories (Gimbels ad, 1922). As further evidence of the Scouts' involvement with Gimbel's radio department, a local troop escorted the mayor through the store and to a glass-enclosed studio as part of WIP's opening day festivities ("Mayor Employs Radio…," 1922). (See Fig. 3.)

In the early 1920s, radio was perceived to be a seasonal activity, with the winter holidays representing the busiest period for radio sales. As one method to combat the "summer slump" in the trade, retailers were advised to take advantage of the Boy Scouts' year-round interest in the technology. The *Dry Goods Economist*, for example, suggested selling portable receivers for campers (Sinsheimer, 1925). Accompanying the article was a photograph of two young Scouts with a large receiver next to a tent. The caption read:

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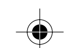

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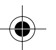
> Boy Scouts are very much interested in radio receiving sets, and while the individual Scouts may be unable to afford more than the parts or kits for a portable [receiver], the expensive "portable" may be sold to the company or troop.

Just as this journal suggested, Scouts were indeed fond of using radio while at summer camp (Fig. 2); in 1923, *Radio Broadcast* wrote, "in Boy Scout camps, the use of radio and the interest in it are practically universal" (Jessup, 1923). In addition to the technology's ability to send potential rescue messages or coordinate movements in the field, as was the case in the 1912 short story, broadcasting was now used to bring sports scores, music, and other entertainment to campers. And, along with other traditional camp activities, building a radio receiver was part of the standard Scout training. This experience was beneficial as it imparted "an intimate knowledge of woodworking, soldering and the use of various tools" (Lynch, 1923, pp. 253-254). This useful knowledge, however, was gender-specific. According to one author, camps for boys were more apt to have radio because "boys, of course, are more technically minded than girls" (Jessup, 1923, p. 104). Some girls' camps did have radios, though they "regarded [it] almost exclusively as means of entertainment" (p. 104).



A 1923 article in *Radio Broadcast* outlined another way in which Scouts could promote radio (Lynch, 1923). According to this recommendation, Scouts could install radio receivers in local hospitals. Specific mention was made of helping veterans' hospitals, since these patients "are quite familiar with radio receiving equipment and would be able to install and operate outfits if they had them" (p. 253). To this specific end, the writer suggested that Scouts collect the now out-dated crystal receivers that many listeners had put aside in favor of newer tube receivers.

As the decade progressed and broadcasting become a mainstream activity, building your own receiver became less common; building your own transmitter even less so. Instructions on how to build a transmitter were dropped from the BSA Handbook in 1924; instructions on building a receiver were removed three years later (Snowden, 2008). These changes in the Handbook are a concise indication of the way in which wireless changed from a reciprocal, two-way form of communication to a unidirectional model. Scholars who have studied the change in radio design have also identified 1927-28 as the period in which receivers became easier to

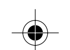
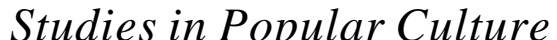


Figure 1: Courtesy of the Library of American Broadcasting



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All Boy Scouts, Attention!

RADIO BROADCAST announces a contest, starting now and ending July 31, 1923, to determine WHAT BOY SCOUT TROOP HAS DONE OR IS DOING THE MOST WITH RADIO.

Prizes for Winning Articles

FIRST PRIZE: CROSLEY MODEL X 4-TUBE RECEIVER.

This receiver, which may be used with dry-cell tubes if desired, consists of detector, one stage of tuned radio-frequency and two stages of audio-frequency amplification. (Advertised in RADIO BROADCAST*).*

SECOND PRIZE: MUSIC MASTER LOUD SPEAKER.

This is the new loud speaker made by the General Radio Corporation. (A picture and description of it appear in the advertising pages of RADIO BROADCAST*).*

THIRD PRIZE: THREE WD-11 VACUUM TUBES.

The WD-11 is the well-known dry-cell tube manufactured for the Radio Corporation. (Filament voltage 1.5, plate voltage 22½—45).

A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION TO "RADIO BROADCAST" will be given as prizes for the ten next best contributions in this contest.

These prizes will be awarded to troops, not to individuals, although any troop may delegate one of its members to prepare the story.

BE PREPARED

Rules of the Contest

1. *Articles must be true accounts of radio with relation to your particular troop: what you have done, or are doing, or both.*
2. *Every article must be written by a Scout or by more than one Scout belonging to one troop.*
3. *Articles should be between 500 and 1000 words long.*
4. *Good photographs to illustrate the article will count 50% in judging contributions.*
5. *Typewritten manuscript, double-spaced, is desired, though not required.*
6. *Address contributions to Scout Contest, Radio Broadcast, Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, N.Y.*

Scouts have done splendid work in maintaining communication by radio in time of floods and disaster, in copying and spreading the market reports transmitted by the government Farm Bureaus, in training themselves along mechanical and electrical lines, and, in short, in using radio as a part of scout work in a way consistent with the best traditions of scouting. What have you to tell of your troop's past or present activities? Get your scribes and photographers under way with that story which will put in a strong bid for first prize. How would a receiver with three stages of amplification go in your troop?

Beginning with the July number of RADIO BROADCAST*, the best articles will be published. The winners will be announced in the September number, and unless the three best articles have been previously published, they will appear in that issue.*

Figure 2: Courtesy of the Library of American Broadcasting

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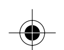

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Figure 3: Courtesy of the Library of American Broadcasting

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operate and more attractive to the eye (Brown & Dennison, 1998; Page, 1960; Volek, 1990).

Even after the BSA Handbook had dropped instructions on building a radio receiver, it continued to include instructions on Morse code. These instructions would persist until 1998, though building a receiver was no longer an obligatory Scout skill by the end of the 1920s. In a related development, *Boys' Life*, the official magazine of the BSA, stopped covering radio by the mid-1930s; information related to this hobby had been a regular feature of the magazine in the previous decade (Trussel, 2009). In his study of technological fiction, Molson similarly found that by the mid-1930s, the genre of radio fiction had disappeared (1999, p. 13).

As a contemporary post-script, it must be noted that the BSA continues to teach young boys about radio, often working with the ARRL to do so, and one can still earn a Radio Merit Badge (though knowledge of Morse code has been dropped from the requirements). In 1999, *Scouting* magazine wondered why anyone would still be excited about radio in the "instant-access world of the Internet," though adult Scout-radio enthusiasts have kept the tradition alive to this day (DaGroomes, 1999). Amateur radio has repeatedly proved its value during natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, when downed power lines or cell phone towers make other forms of communication impossible. For this reason alone, it is unlikely that the BSA will ever give up its radio activities entirely. The undeniable focal point for Scout-radio is the annual "Jamboree on the Air" (JOTA), a two-day event in which thousands of youngsters across the globe attempt to contact one another via radio. Discussions take place on one of several "World Scout frequencies," with a number of official Scout amateur stations particularly active during the event, including K2BSA, the official BSA station located in Dallas, and HB96, located in the Swiss headquarters of the World Scout Bureau.

Conclusion

This examination of the Boy Scouts supplements the previous scholarship regarding the significance of amateur operators during the beginnings of broadcasting. Not only did these amateurs comprise the first audiences for pioneering radio stations, but they also possessed the requisite

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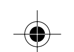

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knowledge to work at some of these same outlets. As early adopters of wireless, Scouts played an important role in popularizing and diffusing the technology to a broader spectrum of the population.

The popularity of radio fiction during the early 20th century, which sought to exploit the interest that young boys had in wireless, can be seen as an example of life imitating art. Radio fiction did not simply reflect the current state of the technology, but were in fact offered up fantastic visions of what might be possible in the future and encouraged readers to learn more about the technology. In the years since radio fiction ceased to be a popular genre, the technology has indeed been applied to many uses that Marconi and his cohorts did not foresee.

This research additionally complements the prior work on the gendered nature of early radio. The conventional wisdom of the 1920s was that men (and boys in particular) were technically adept, while women were unable to comprehend the technical intricacies of radio. The Girl Scouts of America, for example, a group formed shortly after the creation of the BSA, did not offer its members instructions about wireless in the 1920s. This fact itself is not surprising, though over the following several decades, when mainstream notions of acceptable gender roles have changed dramatically, this particular area of instruction has not changed. In 2009, the Boy Scouts of America continues to offer a Radio Merit Badge, while no similar award exists for the Girl Scouts.

Regarding the transition from the two-way, participatory nature of early wireless to the one-way model of radio communication that flourished in the 1920s, it would be simplistic to characterize this transition as a tale of utopian potential thwarted by commercial interests. The amateur operators were indeed instrumental for the beginnings of broadcasting, though equally, if not more, significant was the influence of the military. The Boy Scouts, with their conceptual and literal connections to the military, bridge the amateur-military divide more than any other group. Other players in the social construction process that must be acknowledged were those businesses and corporations who wanted to derive profits from this new communications technology. Using department stores and their radio promotions as just one example, these commercial interests did not seek to ignore the amateur radio operators, but rather worked with them in order to promote the new medium. In this regard, the Boy Scouts were an organized, hierarchical

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group that could be called upon to display their home-made radio receivers or to help celebrate the inauguration of a new radio station.

In relation to emerging media technologies of the present, the evidence presented here suggests that producers or creators of some new form of communication are not solely responsible for its diffusion, though they nonetheless play a vital role in the process. Users may innovate some new use for the technology (such as what amateurs did with broadcasting), but it is only when this new use has been commercialized or otherwise promoted by some organized interest group that it spreads to the larger public. At the time of this writing, the "user-generated" content explosion that is Web 2.0 is attracting considerable press attention. The extent to which these various new applications, innovations, and technologies will be successful, though, depends upon which of them are embraced and adopted by established commercial interests.

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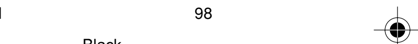

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Ron Briley

The Legend of Sacco and Vanzetti:Keeping the Story Alive in Literature, Song, and Film

On 15 April 1920 the robbery of a shoe factory payroll in South Braintree, Massachusetts resulted in the murders of paymaster Frederick A. Parmenter and security guard Alessandro Berardelli. The authorities charged Italian immigrants Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti with the crime. Although the two men proclaimed their innocence, Sacco and Vanzetti were convicted and executed by the state of Massachusetts on 23 August 1927. Much of the case focused upon the anarchist and antiwar beliefs of the two defendants, illustrated by presiding Judge Webster Thayer's reported comment that he was going "to fry those anarchist bastards." The evidence against Sacco and Vanzetti was flimsy at best, and many observers of the trial perceived the convictions as evidence of prejudice against anarchists and the "new immigrants" from Southern and Eastern Europe during the post World War I Red Scare. Appeals from intellectuals in the United States and around the world, as well as global protests by workers, failed to halt the executions.[1]

However, in 1977 on the fiftieth anniversary of their deaths, Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, citing the prejudicial atmosphere in which the trial was conducted, signed legislation exonerating Sacco and Vanzetti. In proclaiming 23 August 1977 as Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti Memorial Day, Dukakis stated, "Any stigma and disgrace should be forever removed from the names of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti,

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from the names of their families and descendants, and so, from the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and I hereby call upon all the people of Massachusetts to pause in their daily endeavors to reflect upon these tragic events, and draw from their historic lessons the resolve to prevent the forces of intolerance, fear, and hatred from ever again uniting to overcome the rationality, wisdom, and fairness to which our legal system aspires."[2]

The issues of equal justice before the law pointed out by Dukakis explain why the case of Sacco and Vanzetti continues to resonate in American culture. The saga of Sacco and Vanzetti is kept alive in the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay and William Carlos Williams; Ben Shahn's painting *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*; Sherwood Anderson's play *Winterset*; and the music of Joan Baez, Irish folksinger Christy Moore, ska band Against All Authority, and classical composer Anton Coppola.[3] Nevertheless, the case remains on the fringes of mainstream popular culture. Perhaps this is due to the association of Sacco and Vanzetti with terrorism and the anarchist propaganda of the deed which would raise the consciousness of the masses and foment revolution. In his study into the anarchist backgrounds of Sacco and Vanzetti, Paul Avrich documents that the two men were followers of the Italian anarchist Luigi Galleani, who was suspected by the American government of involvement in the bombing of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's home. Galleani was deported in June 1919. Meanwhile, Galleanist Andrea Salcedo died in May 1920 while in the custody of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While asserting that he finds it impossible to establish the innocence or guilt of Sacco and Vanzetti for the South Braintree murders, Avrich concludes, "Both men, it must be emphasized, were social militants, advocates of relentless warfare against government and capital. Far from being the innocent dreamers so often depicted by their supporters, they belonged to a branch of the anarchist movement which preached insurrectionary violence and armed retaliation, including the use of dynamite and assassination."[4]

This is the historical context in which the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti was conducted, and this guilt by association continues to exert considerable influence. But not all scholars concur with the portrait painted by Avrich. Howard Zinn, author of the best-selling *A People's History of the United States*, offers a more positive take on the politics of Sacco and Vanzetti in his introduction to the 1978 reprinting of Upton Sinclair's 1928 novel *Bos-*

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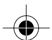


ton: A Documentary Novel of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, insisting, "They believed, as anarchists generally do, that the resources of the earth should be distributed fairly equally among all people; that decisions should be made collectively in small groups in touch with one another; that such a system of equality in wealth and political power would make crime, punishment, and prisons unnecessary."[5] But in order to implement this vision, a class struggle would be necessary, culminating in a general strike by the working class and overthrow of the capitalists. Thus, Sacco and Vanzetti were a threat to the political establishment which had a motive to prosecute the Italian anarchists. Zinn concludes, however, that the state was never able to provide a motive for Sacco and Vanzetti to engage in the Braintree robbery, as the stolen payroll was never recovered.

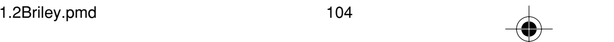
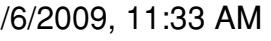
There is, nevertheless, a reluctance to embrace Sacco and Vanzetti as the xenophobia and anti-radicalism of American culture retain a strong hold upon the popular imagination. Thus, keeping the story of Sacco and Vanzetti alive has fallen upon the more marginalized elements of popular culture on the political left, who recognize that the saga of the two Italian immigrants reminds us of the dangers inherent in limiting freedom of expression and curtailing civil liberties. This paper will focus upon two major manifestations of this progressive political tradition in American public culture, in addition to more recent related film representations from Giuliano Montaldo, Hal Ashby, and Peter Miller. The first examined major source will be the Socialist writer Upton Sinclair's novel *Boston*, originally published in 1928, the year after the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti. The second major work came later. When the United States faced another wave of political persecution after the Second World War, folksinger Woody Guthrie wrote and recorded *Ballads of Sacco & Vanzetti*, connecting the Italian-born anarchists to the struggles of working-class Americans. Although Guthrie wrote and recorded these songs in 1946-1947, record producer Moses Asch did not release the music until 1960 when the political winds of change seemed more receptive to them.

In addition to being men of the left, both Sinclair and Guthrie were going through some personal issues regarding their political convictions. As a member of the Socialist Party, Sinclair had broken with Eugene Debs and many of his comrades in supporting Woodrow Wilson's entrance into the First World War. Following his disillusionment regarding the Versailles Treaty

and post-war repression of dissent and radicalism, Sinclair had second thoughts regarding his support of the Wilsonian crusade. In advocating the innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti, Sinclair could restore his more radical credentials. Yet, as his novel indicates, Sinclair often struggled with the case and expressed some reservations regarding the assumption on the political left that the Italian anarchists were not involved with the South Braintree robbery and shooting. The author, nevertheless, concluded that the defendants were certainly the subject of class and ethnic prejudice in the post World War I atmosphere of xenophobia and antiradicalism gripping the United States.

Guthrie was undergoing a similar process of disillusionment following the Second World War. The folksinger embraced the global conflict as a crusade against fascism which would usher in a better world. In addition to destroying militarism in Japan and Nazism in Germany, Guthrie assumed that the struggle against fascism would end Jim Crow and assure a more egalitarian America. Guthrie moved around New York City with the slogan "This Machine Kills Fascists" engraved on his guitar and joined the Merchant Marine. But the post-war utopia he envisioned failed to materialize. The anticommunist crusade of the Cold War labeled reformers, civil rights advocates, and labor activists as potential communist fronts undermining the American way of life. Dissent was muted in an atmosphere of fear. Meanwhile, Guthrie's marriage deteriorated and his young daughter perished in a fire. Beginning to feel the effects of a hereditary disease that would stifle his voice by the late 1950s, Guthrie struggled to regain his political equilibrium. He believed that the Sacco and Vanzetti project would restore him to the radical tradition of protest in America which linked the persecution that vested economic interests inflicted upon Italian immigrants and Oklahoma migrants. Guthrie and Sinclair perceived the story of Sacco and Vanzetti as essential to understanding the post-war efforts of American capital to assure its political and economic dominance by associating voices of dissent with acts of murder and terrorism. In the current post 9/11 political climate of fear and anxiety, perhaps it is time to once again resurrect Sacco and Vanzetti—as well as the works of Guthrie and Sinclair.

When Upton Sinclair published *Boston* in 1928, the novelist's reputation for political activism was already well established. He joined the Socialist Party in 1902 and wrote for the Socialist weekly *Appeal to Rea-*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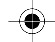
son. After observing the horrid working conditions of Chicago slaughterhouses, Sinclair produced *The Jungle* (1905), earning political acclaim and financial success. In *The Jungle*, Sinclair was aiming for the hearts of Americans and hoped to advance the cause of socialism. Instead, he hit his fellow citizens in their stomachs. *The Jungle* did not usher in the socialist millennium, but it did contribute to such progressive reforms as the Pure Food and Drug Act and the Meat Inspection Act.

Sinclair's novels following *The Jungle* continued to raise themes of class and politics. *The Industrial Republic* (1907) envisioned America's conversion to socialism under the direction of William Randolph Hearst, while *The Moneychangers* (1905) exposed a financier based upon J. P. Morgan. Sinclair picketed the New York City offices of John D. Rockefeller, whom he blamed for the bloody suppression of the Ludlow, Colorado coal strike in 1914 and denounced in the muckraking novel *King Coal* (1914). The novelist, however, broke with the Socialist Party over American intervention in the First World War. While initially supporting the war effort, Sinclair was critical of President Woodrow Wilson's record on civil liberties and opposition to the Russian Revolution. During the 1920s the prolific Sinclair published seventeen books. In his so-called "Dead Hand" series, Sinclair produced a half-dozen nonfiction polemical works depicting how capitalism was undermining American democracy. The author also continued to address political and social issues in his fiction. *Oil!* (1927) focused upon the California petroleum industry and the Teapot Dome scandal, while in *Boston* he turned his attention to the Sacco and Vanzetti case.[6]



In his preface to *Boston*, Sinclair explains that he was attempting to write a "contemporary historical novel" with both historical and fictional characters. For his novel, Sinclair carefully read the trial record and interviewed key participants in the case, including defense attorneys Lee Swanson and Fred Moore as well as defendant Bartolomeo Vanzetti. While clearly sympathetic to the cause of the working class and Sacco-Vanzetti, Sinclair does introduce a degree of ambiguity into his book, writing, "I wish to make it clear that I have not written a brief for the Sacco-Vanzetti defense. I have tried to be a historian. . . . My book will not satisfy either side completely; both have expressed dissent—which I take to mean that I have done my job."[7] As a socialist, Sinclair was clearly uncomfortable with elements of anarchism which he perceived as advocating violence.

The plot for *Boston* is somewhat contrived, and Sinclair was not a great stylist. The novel of over 700 pages could have used some editing. Nevertheless, one can learn a great deal about the Sacco-Vanzetti case through reading this massive volume. The protagonists of *Boston* are sixty-year old Cornelia Thornwell and her college-aged granddaughter, Betty Alvin. They are members of the wealthy and prestigious Thornwell family, but the two women turn their backs on their social class to embrace the cause of working class immigrants. This dialectic is at the heart of Sinclair's novel.

Boston begins with the death of Cornelia's husband, former Massachusetts Governor Josiah Thornwell. Tired of always keeping quiet and doing as she was told, Cornelia decides to abandon the family banking fortune along with the overbearing families of her three daughters. The runaway grandmother ends up in North Plymouth, where she boards with an Italian family and becomes good friends with the gentle and philosophical Bartolomeo Vanzetti. To support herself, Cornelia finds employment in a cordage plant. Although the work is difficult, the elderly woman finds comfort in the simplicity of the Brini family and Vanzetti, but she does come to realize that her social class is living off the labor of these Italian immigrant workers.

Cornelia is eventually discovered by her family, who are appalled by her actions. They convince the eccentric lady to give up her job, but she refuses to reassume her life of affluence. Cornelia takes an apartment in working-class Boston, where she is joined by her bohemian granddaughter, Betty. The two women take a European vacation, and Betty is caught up in the euphoria of the Russian Revolution, becoming a communist and taking up with a divorced journalist whom she eventually marries. Meanwhile, their friend Vanzetti has been arrested along with his colleague Sacco.

Cornelia and Betty return to New England, where, to the shock of the respectable Thornwell family, they assume an active role in the Sacco-Vanzetti defense committee. When denounced as a class traitor for deserting her Boston Brahmin roots, Cornelia reminds her detractors of the Boston dissenting tradition going back to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, William Lloyd Garrison, and Wendell Phillips. It is the hypocrisy of the ruling class which incites the wrath of Sinclair, who perceives the Sacco-Vanzetti trial as an effort to stifle working-class discontent. Sinclair writes, "It was the aim of the prosecution, not so much to refute the testi-

mony of Vanzetti, as to rouse the prejudice of the jurors against him; to fill them with emotions of hatred and fear, so that they would be incapable of thinking; to make them see an anarchist infidel draft dodger as a depraved wretch, deserving to die many deaths."[8]

The key point of conflict comes when defense attorney Lee Swanson asks Cornelia to take the witness stand and provide a fictitious alibi for her friend Vanzetti. Swanson explains that Vanzetti will be acquitted as no one in Boston will dare challenge the veracity of a Thornwell and member of her social class. But Cornelia cannot bring herself to lie, even to save her beloved Vanzetti. Yet, she knows that other members of her family and social class are willing to lie under oath to protect their economic interests. When bankrupt businessman Jerry Walker sues the family banking business for fraud, the Thornwells have no problem with committing perjury. As Cornelia observes, "There were fifteen millions of dollars at stake; and the driving power of this sum was so colossal that it swept every barrier before it, and truth, honor, dignity, justice, law, country, God and religion went out like the contents of a chicken-ranch when a dam bursts at the head of a valley."[9]

Without Cornelia's testimony, Sacco and Vanzetti are convicted. But Cornelia continues to believe in the system and pushes for an independent commission under the leadership of the legendary Harvard University President A. Lawrence Lowell to investigate allegations of prejudice in the trial. Lowell and his commission uphold the verdict and discount the confession of Celestino Madeiros that he and the Morelli gang in Providence were responsible for the South Braintree robbery and shootings. Betty describes her grandmother as naive. After all, Lowell was a mill owner and only protecting the investments of his class.

The novel concludes with the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti, but not until Cornelia has a final visit with her old friend Vanzetti (The novel tends to focus upon Vanzetti while Sacco remains in the background.). Cornelia is distraught with the executions, but the younger generation embraces the anarchists as martyrs. Betty exclaims to her grandmother:

> Don't you see the glory of this case—it kills off the liberals! Before this, it was possible to argue that injustice was an accident, just an oversight—in a country that was so busy making automobiles and bathtubs and books of etiquette! But now here's a test—we settle the question forever! We take our

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> very best—not merely cheap politicians, but our great ones! Our biggest business man! Our most cultured university president! Our supreme court judges—even the liberal ones! We prove them all alike—they all know what flag they fight under, who serves out their rations! They all take their places in the ranks, with every button in position, and all them washed behind the ears! They all obey the great capitalist drill sergeant, and not a man deserts to the enemy—not one single man![10]

Sinclair concluded his lengthy novel by stating, "To a hundred million groping, and ten times as many still in slumber, the names of Sacco and Vanzetti would be the eternal symbols of a dream, identical with civilization itself, of a human society in which wealth belongs to the laborers."[11]

However, some doubt has been expressed recently that Sinclair was less than honest in his presentation of the case. A letter dated 15 September 1929 from Sinclair to his attorney friend John Beardsley, and uncovered by a California rare book dealer, states that Sacco-Vanzetti defense attorney Fred Moore told the novelist that the two anarchists were guilty of the robbery and murders. To some the letter appeared to be evidence that Sinclair was guilty of the same hypocrisy as the upper class villains of *Boston*. In a piece for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Sinclair biographer Kevin Mattson suggests that critics of the novelist take a closer look at the Beardsley letter as well as the text of Sinclair's *Boston*. Mattson points out that later in his correspondence with Beardsley; Sinclair expresses reservations regarding the veracity of Moore, noting the attorney's bitter split with the defense committee as well as Moore's confession that Sacco and Vanzetti had never admitted their guilt to the attorney. Mattson goes on to observe that in *Boston*, Sinclair does express ambiguity regarding the innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti, especially Sacco whom the novelist did not know particularly well. In fact, an essential plot device in the novel is the effort by the defense attorneys to elicit perjury from Cornelia Thornwell. In the final analysis, Sinclair maintained his suspicions of anarchism, but he was convinced that Sacco and Vanzetti had not received a fair trial. He also believed that revolutionaries and the working class were driven to violence by the oppression of the ruling class.[12]

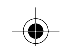
Similar opinions regarding class warfare were expressed by Woody Guthrie in his series of songs on Sacco and Vanzetti recorded in the post World War II years of 1946-1947. Guthrie was born on 14 July 1912 in

Okemah, Oklahoma. His perception of humanity and political ideas were grounded in an agrarian tradition of protest in Oklahoma, where a strong Socialist Party operated before the First World War; a Christian tradition that Jesus was the champion of the poor and meek who would inherit the earth and drive the moneychangers out of the temple; a tragic family history; and the experience of his generation with the Depression and dust bowl of the 1930s.

Guthrie's father Charlie was an entrepreneur whose real estate schemes were unsuccessful. The family was then beset by a series of financial and personal disasters. Guthrie's mother Nora was institutionalized, suffering from Huntington's chorea, a degenerative disease of the central nervous system which eventually claimed her son.

Guthrie's father moved the family to Pampa, Texas in 1927, and Guthrie joined them three years later. Guthrie married and attempted to support a young family on his meager earnings as a musician and sign painter. In 1936, Guthrie, like many dust bowl refugees, journeyed to California, where he found work on Los Angeles radio station KFVD, teaming with Maxine Crossman for the popular show "Here Comes Woody and Lefty Lou." While working at KFVD, Guthrie began to perform at Communist Party functions and wrote a column called "Woody Sez" for *The People's Daily World*, denouncing the profit system and injustice of Depression-era America.

Guthrie's politics were becoming too radical for the progressive Fred Burke, who owned KFVD, and Guthrie departed for New York City in 1939. In February 1940, Guthrie wrote "This Land Is Your Land" in response to what he considered the shallow patriotism of Irving Berlin's "God Bless America." After performing at a concert to benefit John Steinbeck's Committee for Agricultural Workers, Guthrie was discovered by folklorist Alan Lomax, who helped Guthrie record his first commercial effort, "Dust Bowl Ballads." The Oklahoman also hosted two radio shows for CBS, but when sponsors pressured Guthrie to abandon his "Woody Sez" column for the communist *Daily Worker*, Guthrie left New York City and secured employment with the Bonneville Power Administration. Inspired by the potential for public power, Guthrie penned such classic songs as "Roll On, Columbia" and "Pastures of Plenty."



In 1941, Guthrie accepted an invitation from Pete Seeger to return to New York City and join the Almanac Singers, who supported the organizing efforts of the CIO and opposed American entrance into the Second World War. However, Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would make Guthrie a supporter of the war effort. In 1943, Guthrie wrote his autobiography *Bound for Glory*, extolling the virtues of the common people and Guthrie's early struggles. During World War II, Guthrie served in the Merchant Marine with his singing partner Cisco Houston. Near the war's conclusion, Guthrie was drafted into the Army for a year's service, but the discipline of military life did not sit well with him.[13]

The immediate post war years were difficult ones for Guthrie as the emerging Cold War and anticommunist reaction dimmed his vision for a better world that would emerge from the sacrifices of a global struggle against fascism during the Second World War. And perhaps the folksinger held out too much promise for the post-war world, as is revealed in his voluminous journals and correspondence with Marjorie Greenblatt Mazia, who would become his second wife in 1945. Writing to Marjorie, with whom Woody was expecting a child, the folksinger made clear his hopes for the future, writing:

> It makes me glad when I think that this is the war that's going to give not only Jews, but Irish, Negro, Catholic, Protestant, Italians, Mexicans, Hindus, Indians, everybody of every race and color, an equal place to work and live equal, under the sun. This is the war the world has been waiting on for twenty five million years. This will settle the score once and for all, of all kinds of race-hate, and it will give everybody their job doing what they do best; time for learning, time for rest, and time for fun and singing; nobody can push a man off his farm, and nobody can make a family live like rats in a filthy dump; nobody can toss a family of kids out into the streets for the rent. Singers will sing! Dancers will dance! Writers write! Planter will plant and reapers will reap! Boy, ain't that something to think about, huh?[14]

In a similar vein, Guthrie prepared a notebook for the birth of his and Marjorie's child, whom Woody insisted upon calling Railroad Pete, although the singer asserted that he would be equally happy with a female child. Guthrie wrote to Railroad Pete, "A girl can do just as much in any field as a boy, to beat fascism—although I'm hoping this is one monster that your

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eyes won't have to see. . . ." Guthrie told Railroad Pete to envision the world through the eyes of his mother, who was a dancer with the Martha Graham Dance Company. His admiration for his future wife was most evident in the vision he shared with Pete, "My particular dream is to see her plans of dancing reach the most people in the best way . . . and to show the real joy and fun of being a human being in the first place, and do you know that this is a thing which so many people lose sight of too early in life? The work is the dance and the joy is the doing it. The job is the fun of being here."[15]

As it turns out, Railroad Pete was a girl. Cathy Ann Guthrie was born 6 February 1943, and Woody was delighted with a girl just as he promised. His pet name for Cathy was "Stackabones," and he composed numerous children's songs in her honor, maintaining that the future belonged to the children who should not be controlled and coerced by their elders. But with the exception of Cathy, Guthrie was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the post war world. The struggle against fascism did not eradicate imperialism, war, exploitation, the profit system, and Jim Crow. The union millennium idea of equality with all workers finding fulfillment and happiness in the fruits of their labors was not materializing. In addition, Guthrie's marriage was entering a troubled time. The singer found it difficult settling into married life. In theory, he could wax eloquent about Marjorie's commitment to dance, but in reality he felt neglected and increasingly sought sexual liaisons with other women. He also wrote passionate and graphic love letters to various women. Mary Ruth Crissman, the younger sister of his former singing partner Maxine, pressed charges against Guthrie, and he served a short jail term. Guthrie did not believe that he was doing anything wrong, proclaiming, "No human here among us has got any right to walk up to any other human and tell you what to do, and when to do it." In fact, Guthrie biographer Joe Klein believes that the singer "inferred that his legal troubles were of a piece with the HUAC hearings, the blacklist, and the other attempts to limit free expression. He saw himself as yet another victim of right-wing fanaticism. . . ."[16] But Guthrie took solace in his devotion to daughter Cathy. His world, however, came crashing down upon him when Cathy perished in a tragic apartment fire three days after her fourth birthday.

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It is in this tragic period that Guthrie received his commission from Moses Asch at Disc Records to compose and record a collection of songs on the legacy of Sacco and Vanzetti. Asch appreciated the Guthrie children's songs, but the record producer hoped to move the composer in the more political direction of his *Dust Bowl Ballads* and the *Struggle* album of labor and protest songs. Guthrie was certainly taking this assignment seriously, dedicating a notebook entry to the martyred anarchists. Observing that this was the first entry in the book, Guthrie pledged, "I have read the pamphlets about you and my mind is not a blank. I will prove this to you by filling this book with your story, the case, and your frame up." Guthrie promised Sacco and Vanzetti, "I am going to write your history all over again, because the history of you two men is the pure and perfect reflection of the battle of the whole movement of Labor." Recognizing that with his rural origins in Oklahoma and Texas, some might find Guthrie an odd choice to write the story of two Italian anarchists residing on the East Coast, Guthrie sought to build a union bridge between Oklahoma and Italy. Guthrie wrote, "You are Italian and I am from Oklahoma, but I have left out from Oklahoma to do some bigger jobs, just like you left your native house and home back in Italy." Guthrie perceived his migrants from Oklahoma as similar to the immigrants from Italy who were forced to leave their homes and seek a new promised land. Guthrie concluded, "I saw the same vision that you did and all of us dust bowl families saw your same vision. It is the one big union we all saw. It shines just as bright over your Italy as over the prairies and the flatlands of my dust bowl." As Peter La Chapelle suggests in his account of the "Okie" migration to Southern California, Guthrie's genius was to use the concept of refugee to "form a symbolic alliance" between migrants from the Southern Plains and immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe.[17]

While Guthrie considered the Sacco and Vanzetti songs as his most important writing since he left the Army in December 1945, he struggled with the project just as he was encountering problems in his personal life and perhaps early signs of the Huntington's chorea that would institutionalize him by the mid 1950s. On 4 November 1946, Guthrie wrote Moses Asch, reluctantly informing the music publisher that it would be necessary to postpone the Sacco and Vanzetti record, stating that he felt rushed. Perhaps when he was able to afford a car of his own he would be in a better

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position to investigate Boston and Massachusetts, rather than being dependent upon public transportation. Calling the Sacco and Vanzetti material the "most important songs I have worked on," Guthrie explained to Asch, "I've read all the booklets and pamphlets over not once but lots of times. I am very familiar with the case down on paper. I've made several drawings of all sorts based on the trial, but I just can't make up these songs till I've set my foot on every spot related to this Sacco & Vanzetti story and case. I won't let this be one of those hit or miss affairs. I just can't. I wouldn't for no kind of money."[18]

Although Guthrie was disappointed with his effort, he did record eleven songs which Asch released in 1960 along with "Sacco's Letter to His Son," in which Pete Seeger put the words of Sacco to music. The *Ballads of Sacco & Vanzetti* was re-released in 1996 by Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings. Guthrie biographers tend to dismiss the Sacco-Vanzetti recordings. Wayne Hampton simply states, "The *Ballads of Sacco & Vanzetti* are merely a few weak, unenthusiastic, and unconvincing songs with which to remember the martyrs." Ed Cray and Joe Klein conclude that *Sacco & Vanzetti* was ultimately a failure because the songs were too lengthy and polemical as Guthrie was growing increasingly frustrated with the political direction America was taking in the early Cold War years.[19]

However, a closer reading of the Guthrie lyrics and music suggests that the folksinger had not totally lost his ability to communicate the endeavors of working class people. In "The Flood and the Storm," Guthrie places the story of Sacco and Vanzetti within the broader historical context of the post World War I Red Scare and fears by the ruling class that the spirit of the Russian Revolution might sweep the world. Guthrie concludes this song by noting the global implications of Sacco and Vanzetti as martyrs for the working class:

> The peasants, the farmers, the towns, and the cities,
> The hills and the valleys they did ring
> Hindenburg, Wilson, Harding, Hoover, Coolidge
> Never heard this many verses sing
> The zig-zag lightnings, the rainbow of the thunder,
> The singing of the clouds blowing by,
> The flood and the storm for Sacco and Vanzetti
> Caused the rich man to pull his hair and cry

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This larger historical perspective is less important for "I Just Want to Sing Your Name" and "Two Good Men," as Guthrie extols the Italian immigrants more as workers than symbols. In "Two Good Men," Guthrie wrote:

> Sacco earned his bread and butter
> Being the factory's best shoe cutter;
> Vanzetti spoke both day and night,
> Told the workers how to fight
> Two good men a long time gone[20]

The details of the case as a political conspiracy to frame Sacco and Vanzetti are presented in "Suassos Lane," "You Souls of Boson," and "Red Wine." The folksinger's background research on the case is evident in his familiarity with discrepancies in the testimony of prosecution witnesses, ballistic tests of weapons, confessions regarding the Morelli gang, and the supporting evidence for the alibis of Sacco and Vanzetti on the day of the South Braintree murders and robbery. Guthrie's contempt for Judge Webster Thayer is apparent in "Old Judge Thayer," which employs a folk technique of having animals represent humans. The animals conclude that Thayer is a threat to all innocent life.

The more articulate of the two defendants, Vanzetti, who demonstrated some mastery of the English language, is the subject of two songs, "Vanzetti's Rock" and Vanzetti's Letter," based upon the anarchist's appeal to Massachusetts Governor Alvan Fuller. While denouncing Thayer and the manipulation of evidence in support of the state, Vanzetti refuses to beg, proudly proclaiming:

> Your Excellency, we're not asking pardon, but asking to be set free
> With liberty, and pride, sir, and honor, and a pardon we will not receive;
> A pardon you've given to criminals who've broken the laws of our land;
> We do not ask for pardon, sir, because we are innocent men[21]

The more upbeat tempo tune "Root Hog and Die" seeks to convey the urgency of protesters seeking to reach Boston before the two men are put to death, but the most powerful song in this collection is "We Welcome to Heaven," in which Guthrie again demonstrates his faith that a heavenly award awaits those who fight for social justice in this world. Guthrie concludes:

> If you work for wages, you support the rich capitalist;

If you don't work, you're a lumpen to them;
If you play the gamble, of course, you're a gambler,
And if you don't gamble, you never do win[22]

Guthrie's discontent with capitalism led to the singer's association with the Communist Party, an organization he perceived as at least willing to fight for social equality and combat the profit system. However, the philosophical differences between the communists and anarchists did not appear to be on Guthrie's radar screen. The folksinger continued to espouse the solidarity of the Popular Front in which all those on the political left could march under the banner of union.

Ballads of Saco & Vanzetti demonstrate Guthrie's commitment to working class protest and his concept of union during a troubled time during which he was increasingly angry with the state of the world. In a 1947 journal entry, Guthrie lamented:

> No matter how much my U.S.A. did do, in one hour, or in one year, or in our good two hundred. I hurt and I smile when I say that if we'd not let our crooks mess up so much and if we had not got to be so bad afraid of our cowards, and beat down and killed out so much by our robbers that hate labor unions, we could now be ten times farther on down my good road and feeding and housing and clothing ten times more of us than we are doing this early summery morning of the Twenty Third Day of August of this rough year called 1947. My wheels and my plows and my trucks and my planes and my ships just don't move the way they'd ought to move.[23]

As Guthrie's voice was silenced by disease, and political reform was contained by repression, *Ballads of Sacco & Vanzetti* was forgotten. However, as a new decade dawned and young people were rediscovering folk music in 1960, Asch released the Guthrie songs of Sacco and Vanzetti, keeping the story of the two Italian anarchists alive in an era more conducive to political dissent.

In 1971, American film audiences were also treated to Italian filmmaker Giuliano Montaldo's *Sacco and Vanzetti*. Montaldo's film strongly championed the innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti within the historical context of the post World War I Red Scare oppression, with overtures to the political activism of the 1960s. Montaldo learned his filmmaking techniques under the tutelage of radical director Gillo Pontecorvo, directing the second unit for Pontecorvo's revolutionary masterpiece *The Battle of Algiers* (1966).

Political engagement was less evident in Montaldo's Hollywood features of the late 1960s, the heist movie *Grand Slam* (1966) and the gangster film *Machine Gun McCain* (1969). Montaldo returned to Italy, and political questions were at the core of well received international films such as *Fifth Day of Peace* (1969) and *Sacco and Vanzetti*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and earned a Best Actor Award for Riccardo Cucciolla as Nicola Sacco.[26]

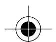
Although the film achieved only limited release in the United States, *Sacco and Vanzetti* generally earned praise from American film critics. Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun Times* described *Sacco and Vanzetti* as one of the best films of 1971. Acknowledging that it is easy for a filmmaker to become bogged down in the details of a courtroom drama, Ebert praises Montaldo for maintaining the audience's focus upon the big picture of "how law can be used as a blunt instrument of politics." Ebert also agreed with the filmmaker's decision to use English for the courtroom scenes and employment of point-of-view shots such as showing Sacco's "arms being strapped into the electric chair as he would have seen them himself." Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* was less enthusiastic than Ebert, but he was generally favorable in his treatment of the picture. Canby asserts that some may discount *Sacco and Vanzetti* as yet another anti-American foreign art film, but the critic concludes that "because the film calls our attention to a terrible chapter in American history, it can't be easily dismissed." Believing Sacco and Vanzetti to be innocent, Canby is disappointed that Montaldo relied more on emotional appeal than an "eloquent plea for the truth." Thus, the film critic has little patience for the film's theme song "The Ballad of Sacco and Vanzetti" by Joan Baez, whom Canby calls "Miss Protest of 1968." Canby goes on to describe the depictions of Judge Webster Thayer (Geoffrey Keen) and prosecutor Frederick Katzmann (Cyril Cusack) as mere evil caricatures, but he finds the portrayals of Cucciolla as Sacco and Gian Maria Volonte as Vanzetti to provide developed and complex "flesh-and-blood characters."[27]

A more complex investigation of the film's politics is presented by Richard Porton's *Film and the Anarchist Imagination*. Porton suggests that by focusing upon the courtroom drama and questions of innocence and guilt, the anarchist politics of Sacco and Vanzetti are obscured by Montaldo's film. Porton credits the Italian filmmaker with depicting the anti-radicalism

of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer as well as the historical context which led to the Red Scare and arrests of Sacco and Vanzetti; however, he argues that the film shrinks from addressing the anarchists' belief in the propaganda of the deed. Porton writes, "This failure of nerve becomes even more pronounced as the film progresses. The contretemps between the two anarchists and Katzmann is followed by footage of demonstrators urging freedom for 'Bart and Nick.' Montaldo, like a barrage of writers with liberal, Marxist, and even anarchist sympathies, is primarily preoccupied with Bart and Nick's presumed innocence, despite the film's unavoidable acknowledgement of their anarchism. *Sacco and Vanzetti's* urge to vindicate its heroes ends up (despite the compensation of Gian Maria Volonte's moving portrayal of Vanzetti) diluting their political convictions."[28]

A similar distorting of political ideology takes place with director Hal Ashby's film tribute to Woody Guthrie, *Bound for Glory* (1976). *Bound for Glory* concludes with the folksinger departing California for the greener pastures of New York City in the early 1940s. As he rides a freight train, Guthrie, portrayed by David Carradine, sings "This Land Is Your Land," which he wrote in February 1940. Under the direction of Ashby and the cinematography of Haskell Wexler, the film's conclusion becomes a bicentennial tribute to the resilient spirit of the American people. Film viewers, however, would certainly not surmise that Guthrie penned his anthem in angry response to the narrow nationalism of Irving Berlin's "God Bless America." As Bryan K. Garman suggests in *A Race of Singers*, the problem with Ashby's film "is that it depicted Guthrie as a romantic individualist." Garman writes, "The most important thing about the filmic Guthrie is not that he fought for social and economic justice but that he celebrated the American landscape and inspired all people to take pride in themselves and their individual accomplishments."[29]

Fortunately a more honest approach to American radicalism and the story of Sacco and Vanzetti, maintained by political artists of the left Upton Sinclair and Woody Guthrie, re-entered the American political arena with Peter Miller's 2007 documentary film *Sacco and Vanzetti*. Miller asserts, "The case clearly has urgent lessons to offer Americans nearly eighty years after its tragic conclusion. As in the 'red scare' of Sacco and Vanzetti's time, present-day Americans have allowed fear and jingoism to erode our civil liberties, scapegoat immigrants, and compromise our judicial



system." Clearly, the filmmaker perceives disturbing parallels between the fate of Sacco and Vanzetti and contemporary issues regarding immigration restriction and limitations placed upon civil liberties in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. To support his contention that the Italian immigrants were persecuted and prosecuted for their ethnicity and political views within a xenophobic atmosphere, Miller employs traditional documentary techniques of archival footage juxtaposed with interviews. In addition to activist scholars such as Howard Zinn, who penned the 1978 introduction to Sinclair's *Boston*, Miller spoke with Sacco's niece, a neighbor of Vanzetti, and the daughter of the security guard who was killed in the Braintree robbery. The impressive prison letters of Sacco and Vanzetti are read by Tony Shalhoub and John Turturro. A nice touch is to conclude the film with Arlo Guthrie performing his father's song "Red Wine" from *Ballads of Sacco & Vanzetti*, which Arlo insists was one of Woody's favorite compositions. Miller's film, which was also recognized by the Erik Barnouw Film Award Committee of the Organization of American Historians, was praised by film critics, who emphasized the contemporary parallels with the Sacco-Vanzetti story. J. Hoberman of the *Village Voice* concluded his positive review, noting, "It scarcely needs be said how much this case has to do with contempt for foreigners, legal injustice, and xenophobic terror."[24]

Nevertheless, the film critics and Miller himself tended to downplay the anarchist views of Sacco and Vanzetti. Paul Avrich is on target when he observes that cultural representations of the trial tend to obscure the political ideas of the Italian anarchists. Still, it is not their political ideology which galvanized global attention in the 1920s and today. Rather, as Lisa McGirr suggests in an article for *The Journal of American History*, "It was the location of the trial in the United States as a world power that above all explains the case's resonance." McGirr emphasizes that Americans and the global community are often frustrated by the gap between the rhetoric of the United Sates as a beacon for liberty and the realities of inequality and injustice in the land of the free and the home of the brave. McGirr concludes her analysis of global protests to the executions of Sacco and Vanzetti by asserting, "Despite the deaf ears of United States officials to the international outcry, its legitimacy was obvious to millions of citizens of the world. A country claiming global influence—partly based on universal values of democracy and freedom—is the rightful subject of interna-

tional criticism when free institutions and democratic values appear to fail. In a world ever more shaped by the United States, that holds true as much today as it did in the 1920s."[25]

It is these universal themes of injustice, inequality, and democracy, and not anarchism per se, which elicited the attention of Upton Sinclair and Woody Guthrie as these two artists of the left struggled with personal issues of political commitment during periods of political reaction. The travails of Sacco and Vanzetti will continue to resonate within popular culture, regardless of the power exercised by bottom line profit motives, as long as people are motivated by the struggle for economic and political democracy and against injustice in the world.

Ron Briley
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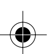

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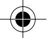

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2008 Whatley Award

In memory of George Whatley, a founder and early president of the Popular Culture Association in the South, the editors and editorial board of *Studies in Popular Culture* annually recognize the article published in *SPC* that in their view best represents the scholarly values Professor Whatley sought for the organization and for the study of popular culture.

The 2008 Whatley Award winner is

Little America: R. E. M., Howard Finster, and the Southern "Outsider Art" Aesthetic

By

Matthew Sutton
The College of William and Mary

Claude J. Smith, Jr.

Tamenicia or Tammy; James or Jim Bob; Bessie or Heather: Patterns and Significance of Choosing Names for American Babies

When Shakespeare wrote: "What's in a name? . . . a rose by any other name would smell as sweet," he recognized that the name given to an object does not change its essence. Human society, however, has complicated the business of naming people. Time and tradition have gone far beyond the old practice of giving the elder son the same name as his father, wherein we ended up with monikers such as John Johnson, Will Wilson, and Martin Martinson. Perhaps it is the astonishing breeding success of homo sapiens that has necessitated increasingly diverse naming as part of our modern culture: more bodies simply require more labels.

But other forces are also at work, including the awesome power of popular culture to popularize names and also to exhaust them. Because of popular culture, many parents name their children after celebrities from showbiz and athletics. Social class also fosters name selection by encouraging lower class folk with upper class aspirations to copy the name choices of their perceived betters. Many African-Americans, particularly those of a poorer social class, seem to want to make their children stand out from other Americans by coining highly original names, often with unusual spelling. Two reactionary forces also operate: one side wanting to avoid old-fashioned names, and the other wanting to adopt an older, more traditional, often Biblical name. Somewhere between those extremes is still another

phenomenon: the parent who wishes to have a traditional name such as Hannah or Jacob, albeit one that has a certain "newness" to it by having been out of favor in the recent past. No matter the driving force that propels name selection, that field is seeded with mines ready to blow up in the well-meaning parents' faces.

The largely bygone practice of primogeniture exacerbated normal sibling rivalries. Fraternal rivalry was further urged by the practice of giving the first-born son the father's name, which indicated a preferential status. (My second son, for example, has voiced his dissatisfaction that he did not receive even one of my familiar names). Widely published research into birth order shows that being first-born is an advantage, so being given the father's specific name further tilts the odds in favor of the first-born. If I could go back in time and again decide on names for my sons, I think I might follow the practice of George Foreman and name both of them after me ("Who2 Biography").

In modern America, propagated by the internet and by both the baby industry and the publishing industry, a new and substantial market has been created, dedicated to helping parents choose names. The online bookseller Amazon listed an amazing 11,234 results for baby name texts ("Books: Baby Names: Amazon.com"), and the internet has a huge number of baby name sites, some of importance in this study. This baby naming "industry" has largely replaced the historical, familial, and neighborhood influences of yesterday that helped small town Americans name their children. The proliferation of aids to naming indicates that parents today, perhaps because of the reduced number of offspring compared to previous generations and the decline of the nuclear family, exert more effort choosing names for their children than did our forebears. The parental desire to give a child an ideal name has several pitfalls, not the least of which is the fact that names come into and go out of popularity and distinctiveness over a few decades for various reasons, including the exhaustion suggested by Andy Warhol's serial prints of Marilyn Monroe's face. And the pace at which names become obsolescent or tired seems to be increasing.

Take, for instance, the female names Jessica and Jennifer, two of the most popular names for American girls in the last quarter of the 20th century. Jessica, although not a "new" name, being deriving from Biblical sources, really soared into popularity in the 1970s, when more than 8,600

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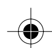
out of every million baby girls in the U.S. were so named. That growth continued even faster in the 1980s, when the name peaked with more than 25,000 out of every million female babies (i.e. 2.5%) being named Jessica. The pitfalls for the child of this groundswell of name popularization are shown by the following comment of a Jessica: "Like many others [named Jessica] said, it's pretty but too common. I'm tired of hearing my name shouted in the hallway, only to turn around and find it wasnt [sic] for me. I would *never* [emphasis added] name my daughter Jessica" ("Jessica . . . : Comment left Aug 13, 2007"). How ironic it is in this case (and probably in many others), that an earnest, well-meaning parent, desiring to find a fresh-sounding name, enters the beginning crest of a wave of popularization that will exhaust the name and turn the child into being just one more Jessica. As an American name choice for females, Jessica declined about 40 % in popularity in the 1990's and another 50% in the early 2000's ("Jessica. . ."). Thus, a thoughtful, fresh name choice in one year can become an exhausted name in a little over two decades.

The name Jennifer represents a similar trajectory. Not even one of the thousand most popular names in America until the 1940s, it soared to more than 35,000 namings (i.e. 3.5%) out of each million female births in the 70s. In the 1990s, it had dropped to about 7,800, or less than 25% of the frequency of only 20 years earlier ("Jennifer. . ."). Although Jennifer was *the* most popular name in the 70s, it had slipped to #64 by 2007 ("Popularity"). Several years ago a cult film, *Heathers*, dissected a conformist high school. The film's title was derived from the popularity at that time of the trendy name. Although Heather was a top ten name for female American babies in the 1970s (along with Jennifer and Jessica), Heather had fallen precipitously to #409 in 2007 ("Heather: Popularity"), again illustrating how fast a hot name can become a cold one.

A contrary force to freshness in name selection that has existed for a long time is the desire to give an old-fashioned, more traditional, and less trendy name. Among popular girls' names of this variety are four of the top ten names for 2002: Hannah, Emma, Samantha, and Sarah ("Social Security Press Release"). These names, which paradoxically sound fresh because they have not been popular in several decades, can quickly become not only stale, but old fashioned. To explore this phenomenon, I selected the names of my grandmothers and the mother of one of my closest college



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friends: Nellie, Edna, and Bessie. Those three names sounded to this 1960s college student old fashioned and out-of-date. In 1900, however, Nellie was the 46th most popular female name, Edna was the 15th most popular, and Bessie was the 22nd most popular ("Popular Names by Birth Year: 1900"). By 1991, Edna had become the 944th most frequent name; Nellie and Bessie did not even appear in the top 1,000 ("Popular Names by Birth Year: 1991"). Ironically, these names that sounded old fashioned in the 60s may be ready to be recycled. In perhaps twenty years, Hannah, Samantha, Emma, and Sarah will probably also have lost their quaintness and simply sound old. Thus, the contemporary parents who chose these fresh-sounding traditional names will have fallen into the Jessica/Jennifer trap.

As an insight into the power of American popular culture to shape naming behavior, in other English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland, trendy American names do not obtain nearly as much traction. Currently, the three most popular names in America for girls are Emily, Emma, and Madison. Only Emma is in the top three in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and New Zealand; and Emma does not make it into the top ten names in England and Wales ("Popular baby names from around the world"). Thus, we can surmise that the popularity of names is strongly culture-driven and is not nearly so much language-driven.

The number 3 American girl's name, Madison, is an interesting example of a phenomenon most famously addressed by Johnny Cash in his song about a boy named "Sue," which is the way a name can cross gender boundaries, usually only from male to female. Lovers of *Gone With the Wind* remember how Scarlett threw herself at Ashley, a name that today has crossed genders and moved into one of the top ten popular names for American girls. One specialist in name study recognizes "33 names that were in use exclusively for boys 40-50 years ago, but now sound [either] androgynous or feminine. 23 of the 33 turn out to have surname origins– [including examples such as] Parker, Kelsey, [and] Peyton." That authority further points out that the names that cross gender boundaries are usually those that previously had an aura of upper class to them, mentioning, for example, Cameron, a formerly strongly masculine name that has made the gender leap in my extended family. Conversely, exceedingly few feminine names or even gender-ambiguous names are used for males. Of the top

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200 male names in England a hundred years ago, only two, Lee and Marion (John Wayne's given name), give one any hesitation as to their gender (Wattenburg).

In the U.S. as of 2005, not one name in the top 100 for boys is gender-ambiguous ("Popular Names by Birth Year"). With apologies to Johnny Cash, there is little chance any boy would ever be named Sue. With apologies to Margaret Mitchell, Scarlett did not become a popular name despite the millions of iterations of it in the novel and movie, perhaps because the literary character was so unpleasant. The popularity of current movie star Scarlett Johansson, however, may be the cause of a trend of popularity as the name entered the 1,000 most popular names list in the 1990s and was in the top 200 by the year 2000 ("Scarlett . . ."). This growth in popularity follows the arc of Johansson's career, which blossomed in 1997 in *Home Alone 3* and in 1998 with *The Horse Whisperer* ("Scarlett Johansson").

One wonders: if a female child is named a formerly masculine name, will the name help determine her personality in the direction of masculine aggression? If a daughter is named Scarlett, will archetypal associations with the color, and character associations with the novels *Gone With the Wind* and *The Scarlet Letter* help determine the color of her future? Will having a strongly masculine name such as Cameron instead of, say, Debbie Sue aid a woman's business career? We sense it may.

Popular media help to disseminate names quickly. One of the top ten female names today is Isabella ("Popular Baby Names"), no doubt fostered, to some extent, by the modeling and movie acting of Isabella Rossellini. We can trace the influence of movies on names back to the 1930s and 40s, when the popularity of certain stars influenced the rise of certain names. Barbara, for example, was the 3rd most popular name for girls in the 1940s ("Barbara. . ."), no doubt in part influenced by Barbara Stanwyck, whose popularity is shown by the fact she was the highest paid woman in America in 1944 ("Biography for Barbara Stanwyck") . The name Betty was the 11th most popular name in the 1950s, probably abetted by the fame of film stars Bette Davis, Betty Hutton, and Betty Grable. Betty (a sobriquet for Elizabeth, as are Bess, Beth, Betsy, and Bessie, among others) is not a popular name today, but Elizabeth continues to be one of the most popular female names ("Popular Names for Birth Year").

The 2008 Presidential race brought Sarah Palin and her children into the spotlight. Her sons are named Track and Trig, neither of which appear in the top 1,000 names for male children. We might guess that those names may grow in popularity simply from media exposure. Two of Palin's three daughters bear names well-known in popular culture: Willow, number 430 in popularity in 2007 and the name of a major character from the1997-2003 *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television series (though there is no indication the series is a favorite of the governor, nor do the dates suggest a derivation); and Piper, number 240 in 2007 and the professional name of actress Piper Laurie ("Popular Baby Names") as well as a character from the 1998-2006 *Charmed* television series (again, with a correlation rather than a derivation). Palin's other daughter is named Bristol, not a popular name but one that has masculine or gender-neutral qualities ("Sarah Palin").

Barack Obama's meteoric rise in American politics runs against common sense: we tend to suspect or not identify with people who sound "foreign." Obama's father recognized this as a potential liability early in his life when he came to America on a scholarship and went by the sobriquet "Barry" for many years. Barack was addressed as Barry and went by that name until he decided in college to embrace his roots ("When Barry Became Barack"). His middle name, Hussein, calls to mind Saddam Hussein, a hated figure. Despite these apparent liabilities, Obama has become the first African-American president, and the name Barack will likely grow in popularity.

Highly original or what we might called "coined" names likewise arise quickly in popularity: in 2005, the name Trinity seemed to come out of nowhere to rank number 48 for girls, a result, in the opinion of the co-author of eight baby name books, of the "butt-kicking heroine of [the movie] The Matrix " ("Hush, Little Genesis"). Latoya grew in popularity beginning in the 70s and peaking in the early 90s. The name did not make it into the top 1,000 names after 1994, mirroring the career of LaToya Jackson. In 2001, the name Beyonce suddenly arrived as the 702nd most popular name, popularized by the singer Beyonce Knowles. A totally invented name, Nevaeh , which is "heaven" spelled backwards, first appeared on the top 1,000 list in 2000, increased each year afterward, and rose to be the 31st most popular name in America in 2007 ("Popular Names for Birth Year"). Nevaeh, as

well as Trinity, seems destined to influence future perceptions of the family the girl was born into and its degree of religious fervor or fanaticism.

In the past hundred years or so, the frequency of popular female names has declined more and faster than those of males. In the 1890 decade, over 25% of all boys born in America were named John, William, James, George, and Charles. In 1940, 4 of those names were still in the top 5 for males. Only 1 of the top 5 names for girls from 1890 made the 1940 list: Mary. By 1980, John, James, and William were still in the top 20; the only female name from the 1890 top 5 still appearing on the top 20 list was Elizabeth. The declining popularity of the name Mary, which was probably the most frequently given female name of the 20th century, can probably be ascribed to both exhaustion and the increasing secularization of our society ("Popular Baby Names").

Names for males were a bit less volatile in the first half of the 20th century, but the impact of popular culture and the baby naming "industry" seem to be accelerating the rapidity with which male names come into and go out of popularity. A celebrity star that struck me immediately as a powerful inducer of name popularization should have been The King, Elvis. Although as a military brat, I attended eight public schools in three states and one foreign country, I had never heard the name Elvis in life, literature, or popular culture before he appeared on television in the 1950s. It was a surprise, then, to learn that Elvis has been one of the thousand most popular male names in America since 1890. Its popularity, however, increased dramatically in the 50s and is steadily increasing in popularity in each decade since the 1980s, shortly after Elvis' death ("Popularity of a Name").

Other pop culture icons have sparked similar trends: Marlon came into the top 1000 names in the 1950s, following the trajectory of Brando's career, and peaked in the 70s, as did his career. Ali and Dylan entered the list of the thousand most popular names, not surprisingly, in the 1970s, as Bob Dylan's and Muhammad Ali's popularity surged during that era. In the 1990s, the name Deion appeared for the first time on the top 1000 list, no doubt encouraged by the popularity of football player "Neon Deion" Sanders ("Popular Names for Birth Year"). The act of homage to a media star may be right in one era and not so ideal in another. Which image of Elvis or Marlon, the young and vibrant, or the old and bloated, will the names evoke

in the minds of the not-too-distant future? Did any parents name their sons "O.J." and now rue it?

Since 1950, the speed at which male names come into and go out of popularity is accelerating and will probably continue to do so. For example, only "Michael" from the top 10 list for 1960 was on the 2005 list; only 2 of the names from the 1970 top 10 list made the 2005 list ("Popular Baby Names"). These statistics overwhelmingly indicate that the naming of boys in America—Jacob, Josh, and Ethan are currently very popular—is becoming a more trendy practice that will undergo the same exhaustion syndrome we saw with Jennifer and Jessica.

An informal study of a list of graduates and associate degree completers from the University of North Florida for 2006 further illustrates this trendiness/exhaustion. Out of approximately 325 named females, I counted 7 Heathers, 13 Ashleys, 10 Jennifers, 6 Jessicas, 11 Amandas, and 6 Brittanys. In other words, nearly 1 of every 6 females listed as graduating from the school had a trendy name ("University" B-7, B-12). One suspects that the graduating class of 2028 will have a similar distribution of trendy male names such as Jacob, Josh, and Ethan, and at that time they probably won't be sounding nearly as fresh and distinctive as they do now.

In the book Freakonomics, the authors point out a striking disparity between the names chosen in the 1990s by parents with high education (and hence income) and by those with less education and income. The top 5 names listed for the two groups share not one name in common. Interestingly, one of the top 5 for the lower income group, Brianna, (Levitt 193) is the name of a major porn star. A behavior pattern based on the assumed social class of certain names also emerges: yesterday's posh name will be co-opted by those wanting to climb the success ladder. The authors caution us, therefore, that the "parents of all those Alexandras, Laurens, Katherines, Madisons, and Rachels should not expect the cachet to last much longer" (Levitt 202). The lower classes, wishing to endow their children with a supposition of class, will likely adopt those upper class names in the next decade, and destroy whatever hints of class associations the names formerly possessed.

"Amanda," a name with upper class associations, gave rise to an interesting episode in the grading of a teacher certification exam in Florida. An essay prompt in 2005 was for the test takers to describe a person whom

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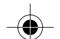
they had initially approved of or disapproved of but later changed their opinion about. Several essay graders encountered more than one paper about a girl named Amanda in which the test-takers took the same approach to the topic: Amanda was initially disapproved of as being snooty but later was found to be a nice person. At least five different graders alerted the test supervisors to this suspicious activity. So many writers had taken this approach, in fact, that the test supervisors requested all essays with that name in them be sent forward to the head table so that the papers could be compared for possible collusion. No collusion was found, but the popularity of the name and its associations with notions of snobbery (read: upper class) were anecdotally established.

Following the era of Black power in the 1970s, a number of highly original, exclusively black names suddenly appeared. Prior to that time, blacks and whites shared a great many names. By the arrival of the 80s, however, a black girl born in a black neighborhood was very likely to be dubbed with a name that was 20 times as common among blacks as it was among whites (Levitt 183). What kind of parent is it that gives such a distinctively black name to the child? It is a single teenaged mother of low income who is likely to have a "distinctively black name herself" (184). Unfortunately, these coined names are typically markers for being black and from lower class and education backgrounds. Comedian Bill Cosby apparently received criticism from whites and blacks when he castigated black parents for giving "ghetto" names to their children (qtd. in Levitt 226).

The coining follows several patterns, all deduced from our local (Jacksonville, Florida) paper : a traditional name like Juan is given a prefix such as La, Ta, De, or Sha; hence LaJuan, Tajuan, Dejuan, or Shajuan. Another pattern is the taking of a traditional name such as Jean and adding suffixes such as "ecia" or "equa"; hence, Jeanecia and Jeanequa. A third pattern is the free use of apostrophe, often a sign of accent; hence names such as Ke'wan, J'mani, or Ce'zanne. A fourth pattern is the apparent joining of two names together; hence, names such as Karlisha, Sheclesiastes, or Brodricka. These names, to many, sound like black names, and, as pointed out by Levitt, are a signal of lower class and educational status. And this connection is, perhaps, devastatingly important to the bearer of that kind of name.

31.2SmithCJ.pmd 131  5/6/2009, 11:35 AM

In an educational experiment, an identical set of essays was given to numerous veteran teachers to grade. Those papers typically received lower grades when presented as the work of a student with a non-traditional name that sounded black. Non-traditional, rural-sounding white names such as Billy Jo and Jim Bob also received similar lower scores. Thus, even the most experienced teachers in this experiment had *negative expectations* of students with non-traditional or lower class-bound names. If we couple that negative teacher expectation with the economic and educational reality of the homes and families from whence students who bear those kinds of names typically come, we can see that the negative expectation is in part well-founded. The author of that study, H. Edward Deluzaine, went on to say, ". . . we can logically assume that the same type of reaction occurs in people in other professions and in similar supervisory relationships." He closes the article speculating about the number of lost opportunities in education, the military, politics, even the assembly line, and all "because of a name" (Deluzaine). His concern echoes Bill Cosby's concern about the negative impact of "ghetto" names.

A recent news article reported that blacks in Jacksonville, Florida, are "nearly four times as likely to get a high cost [home] loan than whites" (Light F-1). The article referred to "sub-prime" loans," which sound as though the loans are going to be below the prime rate, but which are in truth less desirable; i.e. higher than the prime rate. If a loan crosses a desk as only a piece of paper, could something as simple as a name influence the decision of a loan officer? If the previous essay study holds true, it certainly would, and thus, a black-sounding (or rural white-sounding) name could be a negative trigger because of its lower class and education associations. All things being equal, this coining of names would likely be of little import, but, as we know, all things are not equal.

The lower class African/American's practice of coining black-sounding names seems to arise from the desire to set the child apart from the mainstream of society and to make that child special or unique. One may also speculate about the sub-text of this desire, which may be a wish to not fit into the traditions of the dominant white culture. In the 70's, for example, some black activists used the term "slave names" to describe traditional sounding; i.e. "White" names. Many reports exist of studious black students being ostracized by black classmates for "acting white." Thus, these

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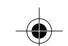
highly original coined "ghetto" names may be part of a package triggering or indicating (to some) an outsider's attitude of defiance, rejection of tradition, and negativity. Consider the earlier discussion of research indicating teachers' low expectations of students with non-traditional or lower class names. The combination of suggested negative student attitudes and low teacher expectations may create a lethal brew for the lower class black student.

A strong correlation exists between black students having traditional names and being academic achievers. MSNBC recognized nine outstanding black "Creative Geniuses." All had traditional names ("Black Brilliance"). A web site dedicated to recognizing outstanding historical black scientists and inventors listed 23 names; only one (Flemmie) sounded "black" ("Important Black Scientists"). An organization dedicated to supporting the advancement of blacks in chemistry and chemical engineering listed 7 black current professionals deemed to be future leaders in the field: all had traditional names (cited in "Black Brilliance"). These historical connections of traditional names and academic achievement are also repeated in the present.

Among today's African-American high school students, a strong connection exists between having a traditional given name and academic achievement. Among the 36 top black students recognized by *Ebony* magazine for the year 2004, 29 (or more than 80%) had traditional names, including two Ashleys, two Joshuas, a Chauncey, and a Katherine. Of the 7 students listed with rare, unusual, or coined given names, 3 had African family names (Doku, Ugoji, and Yemene), which would explain the unusual given names of Stesha, Keside, and Yonas. If we remove them from the mix, we have only 4 out of 33 black students with non-traditional names (about 12 %) in the recognized group of high academic achievers. Because these students were selected from schools across America, the correlation between traditional names and academic achievement is powerfully and persuasively established. When choosing names for their children, the parents of these high academic achievers were almost certainly guided by respect for the traditions of their own families and of the larger American society, and for the benefits of a sound education to secure one's position in it.



In the final analysis, then, conscientious parents, working assiduously to choose an appropriate name for their child, are walking a tightrope just above a minefield of, among other things, family tradition; sibling rivalry; class, race, and gender associations; popularity; and obsolescence. The questions, "Should I name my little girl Tamenicia or Tammy?" "Should I name my boy James or Jim Bob, or my little girl Bessie or Heather?" and "Should I name my little boy DeAndre or Danny?"—these questions are fraught with a great deal more importance for the child than we probably have ever thought before. Indeed, we need to think a great deal more about Shakespeare's quote:"What's in a name?"

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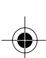

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Andrae, Thomas. *Carl Barks and the Disney Comic Book: Unmasking the Myth of Modernity.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006. xi + 306 pages; bibliography, index.

In the world of comics studies, ducks have tended to get short shrift, according to Thomas Andrae. Overshadowed by superheroes, "Funny Animals" are viewed as "kids' stuff" and thus unworthy of serious analysis. Even on those rare occasions when these comics are taken on their own terms, they are derided as sinister tools of imperialism hiding behind a childish façade. Either way, Andrae argues, they have yet to receive the depth of study that their subtleties and nuances demand. As Andrae's discussion of Disney artist Carl Barks reveals, the assumption that these cartoons are more one-dimensional than other forms is unfounded. Barks, the artist responsible for Donald Duck and the city of Duckburg, produced relevance and social commentary that far outstripped that of superhero artists, and a penetrating antimodernist critique that recognized and took on the contradictions of the "American century." Andrae's study reflects this relevance. More than a look at comics and their context, the book is a valuable contribution to the history of American antimodernism in general.

Andrae's work effectively highlights the context out of which Barks' ducks emerged, and the social pressures that influenced his cartoons. Barks' upbringing on a hardscrabble ranch left him with a complicated view of modernity. Conservative and enamored with traditional mores, he nevertheless recognized the harsh realities of life before industrial progress. These contradictory stances would color his work for decades. Taking a job at Walt Disney's studio in 1936, Barks' potential as a gag writer caught Disney's eye, and he soon found himself collaborating on the production of Donald Duck films. The underlying conservatism of these shorts reflected Barks' discomfort with modern American society. Confronting the crisis in masculinity that began in the late-nineteenth century, spawned flappers in the 1920s, and reached a climax during the Depression, Donald is repeatedly bullied by women and his own nephews. While fears of sexualized women, juvenile delinquents, and male powerlessness were nothing new in that era, Barks also managed to skirt Disney's prohibitions on topical humor by criticizing industrial progress and even the military during World War II. Moving to

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comic books after the war, Barks continued to develop his sense of nuance and irony. Plots became darker, Donald and his counterparts became alternately heroic and greedy, and a simplistic antimodernism was shunned in favor of a more complex discussion of virtues and vices that Andrae refers to as "reflexive modernity, an awareness of the costs and dangers as well as the advantages" of modern life (276). For example, Barks argues that modern society had cursed humanity with the atomic bomb, yet he portrays those who would forcefully impose older, more conservative mores on society as tyrants. Clearly taken with the idea of "lost" premodern civilizations and the promise of unspoiled agricultural utopias, moreover, Barks nevertheless often cast them as paranoid and reactionary. Finally, Scrooge McDuck may be an industrialist, Andrae points out, but he is simultaneously the embodiment of the self-made man (a trope that Barks championed throughout his career), highlighting Barks' ambivalence toward capitalism.

Aside from ushering Barks into the realm of academic study, the discussion of these contradictions is Andrae's most valuable contribution to the scholarship. Other scholars have pointed to Disney cartoons as agents of modern oppression, and a lesser study thus might have succumbed to the temptation to highlight only Barks' resistance to hegemony and modern life. Though there are occasional questions about Andrae's chronology (his main illustration of Barks' response to the "Postmodernism Crack-Up" of the 1960s and 70s, for example, appeared in 1950), the work does an excellent job of closely interrogating America's response to modernity.

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Byers, Michele and David Lavery, eds. *Dear Angela: Remembering My So-Called Life*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007. x + 246 pages; bibliography, index.

Dear Angela: Remembering My So-Called Life seems like a continuation of "Operation Life Support," the famous 1994 online fan movement to convince ABC to revive *My So-Called Life*. While that movement's ad in *Daily Variety* unsurprisingly failed to sway many people at ABC headquarters, it did provide visible proof how passionate the fan base could be and perhaps played some small role in convincing MTV to rebroadcast the existing episodes. Like those fans, these academics aim for the series to

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have a second life—as a rich text in the canon of television studies, rather than as a popular one in broadcast. This book makes a convincing case that teaching *My So-Called Life* to the next generation of television producers and viewers is a worthy pursuit.

As the first book devoted exclusively to the series, *Dear Angela* emphasizes a variety of perspectives. It includes articles examining the role of fandom, genre and narrative strategies, television industry history, gender and sexuality, and music in informing the production and reception of *My So-Called Life*. In addition, it collects three early pieces on the series, which helps the book model the evolution in the critical appraisal of Winnie Holzman's star-crossed masterpiece. Its breadth, general insightfulness, and the need for an entire book devoted to *My So-Called Life* are this project's greatest strengths.

There are a few gaps in the book's discussion of the series. Most notably, there is no close analysis of the performances. Just 15 years old at the time, Clare Danes played as important a role as Holzman in creating one of the few authentic teenage girls on television to that point. This book needs to analyze how Danes translates the scripted lines into the ambivalent, flawed, witty and introverted character we know as Angela. In addition, there could be more on how genres like melodrama, bildungsroman and romance inform the production, marketing and reception of the series. The former omission is notable because of how important Danes was in the series; the latter one is problematic as such a chapter would be an invaluable aid in helping students get past their preconceptions about such "low" forms.

Still, a single book can't be all things to all people and *Dear Angela* is very informative and, at times, innovative.

The three articles that pre-dated the book all deal with central issues. Barbara Bell's superb chapter uses detailed examples to compare Holden Caulfield to Angela in terms of their use of language, sentence structure, and their unreliability as narrators. Michele Byers uncovers the sometimes-infuriating middle class bias of the series, especially as it relates to female sexuality and the home. Her arguments are sometimes undermined by a lack of precise narrative detail, having been published before the release of the DVD boxed set. Susan Murray's chapter on Angela's fangirls contains some fine insight into the varying nature of identification and in-

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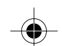

valuable quotes from AOL's message boards at the time of the series' broadcast.

The book solidly connects the series to 1990s culture and to television industry's history. Caryn Murphy's chapter does a splendid job detailing how network production and marketing strategies, changes to ownership and financial syndication rules and the state of the internet in 1994-5 influenced the creators and made a show with 10 million viewers a failure rather than the hit it would be today. This chapter is the article teachers will probably assign most. Kelli Malloy's chapter makes astute connections not only between the music and the narrative, but also between what music itself meant to producers influenced by The Grateful Dead and viewers influenced by Kurt Cobain. And David Lavery muses on why Joss Whedon literally bowed down to Holzman.

Three articles demonstrate the variety that can be found in academic writing, an invaluable lesson for students to learn. Bill Kte'pi remarkably suggests that *My So-Called Life* can be read as the daydreams, fears and projections of Angela's mother, Patty. Since Holzman said that writing Rickie perhaps prepared her for her own son's homosexuality, Patty's ambivalence towards Rickie is more evidence for Kte'pi's against-the-grain reading. Jes Battis investigates whether his own identification with Rickie in his youth was problematic due to his other entitlements in a way that asks whether a simple emotional connection is ever simple. David Scott Diffrient ruminates on the meaning of mortality in a series made under the specter of cancellation.

In short, mission accomplished. *Dear Angela* convinced me that this one-season wonder deserves a second life in the classroom.

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Emerson College

Thompson, Graham. *American Culture in the 1980s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007.

Writing a concise history of a decade's worth of a nation's culture, as author Graham Thompson well knows, is a dicey business. Even the key terms in such an undertaking—*culture*, *nation*, and *decade*—are fraught with rhetorical peril. In addition to that always slippery term *culture*, the

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idea of a single, solitary, and sovereign *nation* in the postmodern world is beginning to appear outdated. As for *decade*? Well, as Thompson notes, that unit of measurement is arguably too short to look at cultural products and too long to examine cultural forms. If that weren't tricky enough, Thompson, to his credit, steadfastly refuses to fit the square peg of America's 1980s into the round hole of a one-size-fits-all designation. For Thompson, convenient labels such as "Ronald Reagan's 1980s" or "The Yuppie Years" are unacceptably reductive. Indeed, as Thompson sagely observes, there was no shortage of cultural output in America from 1980 to 1989 and much of it had *nothing* to do with upwardly mobile professionals or Reaganomics. So, how does one account for it all?

Rather than developing an all-encompassing thesis and attempting to fit every piece of cultural output into it, Thompson begins with a look at intellectual trends in 1980s America (most notably supply-side economics and the country's significant shift to the right). Then, working outward from this "intellectual context"—much like a spider's web—Thompson looks at 1980s American culture in a wide range of modes. Since he is relieved from the dictatorship of the thesis, whether or not everything "adds up" doesn't matter all that much. Postmodern culture, Thompson seems to know, is a messy beast and any compendium of culture will have its share of loose ends. Individual (and independent) chapters include looks at the decade's cultural production in literature, visual arts, TV and film, music, and theatrical performance. These chapters intersperse overviews of cultural activities with observations from some of cultural studies' sharpest minds and with individual case studies of specific examples of cultural products: Madonna, *Hill Street Blues*, and *Top Gun* are just a few of the cultural products that receive this special treatment. The book navigates a fine line: overly theoretical and this ostensibly accessible endeavor becomes useless in the undergraduate classroom; too accessible and it degrades into a seemingly unending litany of "remember when's?"—an academic version of VH1's "I Love the 80s."

When Thompson's approach works, it works very well. The book's "spider webs" uncover provocative commonalities across modes of culture: a link between Bruce Springsteen's music and the literature of the "Dirty Realist" school is sharp and enlightening as is the connection between globalization and William Gibson's 1984 novel *Neuromancer*. One observa-

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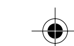


tion deserving of further inquiry is Thompson's contention that the *processes* (or *forms*) of cultural production (via innovations like the VCR or the Sony Walkman or via business shifts like the reorganization of the film industry) became almost as important as the cultural products themselves in the 1980s.

Yet these observations are mired in a work that is decidedly inconsistent. Ironically (to mention that great 1980s über-trope), for a work that makes so much of process, *American Culture in the 1980s'* process seems decidedly sloppy at points. This sloppiness infects both form and content and unfortunately, Thompson's prose sometimes leaves something to be desired. For example, writing of pop icon Madonna, Thompson asserts,

> She received a dance scholarship to attend the University of Michigan, but left before completing her course and moved to New York in 1977 to pursue a dance career, working with dance companies and touring as a dancer with bands while supplementing this work with various temporary and part time jobs (129-30).

And, although many readers can forgive him the occasional fused sentence, or for leaving the first two words out of the film title *This Is Spinal Tap*, or even for providing two differing dates for the publication of Brett Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho*, even the most casual observer of 1980s culture knows that the gangsta rap group NWA was founded by Ice *Cube*, not by Ice *T*, as Thompson implies.

Still, for all its faults, *American Culture in the 1980s* is an edifying work containing useful observations for both the graying cultural studies scholar with a secret stash of parachute pants in his or her closet and the undergraduate for whom the 1980s are only slightly more accessible than the 1780s.

Mark King
Gordon College

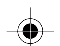
Wilcox, Rhonda V., and Tanya R. Cochran, eds. *Investigating* Firefly *and* Serenity: *Science Fiction on the Frontier*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008. xii + 290 pp.; bibliography, index.

Investigating Firefly *and* Serenity offers twenty original essays examining Joss Whedon's short-lived "sf Western" television series (2002)

and its feature-film reincarnation (2005). The essays range the Whedon universe, linking the two productions to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* and analyzing their particular contributions to Whedon's on-going consideration of the contemporary scene. The book contains a contextualizing introduction and eight sections of two to three essays each. These are: "Language and Rhetoric," "Gender," "Genre," "Social and Cultural Themes," "Religion and Morality," "Music," "Visuals," and "Fans, Transition, and the World Outside." A substantial bibliography of criticism, including both print and Web material, concludes the collection. The work is a generally thought-provoking volume, but prudent readers will keep Occam's Razor fresh in mind as the contributors' uncritical adulation of Whedon as *auteur* quickly cloys.

There is merit throughout the work. Issues of gender inform two particularly persuasive essays. Laura L. Beadling's "Feminism, Postfeminism, and Third-Wave Feminism in *Firefly*" uses Zoe, the con artist Saffron, and Kaylee to illustrate the stages of contemporary feminism's evolution. Maleness gets its due in David Magill's "Masculinities in the 'Verse." Using the characters of Mal, Jayne, Wash, Simon, and Shepherd Book to suggest a range of masculine types, Magill goes on to consider how these types illustrate various masculine ethical stances available in an inescapably violent universe.

Two other essays take up the ties of the *Firefly/Serenity* world to that of the traditional Western. Lorna Jowett, in "Retrofuturism, Cyberpunk, and Humanity in *Firefly* and *Serenity*," uses the Western's crucial tension between wilderness and civilization to illuminate the Whedonverse's blending of past (which is, of course, *our* present) and future. As in the Western, the physical and technological elements of both milieus reflect upon the alternatives available to both real-life reader and the fictional characters. J. Douglas Rabb and J. Michael Richardson's "Reavers and Redskins: Creating the Frontier Savage" reminds us that savagery is a cultural rather than biological construct. Thus, the Western's implicit cultural assumptions establish *Stagecoach*'s Apaches as savage. Although the Apache are an indigenous people with a well-defined culture of their own, *Anglo* culture classifies them as savages. The Whedonverse's culture, in contrast, has in the course of its program of conscious social manipulation inadvertently *created* the implacably ruthless Reavers, and *their* savage traits are an

31.2bookreviews.pmd 143  5/6/2009, 11:45 AM

artifact of the originating society. The issue, then, becomes one of *what* and *who* determines the true meaning of savagery, and what socio-cultural qualities influence the definition. All four of these essays, like the best of the remaining offerings, stick close to their subjects and offer well-substantiated readings.

Other contributions, however, make one appreciate the Law of Parsimony. Alyson R. Buckman's "*Firefly*'s 'Big Damn Heroes' and Little Witches" offers River's *persona* and language as establishing feminine subjectivity in a world of heroic monomyth, backing its arguments with unverifiable theory and ideology rather than empirical evidence. Andrew Aberdein, in "The Companions and Socrates: Is Inara a Hetaera?," exhaustively links the *Firefly* universe's Companions with classical Greece's elite *hetaeras*, openly acknowledged, elite prostitutes. In so doing, he conveniently discounts the Western's long-standing tradition of good-hearted hookers and offers no evidence that Whedon and his writers had *hetaeras* in mind as they developed Inara's character. There are genuine possibilities in these and similar essays, but one wants to say to the authors, as the *New Yorker* used to remark after a particularly portentous newsbreak, "Exhale!"

Finally, there's the issue of Joss Whedon himself, who is unfailingly spoken of in saccharinely awe-struck fashion as authors report his creating, shaping, and defending of *Firefly* and *Serenity*. Whedon is, without question, a talented, even gifted, writer-director, and deserves acclaim for his achievements. He is not, however, one who (in the words of one of Spider Robinson's characters) "freed the slaves, built the Pyramids, and cured yaws." Let's admire him, by all means, but let's not forget that the virtues of *Firefly* and its predecessors were enhanced by the talents of other directors and writers. Whedon's vision of his characters and their worlds has indeed shaped three television series and a film in notable ways, but he's not the sole contributor to the works' *corpus*. His collaborators deserve their due. In short, over-extended analyses and overblown admiration notwithstanding, *Investigating* Firefly *and* Serenity contributes to the growing pool of Whedon studies; however, approaching it with healthy skepticism will broaden its usefulness.

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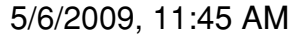

Contributors

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Stephen Bales is a humanities and social sciences librarian at Texas A&M University. His current research focuses on Aristotle's contribution to scholarly communication, feminist analysis of post-Aristotelian information institutions, and the library as "sacred space." He earned a Ph.D. in Communication and Information from the University of Tennessee.

Ron Briley is a history teacher and Assistant Headmaster at Sandia Preparatory School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he has taught for over thirty years. His most recent book is *All Stars and Movie Stars* (University of Kentucky Press, 2008). He is currently working on a book regarding the politics of Woody Guthrie and his work on Guthrie is published in *California History* and *Texas Music History*.

Fred Erisman is Lorraine Sherley Professor of Literature Emeritus at Texas Christian University and a former holder of the Charles A. Lindbergh Chair of Aerospace History at the National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution. He has published numerous studies of science fiction, detective fiction, children's literature, and the western. His most recent book is *Boys' Books, Boys' Dreams, and the Mystique of Flight* (TCU Press, 2006). A companion volume, *From Birdwomen to Skygirls: American Girls' Aviation Fiction*, is scheduled for Fall, 2009 publication.

Kathleen Forni is an Associate Professor at Loyola College in Maryland. She has published two books on the apocryphal texts that attended Chaucer's early canonization, and her articles on both Chaucer's early and late reception have appeared in *The Chaucer Review* and *Literature/Film Quarterly*. She is currently working on a book-length study on Chaucer's reception in popular culture.

Charlie Gee is a member of the Journalism & Multimedia Arts faculty at Duquesne University. His research interests include video/backpack journalism, television news production, communications law, and documentary production. He holds a Ph.D. in Communication and Information from the University of Tennessee.

Dawn Heinecken is Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Louisville and is the author of *The Warrior Women of Television: A Feminist Cultural Analysis of the New Female Body in Popular Media* (Peter Lang, 2003) and co-writer of *Measuring Up*: *How Advertising Affects Self-Image*

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(University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). Her publications have focused on critical cultural analysis of gender and body image representations in popular culture, including women in professional wrestling, romance novels, and fan fiction.

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