

STUDIES  
IN  
POPULAR CULTURE

32.2

Spring 2010

PUBLISHED BY THE  
POPULAR CULTURE ASSOCIATION  
IN THE SOUTH

## STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

### Editor

Rhonda V. Wilcox, Gordon College

### Associate Editor and Book Review Editor

David Janssen, Gordon College

**Assistant Editor:** Stacia Watkins, Middle Tennessee State University

### Editorial Board

Linda Badley  
Middle Tennessee State University

Liz Cummins  
University of Missouri, Rolla

David Fillingim  
Shorter College

Robert Holtzclaw  
Middle Tennessee State University

William Klink  
College of Southern Maryland

David Lavery  
Middle Tennessee State University

Lynnette Porter  
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Former editor Michael Dunne, Middle Tennessee State University  
Former editor Sara Lewis Dunne, Middle Tennessee State University  
Former editor Dennis Hall, University of Louisville

*Studies in Popular Culture* is published by the Popular Culture Association in the South and indexed in the annual *MLA International Bibliography*. All members of the Association receive *Studies in Popular Culture*, as do a growing number of libraries. Yearly membership is \$40.00 (International: \$60.00). Write to the Executive Secretary, Diane Calhoun-French, Provost, Jefferson Community College, 109 E. Broadway, Louisville, KY 40202, for membership, individual issues, back copies, or sets.

ISSN 0888-5753

**THE POPULAR CULTURE ASSOCIATION/AMERICAN CULTURE ASSOCIATION  
IN THE SOUTH**

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Sarah Fogle, *President*  
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Diane Calhoun-French, *Executive Secretary*  
Jefferson Community College

Bennett Kravitz, *Vice-President, President Elect*  
University of Haifa

Dennis Hall and Tom Van, *Program Chairs*  
University of Louisville

Geoffrey C. Weiss, *Editor, The PCAS / ACAS Newsletter*  
Mount Olive College

Rhonda Wilcox, *Editor, Studies in Popular Culture*  
Gordon College

Rob McDonald, *Editor, Studies in American Culture*  
Virginia Military Institute

Jennifer Garlen, *PCAS Member-at-Large*

Tamara Wilson, *PCAS Member-at-Large*  
Flagler College

Michael Graves, *ACAS Member-at-Large*  
Liberty University

Geoffrey C. Weiss, *Member-at-Large for Technology*  
Mount Olive College

Bob Coleman, *American Culture in the South Representative*  
University of South Alabama

David Lavery, *Webmaster*  
Stacia Watkins, *Graduate Student and New Professional Member-at-Large*  
Middle Tennessee State University

Hugh Davis, *Past President*  
St. Mary's School

## ***2009 Whatley Award***

In memory of George Whatley, a founder and early president of the Popular Culture Association in the South, the editor 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 2009 Whatley Award winner is

***Sexed Appeals: Network Marketing Advertising and Adult  
Home Novelty Parties***

By

**Dawn Heinecken  
University of Louisville**

## *From the editor*

---

### *No Monoliths Here*

---

The title above is certainly not meant as a rejection of Stanley Kubrick. Instead, it is just one more reminder of the variety of voices of popular culture. “P-C-A-S,” said a woman observing our t-shirts in a hotel lobby. “Does that mean the Politically Correct Association?” No, it most certainly does not. The Popular Culture Association in the South, the sponsoring organization of *Studies in Popular Culture*, is a group of many separate voices. Some of the essays in this issue will appeal to certain members of the group, while other articles will be strongly commended by readers who don’t care much about still a third set. Some represent views that certain scholars might indeed call politically correct, while others have nothing to do with that perspective. Yet we all hang together (so as not to hang separately). As contributor Delia Poey says, “Popular culture . . . has multiple, and at times contradictory, speakers and messages. It does not represent monolithically” (2). We thoroughly enjoy the fact that this issue bounces from salsa to the soft-focus South to *Star Trek*, from the Jesus fish to the Whopper—and we hope that you will, too.

Poey’s essay is the first in this, the second issue of the thirty-second volume. She considers two songs—one salsa and one country; one by the Dixie Chicks, one by Celia Cruz—which deal with domestic violence. Both represent radical responses but do so using musical forms and qualities long established in a patriarchal tradition. In doing so, Poey discusses race, class, and gender in both musical genres. We move from music to popular novels with Eleanor Hersey Nickel’s discussion of Jan Karon’s best-selling series of Mitford novels, centered on an Episcopalian priest and placed in an idealized small town in North Carolina. How genuinely regional are they, she asks—just how Southern? She comments on the author’s ambivalence and notes that a sharper turn from idealization to reality in the latest book in the series seems to have met serious fan resistance. Nickel used a survey of fans of the novels to help establish some of her conclusions. As for the fans of *Star Trek*, they have, among other enterprises, created a complete language based on a few utterances in the series attributed to the fictional alien species of the Klingons. Members of the Klingon Language Institute have produced translations of Shakespeare—specifically, *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Since they fictionally claim that the plays are, in fact, translations from works originally in Klingon (based on a line from one of the *Star Trek* movies), they present a particularly intriguing case of the nature of translation and adaptation, which Karolina Kazimierczak explores with thoroughness and careful contextualization. Contextualization is also important for Todd Edmondson’s work on the Jesus fish, a cultural icon that has swum in tempest-

tuous religious waters for many centuries now. Edmondson traces the symbol's significance in image and text from the third century to its Australian reemergence into the current culture wars. American culture and attitudes are the focus of Margaret Hrezo and William E. Hrezo's examination of two master American filmmakers, King Vidor and Robert Altman, both of whom, in their long careers, "captur[e] essential elements of the nation's political values and behavior." Moving from full-length films to the brief form of television commercials, we are given an anthropologist's perspective on a series of fast-food advertisements. Ty Matejowsky discusses the controversial "Whopper Virgin" campaign, with its inclusion (though that may be the wrong term) of indigenous Hmong, Inuit, and Maramures people. He places these commercials within a brief history of the use of indigenous people in U.S. advertisements. Elizabeth Monk-Turner and her students Mary Heiserman, Crystle Johnson, Vanity Cotton, and Manny Jackson place their own work carefully within the history of sociological studies of television, building on the 2000 work of Mastro and Greenberg to provide a more up-to-date study of the representation of racial minorities on prime time, dealing with Caucasian, African American, and Latino characters. And to round out the variety, we present reviews of books on graphic novels, television and film, music, and pulp fiction.

We thank the contributors for their illumination of these varied facets of popular culture—the mica-shine of a far-from-monolithic structure. This issue, as usual, also owes a great deal to the work of the members of the editorial board, not to mention Associate Editor/ Book Reviews Editor David Janssen. Their work as reviewers is extremely important for the journal. We also wish to thank, for their invaluable help in the reviewing process, the following colleagues: David Broad; Agnes Curry; Kathy Forni; Jill Hague; Donna Waller Harper; Mark Milewicz; Lewis Moore; Ananya Mukherjea; Marc Napolitano; Anne Petersen; Roy Schwartzman; and Lisa Yaszek.

**Rhonda V. Wilcox, editor**  
**Gordon College**

## STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

*Spring 2010*

32.2

---

- v From the editor: No Monoliths Here
- 1 Striking Back Without Missing a Beat: Radical Responses to Domestic Violence in Country Music's The Dixie Chicks and Salsa's Celia Cruz  
—*Delia Poey*
- 17 "But This Is the *South*": Ambivalent Regionalism in Jan Karon's Mitford Novels  
—*Eleanor Hersey Nickel*
- 35 Adapting Shakespeare for *Star Trek* and *Star Trek* for Shakespeare: *The Klingon Hamlet* and the Spaces of Translation  
—*Karolina Kazimierzczak*
- 57 The Jesus Fish: Evolution of a Cultural Icon  
—*Todd Edmondson*
- 67 The Politics of the "Open" Self: America in the Cinemas of King Vidor and Robert Altman  
—*Margaret Hrezo and William E. Hrezo*
- 85 Like a "Whopper Virgin": Anthropological Reflections on Burger King's Controversial Ad Campaign  
—*Ty Matejowsky*
- 101 The Portrayal of Racial Minorities on Prime Time Television: A Replication of the Mastro and Greenberg Study a Decade Later  
—*Elizabeth Monk-Turner, Mary Heiserman, Crystle Johnson, Vanity Cotton, and Manny Jackson*
- 115 Book Reviews

- 115 Allen, Glen Scott. *Master Mechanics & Wicked Wizards: Images of the American Scientist as Hero and Villain from Colonial Times to the Present*. Rev. Doug Davis.
- 119 Beeler, Karin. *Seers, Witches, and Psychics on Screen: An Analysis of Women Visionary Characters in Recent Television and Film*. Rev. Ananya Mukherjea.
- 122 Di Liddo, Annalisa. *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*. Rev. Robert T. Koch Jr.
- 123 Waksman, Steve. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Rev. Charles Grey.
- 127 Contributors

## **Striking Back without Missing a Beat: Radical Responses to Domestic Violence in Country Music's The Dixie Chicks and Salsa's Celia Cruz**

“Earl Had to Die,” and “¡Que le den candela!” (Have them set him on fire!) are the rallying chorus and title of songs by the Dixie Chicks and Celia Cruz, respectively. Both are posed as solutions to situations of domestic violence and abuse.<sup>1</sup> The two songs offer similar responses to domestic violence while working in two distinct musical genres: country music and salsa. In working within these particular music traditions, they engage issues of race, class, and gender in ways that simultaneously play into and critique conventional constructs and expectations.

Country music and salsa, at first glance, appear to be at opposite ends of the musical spectrum, and in terms of structure and musical arrangement, they may well be. However, their socio-political positionings in relation to the hegemonic have common elements. Both are associated with working class roots and audiences. They are the music of populations that are consciously “outsiders” to the mainstream. Stereotypically, country music and salsa fans are viewed as less affluent and less educated, with a low-brow aesthetic that is too easily parodied and caricatured. Both genres also participate in, and promote or create, conservative gender ideologies. Incidentally, they are also both multi-billion dollar industries.

The purpose of this article is to contextualize these two popular music representations of domestic violence, these two songs, within their respec-

tive traditions. As Mia Consalvo points out, very little scholarly attention has been paid to the representations of domestic violence in the media, and “even less attention has been paid to popular culture representations of domestic violence” (Consalvo 62). However, popular culture, being heteroglossic, has multiple, and at times contradictory, speakers and messages. It does not represent monolithically. An analysis of these two songs and how they signify in their respective traditions can shed light on how they offer a gendered perspective within the boundaries and frameworks of their genres. These two songs confront and critique gender inequity and violence in heterosexual relationships, proposing radical courses of action, but they do so while incorporating elements of their patriarchal traditions.

### **Race, Class, and Gender in Country Music**

While country music traces its roots to folk music and ballads of rural, poor, white Southerners, it has grown and expanded to become the leading musical radio format in the United States, with over seventy million Americans tuning in to country music radio stations on a regular basis. By 1993, country music radio sales totaled close to two billion dollars annually (Lewis, “Lap Dancer” 163; Tichi 2). The demographics of country music’s audience have also changed. Once defined as rural and poor, the audience is now more affluent and just as likely to reside in urban or suburban areas.<sup>2</sup>

Although country music’s audience is more diverse now than ever before in terms of location, education, and socioeconomic background, the genre continues to appeal primarily, if not overwhelmingly, to a white public. It has traditionally been, and continues to be, racially and ethnically associated with Anglo American heritage.<sup>3</sup> In terms of class, country music’s roots in poor, white, rural communities continue to exert an influence on the genre’s themes and perspectives, as well as its construction of its own identity. Despite the audience’s changing demographics, country music remains rooted in the concerns and perspectives of white working class Americans.

Thematically, country music tends to deal with everyday life experiences. As Curtis Ellison points out, “Country music culture is probably best known to nonparticipants as a popular expression of heartbreak, hard times, and personal failure” (Ellison xvii). This perception has a basis in the fact

that “an important motif at the heart of this entertainment is a sense of living in hard times. Hard times are usually expressed as financial distress, marital discord, family problems ... [and] personal loneliness” (Ellison xvii). The genre’s class-based perspective, however, does not translate into a progressive mobilization for change, but rather a predominantly conservative reaction idealizing traditional values. One reason for this is that “hard times in country music typically are represented as an intimately *personal* condition. . .not the result of economic conditions or tensions between social classes that might be remedied by collective action” (Ellison xviii).

In terms of gender roles, country music has historically been quite conservative. With its idealization of home and hearth, the genre has promoted strictly prescribed and proscribed gender roles. As Pamela Fox states, “from its inception in the late 1920s traditional country mythology has made the family its centerpiece, envisioning distinctly gendered roles for that institution’s maintenance and protection” (Fox 244). In terms of the representation of women, these have tended to be stereotypical and dichotomized as the “good girl” who is longed for, or the temptress. Ruth Banes has argued that country music has also included a “countermythology” of southern womanhood, portraying working-class women who are neither belles nor vamps but strong characters exemplifying traditional virtues, hard work and inner strength. Nevertheless, even this countermythology defines rigid and hierarchical gender roles within the family and limits women’s possibilities and worth to their roles as homemakers and nurturers, even when they are also breadwinners.

Given the structure of the industry, which is patriarchal, with men dominating the commercial aspects as well as the artistic side as song writers and performers, it is not surprising that even as country songs have dealt extensively with issues of home and family, including discord and conflict, they have been overwhelmingly from a strictly male perspective. Even when dealing with representations of domestic violence, country songs have taken a male perspective that is at times chilling. The most famous example of this is probably Johnny Cash’s “Delia’s Gone.” In the song the speaker recounts his killing Delia, explaining that “had I not shot poor Delia, I’d have had her for my wife.” He admits he found her “in her parlor and tied her to her chair.” The ensuing murder is recounted matter-of-factly in the lines,

“first time I shot her, I shot her in the side . . . but with the second shot she died.”

It is revealing that one of Delia’s “devilish” aspects is that she’s “travelin’.” A dominant theme in country music is the pull between “home” and “rambling” (Malone). This pull, reserved exclusively for males, is characterized by either the performer or the cowboy’s need to wander, while lamenting the absence of “home and hearth.” For women, however, “rambling” represents abandonment of social responsibilities and conventions, making her, as Cash’s song illustrates, “devilish.” As Lewis observes, the “new woman” who defies strict gender roles by traveling is occasionally portrayed in country music songs, yet “in contrast to the man, who is constantly torn in both directions—which makes him appear both tragic and noble, even as it offers him an excuse for excess in the area of freedom—the new female is seen as one-dimensional in intent, turning her back on social responsibilities...[she is] a one-dimensional bitch” (Lewis “Duelin’ Values” 115).

The presence of women in country music, particularly as performers and song writers, has made some headway in destabilizing patriarchal structures. While having to conform to at least some of the gender-based conventions of the genre, women performers have managed to also, in limited ways, contest those structures.<sup>4</sup> Female performers, however marginalized, have existed since the inception of country music as a genre and as an industry. Given country music’s emphasis on the personal, it is not surprising to see women’s voices and perspectives gaining ground throughout the musical genre’s history. Country superstar Reba McEntire perhaps sums it up best in expressing her own rebellion against the industry’s censorship of women’s issues by “trying to sing songs for women, to say for them what they can’t say for themselves” (Bufwack 207).

This “new kind” of female country singer has included songs of female empowerment and independence. As Lewis summarizes:

Although the roots of female independence go back a long way—at least to Kitty Wells’ 1952 “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels”... and Emmylou Harris’ 1978 “To Daddy,”... this theme took a strong stride forward in 1987, with K.T. Oslin’s “80s Ladies”.... This increasingly strong women’s perspective has been explored in the 1990s in Mary Chapin Carpenter’s ironic “He Thinks He’ll Keep her,” Rosanne Cash’s “The Truth About You,”

and—in what is arguably one of the most powerful country recordings of the 1990s—Martina McBride’s version of the Gretchen Peters song “Independence Day,” in which, as told from the perspective of her child, an abused mother burns down her home with her drunken husband inside on July 4<sup>th</sup>—Independence Day. (“Lap Dancer” 168)

“Independence Day” is a particularly important song in that it uses the rhetoric of freedom and patriotism to denounce gender oppression. By equating the mother’s “revolution” with the American movement of independence from British colonialism, it locates women’s rights and freedoms as inseparable from American ideals.

In historical terms, the Dixie Chicks’ song, “Goodbye Earl” is not the only song in the genre, or even the first, to represent domestic violence from a woman’s perspective. What makes an analysis of this particular song compelling is the way it plays with conventions and boundaries in its articulation of a radical solution to a situation of domestic violence.

### **“Goodbye Earl” as Feminist Critique within the Country Music Tradition**

“Goodbye Earl,” released in 2000, is structured squarely within the country music tradition of the “story song.” The story, narrated in the third person, has two best friends—Mary Anne and Wanda—as protagonists. Mary Anne chooses to leave home in search of something better, while Wanda quickly marries local boy Earl. As Earl regularly beats Wanda, she leaves him and files for divorce. He then beats her so severely she ends up in Intensive Care. Mary Anne immediately returns to the hometown and the two women plan and carry out Earl’s murder via poisoned black-eyed peas. The two friends go on to live happy lives as proprietors of a roadside stand. As performed by the Dixie Chicks, the song is self-consciously satirical with a tongue-in-cheek attitude directed not just at its subject matter, but at its definitively “country” character.

Natalie Maines’ vocals on the track are intensely twangy, taking on a heavy drawl in the phrasing of the lyrics. The lyrics themselves, compact as they are, make repeated and marked references to “country” stereotypes. In the opening stanza, as the protagonists are introduced, it is clearly estab-

lished that they are not only “good girls,” but “good country girls,” since they are appropriately “both members of the 4-H Club, both active in the FFA [Future Farmers of America].” After high school, Mary Anne “went out lookin’ for a brand new world,” in keeping with country music’s recurring theme of “rambling.” That Mary Anne is a woman, however, could make this problematic. As demonstrated in Cash’s “Delia’s Gone,” a “travelin’” woman is “devilish” and should be stopped. Mary Anne’s later return, however, redeems her.

In contrast to Mary Anne, Wanda remains “home.” In country music’s cultural parameters, Wanda’s pursuit of a socially and culturally sanctioned path should be rewarded. However, in “Goodbye Earl,” Wanda’s staying home closes off her possibilities. She “looked all around this town, and all she found was Earl.” These lines imply that not only was Earl a poor choice, but that in remaining in “this town,” he was the only choice.

After a mere two weeks, Wanda’s marriage turns violent. Her first reaction is to keep the abuse hidden as “she put on dark glasses and long sleeved blouses, and make-up to cover the bruise.” Her second strategy in dealing with the violence is to file for divorce and “let the law take it from there.” Yet, since “Earl walked right through that restraining order, and put her in Intensive Care,” it is clear that she cannot rely on institutions such as the courts or the police for protection. By recounting Wanda’s failed strategies for ending the abuse—dealing with it privately and then appealing to institutions of social order—the listener can release all blame for Wanda’s next course of action, which is to kill the perpetrator, Earl. In other words, it preempts the simplistic victim-blaming response: “Why didn’t she just leave?”

The decision to kill Earl is not made solely by Wanda. The catalyst for it is Mary Anne, who “flew in from Atlanta.” Returning to the home vs. rambling theme, Mary Anne leaves home “lookin’ for a brand new world” represented in Atlanta. The choice is significant in that while Atlanta is a major urban center, it is still the South. Thus, the good country girl can migrate to an urban setting, but she is still true to her roots by remaining in the South, albeit the city that stands out as the quintessentially cosmopolitan “New South.” It is through this female friend as catalyst that Wanda is able to reach a definitive solution to her dire situation. While in Intensive Care, they “worked out a plan, and it didn’t take them long to decide that Earl had

to die.” The topos of a female friend as catalyst for change is also present in Celia Cruz’s song, which will be discussed later in this essay.

Once the women have made the decision to kill Earl, the musical composition of the song changes. It becomes louder, has more instruments coming in, and is more up-tempo, with the voices of the other band members joining in. It signals a musical and lyrical shift from a song about “hard times” to one of celebration and transcendence. This shift works within country music’s tradition in that, according to Curtis Ellison, “if hard times are the principal topic of country music culture, its consistent hope is to escape them” (Ellison xviii). Ellison goes on to note that “country music affirms the possibility of finding better times in the rewards of romantic, familial, or heavenly love” (xix). In “Goodbye Earl,” escape from hard times begins with the decision to kill Earl, but true happiness is found, as the later verses articulate, not in the promise of romantic, familial, or heavenly love, but rather in the friendship and partnership between the two women.

Earl’s death is brought on by poisoned black-eyed peas served to him by the two women. In cooking and serving the meal to Earl, Wanda is fulfilling her prescribed gender role. At this point in the song, there is actual dialogue presumably spoken by Wanda, who says, “Those black-eyed peas, they tasted all right to me, Earl.” Continuing her role as the solicitous wife, Wanda suggests, “Why don’t you lay down and sleep, Earl?” Her feigned concern is even carried out in the disposal of the body as Wanda asks, “Ain’t it dark, wrapped up in that tarp, Earl?” The way this scene is played out in the song signifies through country music conventions in several ways. It uses standard musical arrangements while employing irony to contest domestic arrangements, which as promoted in country music, entail conservative gender roles and the idealization of “home and hearth.” The scene also plays on the genre’s tendency to romanticize what it deems old-fashioned Southern values in its use of black-eyed peas as a murder weapon.

After recounting the murder scene, the song returns to a more subdued musical arrangement and third person narration with only Natalie Maines on vocals. The verse absolves the women of any blame as it presents Earl’s absence as a positive outcome, not only for Wanda, but for the world in general, since even the police make little effort in finding him because “it turns out Earl was a missing person who nobody missed at all.” The two women go on to lead happy lives running a “roadside stand out on

Highway 109.” Here again the transgressive behavior remains within certain parameters. In being situated on Highway 109, the women are at a half-way point between home and rambling. As entrepreneurs, they are not found at home as either wives or mothers; that is, they are outside of the control of the patriarchal family structure. Yet, what they sell at the roadside stand is “Tennessee ham and strawberry jam,” which are regionally appropriate products and what one might associate with home cooking. The women have thus succeeded in finding a way to live within patriarchy but outside of patriarchal control, redefining “home and hearth.”

### **Race, Class, and Gender in Salsa Music**

Salsa music is not a rhythm or a dance step, but a genre which developed in the 1960s and 1970s in New York City as Latinos from various parts of the Caribbean lived, worked and sought entertainment in close proximity to one another. The genre emerged as a response to their collective condition as immigrants and/or minorities in the abject and alien urban environment of the *barrio*. Musically, it claimed no central authenticity, but rather favored incorporation of various influences to create something new. In this way, salsa is the musical representation of Caribbean *mestizaje*, or cultural and racial blending carried out in a U.S. context.

Frances Aparicio succinctly defines salsa as:

A syncretic art form that originated in the Latino barrios of New York City. A conjunction of Afro-Cuban music (*el son*) and rhythms, of Puerto Rican *bombas* and *plenas*, and of African American jazz instrumentation and structures, salsa music has become the quintessential musical marker of *latinidad* in the United States and in Latin America. (Aparicio 662)

The roots of salsa are easily traced to Afro-Caribbean musical expressions which developed, or rather survived, within the institutions of the plantation and slavery. The Cuban *son*, salsa’s primary influence in terms of rhythm, is itself syncretic, using polyrhythms adapted from the various regions of Africa reflecting the cultural diversity of the slaves forcibly transported to Cuba, in conjunction with European influences. Thus, even in its influences and roots, salsa denies authenticity in favor of incorporation and cross-pollination. It is also, significantly, a genre with roots in cultural sur-

vival through a delicate balance of maintaining tradition while also promoting innovation. Salsa's other strong influences, particularly in terms of lyrical structure, are traced to Puerto Rico through the incorporation of *bombas* and *plenas*—which also developed within the plantation system. These forms carried in their lyrics news and anecdotes of everyday occurrences and events. The songs served as entertainment, a depository of collective memory, and a way to disseminate information over large areas.<sup>5</sup>

Fusing these two strains, and adding others such as jazz, salsa developed as a genre that looks to the past for its structure, but addresses present conditions in concrete ways. Felix Padilla explains the historical basis for salsa's power as social commentary as well as its innovation assigning importance to the lyrics in the following way:

The major structural feature which distinguishes Salsa from other earlier Latin music forms is the importance given to lyrics. Following closely the tradition of the Puerto Rican *bomba* and *plena*, as well as the *seis*, another Island music form which has become a focal part of the working class of the countryside, Puerto Rican Salsa was built around particular messages expressed in the words of songs....The leading messages conveyed by the music revolve around themes having to do with love (happy and unhappy romance songs), friendship, music, humor, and just as important, ideas reflecting the social, cultural, economic, and political visions and realities of *barrio* people. (Padilla 97)

Thus, salsa is used to “speak directly to the social, cultural, economic and political experiences of Latinos as a group” (Padilla 100).

Extending the tradition of the *plena* in relating experiences of everyday life, now in an urban setting, salsa songs also offer commentary, usually through the use of humor. For example, Ramón Jiménez's song “Se te quemó la casa” (Your House Burnt Down) made clear reference to the practice of setting fire to buildings that provided housing for working class Latinos in order to encourage more upscale renovation and neighborhood gentrification (Quintero Rivera, “Migration” 220).

Listening to salsa, or more fully participating through dance, can be described as dialectical processes in that the music is set to, first of all, make the body move. While the words are present and constant in the background, insinuating themselves into the listener's consciousness, it is the rhythm that draws in the listener. Frances Aparicio has pointed to the

superficial perception of salsa as “easy listening,” as well as its class and racial/ethnic associations, as reasons for dismissing the genre. Yet the tension created by the seemingly contradictory relationship between the lyrical and musical content is where salsa’s subversive potential lies. As Quintero Herencia observes, “salsa promises not to get you wet, while soaking you through and through. In short, salsa *plays* innocent, *la salsa se hace la pendeja*” (Quintero Herencia 196).

Given the musical genre’s oppositional potential and its tradition of speaking to systems of oppression and marginalization, the fact that this does not extend into gender ideology is all the more disturbing. Salsa’s relation to gender is contradictory in that “while it reaffirms a Pan-Latino cultural resistance within the United States and in that sense can be deemed politically progressive, it simultaneously participates in the patriarchal systems of both Latino and North American culture” (Aparicio 662). As an industry, salsa is male-dominated to the point of being almost exclusively male in terms of both the commercial and artistic aspects. There have historically been no successful female song writers and very few performers. The exclusion of women is so blatant that “since the 1960s, only one female, Celia Cruz, has been able to maintain a career singing salsa” (Derno and Washburne 142).<sup>6</sup>

Even the most politically and socially progressive male performers, such as Rubén Blades and Willie Colón, who have included issues such as AIDS and homophobia in their songs, have left inequitable gender relations and representations intact. As Augusto Puleo points out, “the sexist, misogynistic, and machista ways of thinking and behaving have been reflected and glorified in the patriarchy of salsa music” (Puleo 224). Salsa’s misogynistic side is overt and goes beyond the one-dimensional representations of women as the source of either pleasure or pain (Puleo 225), wherein the subject is male and women are objects. The genre’s tradition also includes, and implicitly sanctions, “gender based violence, as in the songs ‘Bandolera’ (Hector Levoe 1978) or ‘Yo la mato’ [I Kill Her] (Daniel Santos 1974)” (Aparicio 669).

Women’s very limited participation in the industry has no doubt been a factor in the perpetuation of sexist and misogynistic ideologies, yet critiques of salsa’s sexual politics have, with rare exception, been absent. As Aparicio states: “Despite isolated attempts to raise the issue of women’s representa-

tion in Caribbean popular music, salsa lyrics have remained virtually uncontested by female musicians, singers, consumers and critics” (661).

### **“Que le den candela” as Feminist Critique within the Salsa Music Tradition**

Celia Cruz, the undisputed Queen of Salsa until her death in 2003 at the age of 78, recorded a few songs, in her long career, in defense of women. “Las divorciadas” stands out as an example. Yet only two songs in her extensive repertoire spanning a sixty-year period address male violence against women directly: “No le pegue a la negra” (Don’t Hit the Black Woman) and “Que le den candela.” The first exposes and denounces gender and racial violence by narrating the story of a black female servant who is beaten by her white male employer. In the song, the title line is spoken by the woman’s lover or husband, who comes to her defense. “Que le den candela” focuses on inequity and violence in the context of heterosexual romantic relationships by offering advice to a woman in an abusive relationship.

In contrast to “Goodbye Earl,” “Que le den candela” is not lyrically structured as a story narrated in the third person. Rather, it is a monologue in which the speaker addresses a “Buena amiga” (good [female] friend). What is similar in the two songs is that a female friend is the catalyst, and indeed the co-conspirator, in enacting a radical course of action to put an end to the victim’s situation of abuse. While “Goodbye Earl” presents the listener with a story in which the radical solution is killing the perpetrator of the abuse, “Que le den candela” offers possible radical solutions that are not carried out in the narrative of the song.

Like most salsa songs, “Que le den candela” begins with an explosion of sound and an up-tempo dance beat. The music then slows down and becomes subdued as the verses open. In the first two verses, the speaker describes the ways in which “ese hombre” [that man] is unsuitable as a romantic partner. He is described as rude, inattentive, lazy, demanding, and all-around undeserving of all the love the woman bestows on him. In contrast to the man, the woman in the relationship is described in stereotypically positive ways. She cleans, does the washing, irons his clothes, etc. In other

words, she fulfils all the domestic duties ascribed to women by a patriarchal gender ideology. Like Wanda in the Dixie Chicks song, the victim in the abusive relationship is defined as a “good woman” and therefore blameless.

The second verse of “Que le den candela” ends with the startling lines that if the woman should by chance complain about the inequity and abuse in the relationship, he becomes indignant and wants to hit her. Immediately following these lines, the instrumentation changes for the chorus, becoming louder and more up-tempo. With additional vocals coming in, the chorus returns to a strong, rhythmic dance beat as, lyrically, it spells out a list of possible physical responses to the situation of abuse including setting him on fire, cooking him in a pot and/or putting him on a kite and cutting the string.

Like “Goodbye Earl,” Cruz’s song uses humor in proposing radical solutions to an abusive relationship. This similarity is not coincidental, as the use of humor can disarm the audience/listener and make the violence enacted, or proposed in the case of Cruz’s song, acceptable. Because both salsa and country music have strong and long traditions of employing humor in songs, even when dealing with serious topics or themes, the use of humor in both “Goodbye Earl” and “Que le den candela” works squarely within the frameworks of their respective genres, even as it also functions in subversive and transgressive ways. That is to say, both songs manage to subvert conservative gender ideologies while working within the parameters of their respective musical genres.

The last verse of “Que le den candela” offers the female victim advice with the lines: “If I were you I would leave/ the suitcases at the door and a note saying/ from this moment on, have your grandmother cook for you.”<sup>7</sup> The lines are significant in that at first they seem to suggest that the woman leave, but after a brief pause, the lines reveal that it is the man who must be forced to leave. In other words, it is the man who must be displaced from the home. The woman remains as the rightful occupant of this space which in the abusive man’s absence can return to a place of safety and comfort. The final line of the verse is not only an insult directed at the man, but can also be interpreted as returning the man to the position and status of a child or even the dependency status of an infant.

“Goodbye Earl” and “Que le den candela,” in offering radical responses to situations of domestic violence and abuse while working within their respective musical traditions, disrupt conservative gender ideologies. As Ferraro

has pointed out, “Domestic violence discourse...challenges male dominance in its most cherished location, the home” (78). While the two songs analyzed here do just that, they go one step further in challenging patriarchy using the very tools, frameworks and assumptions that their respective genres have used to reinforce and reproduce inequitable and repressive gender ideologies.

**Delia Poey**

**Florida State University**

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> As Ferraro articulates it, the term “domestic violence” is “a code for physical and emotional brutality within intimate relationships, usually heterosexual” (77).

<sup>2</sup> For a full description of country music’s audience demographics, see Lewis’ “Lap Dancer or Hillbilly Deluxe.”

<sup>3</sup> As Lewis, among other critics, has pointed out, country music has strong influences from black American music such as the blues and gospel. See Lewis, “Lap Dancer or Hillbilly Deluxe.”

<sup>4</sup> For a comprehensive history of women in country music and their role in the growth of the genre, see Mary Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann’s book *Finding Her Voice: The Saga of Women in Country Music*. For a history of country music gender conventions as they relate to stage personas and representations, see Bufwack’s “Girls and Guitars.”

<sup>5</sup> Angel Guillermo Quintero Rivera has traced the development of Puerto Rican music to the *cimarrón*, or runaway slave, and proposes a theory of the music as following a tradition of liberty and justice. See his article “La música puertorriqueña y la contra-cultura democrática.”

<sup>6</sup> Two other possible examples of successful female salsa performers are La Lupe, who had a strong career in the 1960s and 1970s, and La India, a contemporary singer often compared to La Lupe, who shows signs of maintaining a strong and long career in salsa.

<sup>7</sup> The original lines in Spanish read: “si yo fuera tú/ le dejaría, las maletas en la puerta/ y una nota que dijera/ apartir de este mometo que te cocine tu abuela.” The translation is my own.

## Works Cited

- Aparicio, Frances. "'Así Son': Salsa Music, Female Narratives, and Gender (De)Construction in Puerto Rico." *Poetics Today* 5.4 (1994): 659-84. Print.
- Banes, Ruth. "Dixie's Daughters: The Country Music Female." *You Wrote My Life: Lyrical Themes in Country Music*. Ed. Melton McLaurin and Richard Peterson. Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 1992. 81-112. Print.
- Bufwack, Mary. "Girls with Guitars—and Fringe and Sequins and Rhinestones, Silk, Lace and Leather." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 94.1 (1995): 173-216. Print.
- Bufwack, Mary, and Robert Oermann. *Finding Her Voice: The Saga of Women in Country Music*. New York: Crown, 1993. Print.
- Cash, Johnny. "Delia's Gone." *American Recordings Lost Highway*, 1994. CD.
- Consalvo, Mia. "Hegemony, Domestic Violence and Cops." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 26.2 (1998): 62-70. Print.
- Cruz, Celia. "¡Que le den candela!" *Irrepetible*. RMM, 1994. CD.
- Cruz, Celia, and Johnny Pacheco. "Las divorciadas." *De nuevo Fania*, 1985. CD.
- Derno, Maiken, and Christopher Washburne. "Masquerading Machismo: La India and the Staging of Chusmería on the Salsa Scene." *Women and Performance* 12.2 (2002): 139-156. Print.
- Dixie Chicks. "Goodbye Earl." *Fly*. Monument Records, 1999. CD.
- Ellison, Curtis. *Country Music Culture: From Hard Times to Heaven*. Jackson, MS: U of Mississippi, 1995. Print.
- Ferraro, Kathleen. "The Dance of Dependency: A Genealogy of Domestic Violence Discourse." *Hypatia* 11.4 (1996): 77-91. Print.
- Fox, Pamela. "Recycled 'Trash': Gender and Authenticity in Country Music Autobiography." *American Quarterly* 50.2 (1998): 234-66. Print.
- Lewis, George. "Lap Dancer or Hillbilly Deluxe? The Cultural Construction of Modern Country Music." *Journal of Popular Culture* 31.3 (1997): 163-73. Print.
- . "Duelin' Values: Tension, Conflict and Contradiction in Country Music." *Journal of Popular Culture* 24.4 (1991): 103-17. Print.
- Malone, Bill. *Don't Get Above Your Raisin': Country Music and the Southern Working Class*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2002. Print.
- Padilla, Felix. "Salsa: Puerto Rican and Latino Music." *Journal of Popular Culture* 24.1 (1991): 87-104. Print.
- Puleo, Augusto. "Una verdadera crónica del Norte: Una noche con La India." *Everynight Life: Culture and Dance in Latin/o America*. Ed. Celeste Fraser Delgado and José Esteban Muñoz. Durham: Duke UP, 1997. 223-37. Print.
- Quintero Herencia, Juan Carlos. "Notes toward a Reading of Salsa." *Everynight Life: Culture and Dance in Latin/o America*. Ed. Celeste Fraser Delgado and José Esteban Muñoz. Durham: Duke UP, 1997. 189-222. Print.

Quintero Rivera, Angel Guillermo. "La música puertorriqueña y la contra-cultura democrática: Espontaneidad lebertaria de la herencia cimarrona." *Folklore Americano* 49 (1990): 135-67.Print.

Tichi, Cecilia. "Editor's Note." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 94.1 (1995): 1-5.Print.

CALL for PAPERS

PCAS / ACAS

Savannah, Georgia

October 7-9, 2010

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, American and world-wide. Here is a sampling of topic areas at last year's meeting: film, mass media, sports, myths, utopias, feminist and gender studies, religion, insanity, identity, humor, horror, literature, social history, cookbooks, rhetoric, aspects of material culture, consumerism, vampirism, military history. We encourage panels organized around one issue or theme. The program chairs will be glad to help you with that.

Papers are limited to twenty (20) minutes or less. All submissions will be acknowledged. Please send an abstract of at least 200 words, and with it your email address and cell phone or land line number to

[pcasacas2010@gmail.com](mailto:pcasacas2010@gmail.com)

Submission deadline: June 14, 2010

If you will need audio-visual support, please note that need on your abstract. We can only schedule overhead or DVD/VCR w/monitor--NO LCD projectors will be available. If you have any questions about any aspect of the October conference, please contact one of the Program Co-Chairs:

Dennis Hall: [dennis.hall@louisville.edu](mailto:dennis.hall@louisville.edu)

Tom Van: [tavan@digicove.com](mailto:tavan@digicove.com)

## **“But This Is the *South*”: Ambivalent Regionalism in Jan Karon’s Mitford Novels**

The novels in Jan Karon’s best-selling Mitford series—from *At Home in Mitford* (1994) to *Light from Heaven* (2005)—focus on a small town in North Carolina and its Episcopal priest, Father Tim Kavanagh. While the books have been read by millions, they represent a strange twist on the genre of southern literature. Mitford is a bucolic town with streets named Lilac Road and Wisteria Lane, resembling nineteenth-century British fiction more than present-day North Carolina. Yet Karon occasionally insists on the southern nature of her stories, even suggesting that a very common term or practice is unique to the South. For example, when Father Tim claims that Anglican burial tradition does not include talking about the departed person’s life, Olivia Harper responds: ““But this is the *South*!”” (*These High* 289). Of course, everyone talks about the deceased during funerals. Olivia’s comment seems like an over-compensation for the books’ departure from regional conventions—or perhaps a hint that southerners have a unique talent for mourning. In fact, the South that Karon tends to affirm is also passing away, the victim of consumerism, bad taste, and urban sprawl. At first glance, Karon seems to be ambivalent both about being understood as a regional writer and about whether the South can be celebrated. Yet the Mitford novels ultimately betray this ambivalence by revealing a southern worldview that is all too familiar, filled with nostalgia for a lost world of white southern gentility while portraying poor white and black characters as caricatures of Confederate pride and devoted servitude.

### **In the South, But Not of It?**

In the essay “Making Mitford Real,” Karon describes her decision to return to her native North Carolina after years of living in New York City. Her nostalgia for the South includes many regional characteristics such as lower-class dialect: “I longed to return to the uncommon music of common speech in our foothills and mountains, to hear ‘ain’t’ for *aren’t*, and ‘tote’ for *carry*” (*Mitford Bedside* 30). Yet she goes on to insist that “I’ve found Mitford in Milford (Michigan), in Manteo (North Carolina), in Montrose (California), and even in certain neighborhoods of Manhattan. There are Mitfords everywhere!” (31). When I surveyed thirty-six devoted Mitford readers from around the country, they often reminded me that Mitford is a state of mind rather than a specific location. All but three readers knew that Mitford is in North Carolina, but one respondent called my question about its location “sneaky,” since “I have heard Ms. Karon say, and would agree, that the spirit of Mitford, of loving and caring about our neighbors and friends, is alive and well all over the place.” When readers were asked to rank eight possible reasons for enjoying the books, the southern setting came out next to last, placing well below Christian values and “the chance to experience a simpler, more caring world.”<sup>1</sup>

Critics of southern literature have been quick to agree with Karon that she is not really a “southern writer.” She is not mentioned in the massive volume *The History of Southern Women’s Literature* edited by Carolyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks. Sharon Monteith begins her discussion of contemporary southern women writers by eliminating those who do not fit her criteria: “Karon’s novels are popular with readers who seek a soft-focus South; the narratives exemplify a white housewives’ utopia that exudes bland and sweet didacticism and lacks the irony that peppers Southern fiction” (“Recent” 537). Ted Olson includes Karon in a list of best-selling authors who write about Appalachia, but claims that the novels “hold little pretense of being anything other than popular page-turners” (177). Christopher D. Geist distinguishes Karon from the mainstream of southern writers: “Old southern issues of the burdens of history, racial tensions, and poverty seem far away in this new popular literature coming from the region” (124). While Scott Romine devotes several pages to the Mitford novels, he uses them as a point of contrast to texts that he considers “more complex”

(157). His astute observation that the series “preserves its pastoral integrity by marginalizing African American characters” is relegated to a footnote (257).

Yet Karon’s denial that she is a “southern writer” may be her most southern quality, since Richard Gray reminds us that “denying regional affiliation is in itself a venerable Southern tradition” (399). Karon’s work echoes many literary traditions—from plantation fiction to Agrarianism—that claim to uphold universal values and ideals but contain prejudices about class and race that are deeply rooted in the South. Like the writers of plantation fiction, Karon cloaks profoundly racist representations with nostalgia for a past era in which privileged whites reigned peacefully. This type of literature “posits a world innocent of politics—because innocent of the conflicts that generate politics—but continually endangered by a surrounding world of political and economic corruption” (Grammer 58). In Mitford, these dangers still come from Yankees and liberals, as well as ruthless Florida developers who would destroy the village’s close-knit community. Rather than chivalric masters and contented slaves, we have benevolent employers and loving African American servants who speak in dialect, for example when Louella Marshall insists on down-home cooking: “‘Low-fat? Pass it on by, honey, you can *skip* this chile!’” (*Out* 194). Lisa Cohen Minnick advises readers to pay close attention to an author’s motives for using black dialect, but she also notes that “there seem to be far fewer examples today of white-authored representation of African American speech. Perhaps this is the result of increased sensitivity to the complications inherent in attempting to render black voices authentically, given the troubling history of these renderings” (27). Karon’s decision to use black dialect as comic relief—whether it stems from an attempt to celebrate black voices or a failure to recognize the dialect’s “troubling history”—has the unfortunate effect of contributing to a racist literary tradition.

Karon’s small-town Christian fiction also upholds the values of the Agrarian movement that formed at Vanderbilt University in the 1920s and 1930s and remained a source of lively debate among southern critics during the time of the publication of the Mitford novels. Religious faith was deeply important to Agrarians such as John Crowe Ransom, the son of a Methodist minister, and Allen Tate, a convert to Catholicism. Tate’s ideal of a modern world “that included England, France, and Italy as well as the American

South” (Bryant 50) also foreshadows the central role that all three countries play in the Mitford series as repositories of high culture. Even Karon’s denial that Mitford is uniquely southern finds its counterpart in the New Criticism that followed the Agrarian movement, with its doctrine that literature should transcend its region and “constitute an extension of reality rather than a reflection of it” (Bryant 61). In the words of contemporary Agrarian defender Mark Royden Winchell, “they decided to construct an ideal of what the South might become from an image of what they imagined it to have been” (109). Readers who told me that they strive to recreate Mitford in their own towns suggest that Karon has succeeded in representing the South to them as a model for the nation.

Michael Kreyling’s *Inventing Southern Literature* analyzes the methods of “keeping history at bay” (xii) in southern conservative thought, providing a context for the sense of timelessness that causes many readers to think that the Mitford novels are set in the distant past. Kreyling’s arguments about other conservative southern writers could easily apply to Karon, who appears to view the South as the world’s “cultural salvation” (23), while “New York is the familiar image of the place where the nefarious forces of destruction nest” (47). Kreyling reminds us that despite the move toward parody and irony in much contemporary southern literature, “a strongly conservative minority still dedicates itself to preserving the South as a cultural refuge from the excesses and wrong turns of modern life” (166). Gray describes a broader trend in which we can place the Mitford novels: recent movies and advertisements often present the South as “a desirable other, one potential, purchasable release from the pressures of living and working in a world governed by the new technologies and international capital” (356). Karon is not the only writer who has marketed the South as an escape from the supposedly more fast-paced and heartless states, although her popularity with southern readers proves that the South is not immune to the same stresses.

Feminist critics also describe the traditions of southern women’s literature in ways that resonate with Karon’s work, even if her conservatism makes other popular novels—Bobbie Ann Mason’s *In Country*, Fannie Flagg’s *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, Rebecca Wells’ *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*—seem remarkably progressive. Published in the same year as the first Mitford novel, Linda Tate’s *A South-*

*ern Weave of Women* argues: “Only when all southern women’s voices are heard do we begin to understand the South itself” (6). While Karon has little in common with the more counter-cultural writers that Tate discusses, she shares their “points of connection—family, race, history, sense of place, and women’s voice” (6). In their introduction to *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson acknowledge: “The stories of southern bodies have been structured in large part by the interlocking logics of dichotomy—masculine and feminine, white and black, master and slave, planter and ‘white trash,’ Cavalier and Yankee—that have characterized the dominant public written discourse of the South” (2). While these dichotomies remain fairly solid in Mitford, underlying tensions such as Tim’s anxious memories of his Mississippi childhood remind us that despite the powerful ideologies that Jones and Donaldson describe, “Leftover areas of ambiguities always threaten to reassert themselves” (6). If we read Karon carefully, even the life of a middle-class white male preacher turns out to be filled with fear and identity crisis. Karon’s immense popularity also seems to demand a closer look. Though her politics may not be appealing to many academics, our refusal to engage them makes it impossible for us to recognize the full range of writing that millions of Americans use to imagine “the South.”

### **“Morbid Decline”: Ruins of the Old South**

There are two mansions in Mitford, both falling into ruins at the beginning of the series, which represent the ongoing decline and reinvention of the Old South: built with Victorian architecture in the 1920s, they are renovated to serve the needs of the white middle class of the twenty-first century. The old Porter Place—located downtown on Main Street—was once the pride of the village, but now its “stone benches with carved angels’ heads were crumbling to dust. Many of the shutters lay in the grass where they had fallen” (*At Home* 35). The current owner is the elderly Miss Rose, a vicious schizophrenic whose bizarre outfits deconstruct the styles of a southern belle, for example “a green taffeta evening gown, a moth-eaten plaid velvet cummerbund, elbow-length satin gloves, a World War II officer’s cape, and saddle oxfords without laces” (*At Home* 144). Her husband Billy is a lower-class character who speaks in dialect and seems

incapable of keeping up the house. They finally agree to donate it for a Town Museum, giving Tim a chance to reverse its “morbid decline” (*At Home* 286) and to infuse it with a generic spirit of patriotism. When Rose requests a statue of her brother that looks “like Sherman or Grant or one of them” (*At Home* 379), Tim sidesteps this unexpected reference to Northern Civil War generals and hands the project over to the Daughters of the American Revolution. The public unveiling of the statue in *A Light in the Window* focuses on Willard Porter’s service in World War Two, with a brass band playing “God Bless America” (371). Both the statue and the Town Museum, which features artifacts like a jukebox from the local diner, mask the eccentric southern reality of Rose and Billy, who are still living in the back rooms of the house, surrounded by stacks of old newspapers that seem to represent the weight of forgotten history.

Miss Sadie Baxter’s mansion Fernbank has a more rural setting, located among apple orchards on the edge of town, and more clearly represents nostalgia for an era when devoted black servants ministered to their white employers. In the first novel, the elderly, unmarried Sadie tells Tim a long story of her childhood, in which her descriptions of another local mansion seem like a modern version of plantation fiction: “‘Oh, we all loved Boxwood! It had so many servants hurrying about, and they all seemed so happy in their work. Miss Lureen was good to her people. Why, when her Packard wore out, do you know who she gave it to? Her chauffeur!’” (305). The narrative does not invite the reader to question Sadie’s assertion that “‘Life was better in those days, Father, it really was’” (307). Like the Porter Place, Fernbank eventually ends up in public hands, as Sadie becomes too feeble to maintain the property and donates it to the church. When the Miami Development Group offers to convert it into a spa, Tim tries to convince himself to do the practical thing: “‘Surely he was trying to hold on to what was vanished and gone, to another way of life that had been vibrantly preserved in Miss Sadie’s engrossing stories’” (*Out* 94). But the narrative affirms Tim’s nostalgia when he has the opportunity to sell the property to Andrew Gregory, who makes it into an expensive Italian restaurant. Tim acknowledges that Sadie would not like Lucera’s yuppie atmosphere, but he seems to accept it as a reasonable substitute for the Old South that she remembers—perhaps because it is also inaccessible to most people in town.

A third crumbling southern mansion reinforces the image of the Old South as “vanished and gone,” with the power to generate nostalgia despite elements of the bizarre and grotesque. When Tim and his wife Cynthia spend a year living on Whitecap Island on the North Carolina coast in *A New Song*, they venture into the overgrown yard of a nearby mansion called *Nouvelle Chanson*. The sole inhabitant is a nasty, reclusive, childless cripple named Morris Love, who suffers from the chronic hereditary disorder of Tourette’s syndrome. Yet Morris turns out to be redeemable, ultimately becoming the organist at the local Episcopal church. Even his house is not entirely ruined:

There was definitely a musty smell, but everything looked clean and orderly. Ornately carved armchairs stood on either side of a heavy mirror in which he was startled to see himself. On the floor, a pattern of black and white tiles, and to the right, a curving stairwell and a vast, lighted oil painting on the high wall. The painting was of rolling countryside, somewhere in Europe, perhaps, with a church spire and a procession of people in a lane. (287)

Tim is startled to see his reflection, perhaps recognizing that he has been searching for his own southern identity in these old houses all along. The painting with “a church spire and a procession of people in a lane” also mirrors the cover of this book, an illustration of a small white church with a line of parishioners moving toward the door. By reading *A New Song*, Karon suggests that we can inhabit the carefully guarded space of southern wealth represented by *Nouvelle Chanson*. Her clear investment in restoring the mansions of these privileged white families contradicts her claim that Mitford can be found just as easily in Manhattan or California. The books turn out to be vehicles for appreciating a uniquely southern past that might appear repellent on the surface, but which always turns out to be valuable enough to preserve.

### **“It Ain’t Dollywood”: Poor White Characters and Spaces**

Throughout the series, Karon undercuts the more educated characters’ sentimental language with humor about working-class southern pride, whether Percy Mosely is complaining about Yankee tourists or Dora Pugh

calls someone a “cracker.” A more elaborate example takes place in a subplot about Coot Hendrick, the hillbilly descendent of the town’s founder, who claims that his great-great-granpaw shot and buried five Yankees who had run away from their regiment during the Civil War (*New Song* 23). Even before the graves are located, the townspeople argue about whether they should become a source of local pride and should be preserved in a museum. A local college professor exemplifies the language of historical preservation: ““We wish to see this valuable site preserved. . . so that residents and visitors can understand and enjoy our mountain frontier heritage”” (*New Song* 199). This frontier heritage is embellished in a folk song that Mrs. Beulah Mae Hendrick sings to the Town Council:

Shot five Yankees  
 a-runnin’ from th’ war  
 Caught ’em in a cornfield  
 Sleepin’ by a f’ar  
 Now they’ll not run no more, oh  
*They’ll not run no more!* (*New Song* 255)

The graves are found at the end of *In This Mountain* and made into a historical site, including a marker and a walking trail (378-79). While Karon rarely mentions the Civil War, this satirical subplot exemplifies her tendency to use poor white characters to express Confederate pride, thus disassociating herself from a historically white supremacist ideology while also suggesting that it is harmless.

References to food in *At Home in Mitford* also associate the poorer characters with uniquely southern tastes. Whereas Tim and Cynthia eat lamb stew and bouillabaisse and buy expensive cabernet, Russell Jacks likes to ““cook me a mess of greens and fry out some side meat”” (108), church members bring Homeless Hobbes a Thanksgiving meal of ham biscuits, collards, grits, and sausage dressing (157), and Coot Hendrick dumps a pack of peanuts in his bottled Coke (205). The novels imply that upper- and middle-class whites have more cosmopolitan and sophisticated tastes as a way of reinforcing their overall superiority to the redneck characters. Ironically, *Jan Karon’s Mitford Cookbook & Kitchen Reader* reverses this trend as part of the publishers’ attempt to capitalize on the popularity of the novels and allow every reader to recreate Mitford in her own community. The cookbook represents wealthy and middle-class white women as the authentic regional cooks and southern food as exotic and desirable.

Karon describes editor Martha McIntosh's southern credentials, including the fact that she was born in Mississippi: "A classic Southern ambrosia? She grew up on it. A totally scrumptious chicken pie? She learned this secret at her grandmother's knee'" (xi). The recipes represent a combination of southern dishes (sweet tea, cornbread, ham biscuits, livermush, grits, spoon bread, fried chicken, sweet potato pie, fried okra) and dishes that would be served anywhere in America (apple pie, pork roast, green beans, scalloped potatoes). Yet the recipe credits show that most contributors are from the South, including Mississippi, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, and Alabama.

This listing of states invokes a kinship of southerners throughout the region, but the novels' symbolic geography privileges middle-class Mitford over poor areas of town and many other southern states. Every book contains a detailed map of the town in which the top right corner is covered by the word "Mitford." Readers know this to be the location of the Creek, an impoverished community usually associated with crime. When Tim's dog is stolen by drug dealers from the Creek in the first novel, police officers call them "low-down snakes" (358) and "scumheads" (376). Tim does not actually see the Creek until the third novel, from the distance of a private airplane: "Then he saw the open sore on the breast of the creek bank—ramshackle, unpainted houses, tin-roofed sheds, houses that had burned and stood in their rubble, rusted trailers and vehicles abandoned in the weeds or sitting on blocks" (*These High* 112). Tim converts the Creek's poverty to a natural metaphor, an "open sore on the breast of the creek," as a way of removing himself from responsibility. When his pilot points out: "'It ain't Dollywood!'" (112), he invokes the country music attraction as the epitome of high class. Yet the reader senses the irony, since we assume that both Dollywood and the Creek appear at the bottom of Tim's hierarchy of southern spaces. Despite some attempts at ministry to the people of the Creek by Tim and other pastors, this area is finally converted into a shopping center and erased from the Mitford landscape, just as it has always been erased from the map.

Appalachian states do not fare any better. A *Mitford Muse* newspaper article lists the recipients of charitable gifts raised at a church rummage sale as "'Bosnia, Croatia, Ruwanda'" and "'Harlan County, Kentucky'" (*Out* 300). The needs of entire countries are equated with the imagined

need of a single Kentucky county. Tennessee always seems to be associated with lowbrow comic relief or the nameless terrors of poverty. Joe Ivey moves to Memphis to work security at Graceland, but decides to return after he has a vision of Elvis mowing his lawn (*New Song* 12-13). The owner of a diner in Whitecap responds viscerally to her husband's suggestion that they could retire there: "'Tennessee! The very thought gave her the shivers. All those log cabins, all those grizzlies stumbling around in the dark, plus moonshine out the kazoo'" (*New Song* 383). When Tim and Cynthia plan to move to Tennessee for a missions trip in *In This Mountain*, Tim has a nightmare that links his fear of this environment to his own buried Mississippi childhood: "He sat in a straight-back chair in a small, empty room with a dirt floor. It was the same cool, hard-packed floor of his grandmother's potato cellar" (80). The nightmare room fills with silent children who "looked at him, searching for something he had no ability to name or to deliver" (80-81). Soon after, he goes into a diabetic coma that nearly kills him, closing off any possibility of mission work. This portrayal of Appalachia as nightmarish and potentially fatal to the visitor belies Karon's claim that "There are Mitfords everywhere" and implies that Mitford is an elite space surrounded by the horrors of most southern life.

### **"Slavery Done Been Over All These Years": Black Servants in the Mitford World**

In the same year that Karon published *At Home in Mitford*, Patricia A. Turner published *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies*, describing a resurgence of popular interest in the smiling, overweight black mammy who faithfully serves a white family. Turner asks: "What does the present fascination with mammy images reveal about contemporary society? What price has been exacted from the real black women who have been forced to make their way in a culture that pays homage to a distorted icon?" (43). The only African American character in Mitford, Louella Baxter Marshall, clearly embodies the classic mammy stereotype, with her dark skin, buxom figure, broad dialect, fabulous cooking, and passionate devotion to her mistress. She was born on the Baxter family estate as the illegitimate daughter of a black servant and has lived and worked there for much of her life,

apparently without pay. At the beginning of the series, Louella returns to Fernbank after living with her grandson in Georgia. Tim's first response to her skin color reveals his fantasy that she will nurture the white church community: "It was inspiring to see Louella's broad, mahogany face smiling at him these days from the gospel side. Her presence brought something nourishing to the spirit of the congregation, like raisins added to bread" (*At Home* 214). Louella quickly falls into a role of domestic servitude, despite Sadie's claim that Louella is her friend and not her maid. When Tim visits Sadie, Louella rings a bell to say that lunch is ready and refuses to join them: "I'm eatin' right here in this kitchen" (*At Home* 310). At different times in the series, she sleeps in the sewing room, on a sofa at the foot of Sadie's bed, and in the kitchen, reinforcing Monteith's claim in *Advancing Sisterhood?* that "black women characters have not yet been liberated from the kitchens of white women in contemporary fiction" (102-103), despite a lot of utopian and therapeutic language from the white authors.

Numerous symbolic episodes reinforce Louella's role in the community. When Sadie and Olivia Harper are trying on the late Mrs. Baxter's hats, classic southern belle styles with wide brims and organdy sashes, they force Louella to take part in their informal fashion show. No one understands why Louella resists this act of reverse minstrelsy, in which she must dress up in her white employer's clothes just as Sadie used to dress her up as a baby. In a rare moment of protest, Louella refuses to play her role: "Slavery done been over all these years. . . an' some folks act like it still goin' on" (*Window* 56). Yet the narrative invokes a classic mammy stereotype to put her back in her place. When the male audience members tell her she looks terrific in the hat, she breaks "into one of her huge smiles" (56). By the end of the series, Louella spends her days in a nursing home watching soap operas, reminding Tim that "I never liked to fool with money" (*Heaven* 129) to explain why she did not care to inherit Sadie's millions.

In *A New Song*, Karon introduces another black domestic servant who devoted her life to her mother's white employers—this time with the unsubtle name of Mamie. In superficial ways, Morris Love's housekeeper defies the buxom, overweight, unintelligent mammy stereotype. Before learning her identity, Tim notices that she is slender, graceful, elegant, and genteel, with a tidy house and a husband. Yet as soon as he learns who she is, the stereotypes come flooding in: "'You're Mamie,' he said, noting her

carefully braided hair and the printed scarf tied round like a headband” (360). Tim feels so drawn to this woman that he finds himself haunting the area around her house “as if he’d found someone who’d been lost to him for many years” (361). When Mamie tells Tim about her education, she admits that she did not intend to devote her life to servitude, but she quickly assures Tim that she has no regrets: ““Noah and I raised a fine son. He’s a doctor in Philadelphia”” (364). Like Louella, Mamie chooses to live near her white employer in an all-white town rather than with her own relative. When Tim asks if she was born on the island, she responds: ““My people washed up on shore like timbers from the old ships. We think our wreck happened sometime around 1860”” (365). This story of a shipwreck right before the Civil War erases the entire history of slavery, suggesting that black people simply “washed up on shore” just in time to be liberated by the North. Although Mamie is slender, married, and articulate, she does not conflict with Karon’s other portraits of black women.

We finally discover why Tim has such a powerful reaction to Mamie when we learn about his own mammy in a flashback in *Shepherds Abiding*. As with Louella, Peggy’s dialect signals her race before there is an explicit reference to her skin color. Her first words are rendered in eye dialect: ““Miz Kavanagh, is it all right t’ give Timothy some of this candy fruit?”” (88). Her skin is then compared to food, “exactly the color of gingerbread” (90). Ironically, Peggy uses her dialectical speech to teach Tim the correct pronunciation of *bûche de Noël*, raising the question of how she can pronounce perfect French but says “yo” instead of “your.” Peggy reappears in flashbacks later in the novel, beginning with the day that Tim’s mother is taken to the hospital in Memphis. Here we receive our first glimpses of the Kavanaghs’ “big white house in the stand of oaks” and Peggy’s cottage where she feeds him cornbread and sweet potato (165-66). In the next flashback, he describes “her head wrapped in a red kerchief” and her tendency to correct his grammar, even though she continues to speak in dialect herself (246). In *Light From Heaven*, Tim reveals that Peggy vanished when he was ten: “It occurred to him as he sat here, more than a half century later, that he’d looked for Peggy for most of his life” (145). This might explain his childlike adoration of Louella and Mamie and his relationships with his own working-class white maids, from the heroic Puny Bradshaw to the comical Del Flower, who has a Confederate flag on

the antenna of her van. Tim feels a familial affection for both black and white domestic workers, but they are never depicted in their own homes.

In *Clinging to Mammy*, Micki McElya explains the ongoing appeal of this stereotype: “The myth of the faithful slave lingers because so many white Americans have wished to live in a world in which African Americans are not angry over past and present injustices, a world in which white people were and are not complicit, in which the injustices themselves. . . seem not to exist at all” (3). This myth seems very pervasive among the readers that I surveyed, who made no references to race or racism when asked open-ended questions like: “Have you ever disagreed with or been offended by anything in the books?” and “Do you think that the Mitford books are realistic?” In a follow-up interview in which I brought up the issue directly, one liberal, white New England reader explained how she overcame her initial annoyance that Louella has to wait on Sadie just because she is black: “I think the reader is transferred to a magical ‘other’ place, almost like reading about a foreign culture. In a foreign culture, we have been schooled not to judge or feel superior. It makes the black question seem to be one outside our realm, not triggering our call to action about black stereotypes and inequalities of all kinds.” If Mitford can be found “everywhere,” it also turns out to be nowhere, a “magical ‘other’ place” where racism becomes invisible.

### ***Home to Holly Springs: A New Direction for Jan Karon?***

*Home to Holly Springs* (2007), the first novel in the new Father Tim series, offers a jarring contrast to Karon’s portrayal of the South in the Mitford books. It is no surprise that one reader told the Mitford Bulletin Board that she threw the book in the trash without finishing, since it refuses to offer the comfortable pleasures that drew readers to Mitford. In her dedication to the new novel, Karon explains how she had chosen Tim’s hometown more than a decade earlier: “I spread a map of America on the floor of my writing room, and proceeded to eliminate every southern state but Mississippi (which I had never visited)” (ix). She chose the town based on its name. Writing *Home to Holly Springs* compelled Karon to travel to “this gem of the Deep South,” and this author who has always avoided Civil

War references was faced with an enormous Civil War cemetery and more than sixty antebellum homes (ix).

On his fictional version of this journey, Tim learns some surprising things that transform the Peggy of Mitford into the more well-rounded character Peggy Lambert Winchester. In one graphic flashback, the young Tim shoots a white man who is raping Peggy (142-45), which places her in the realistic position of having to defend herself from white male violence, even if Tim does get to enjoy the role of savior. More importantly, Tim discovers that Peggy abandoned him because she was pregnant with his father's baby and wanted to focus on raising her own child, a choice which even Tim learns to respect. While the book cover conflates Tim's mother figures by showing the back of a slender caregiver in nylon stockings who could be either Peggy Lambert Winchester or Madelaine Howard Kavanagh, the novel makes it clear that both women endured more than Tim realized, and Peggy is the one who survived.

So what do the Mitford novels say about the present role of the South in American popular culture? In *Dirt and Desire*, Patricia Yaeger concludes that southern studies have become marginalized within the academy, while "fiction by southern women is hardly the flavor of the month" (252). She was writing in 2000, in the middle of the enormous popularity of the Mitford series. While these books prove that the racial politics of plantation fiction are still very present, they also remind us to look for southern literature in unlikely places, including Christian novels with pastel covers. The appearance of *Home to Holly Springs* also reminds us not to judge southern women's writing too quickly. When Peggy shows Tim her scars in the latest novel, Karon demonstrates her willingness to explore themes "of flesh that has been ruptured or riven by violence, of fractured, excessive bodies telling us something that diverse southern cultures don't want us to say" (Yaeger xiii). Perhaps the remaining novels of the Father Tim series will continue to dig up surprising messages about the Deep South, even in a "postsouthern" world.

**Eleanor Hersey Nickel**  
**Fresno Pacific University**

## Note

<sup>1</sup>I conducted the survey of thirty-six Mitford readers in 2008. Twenty-five readers responded to the survey posted on the Mitford Books Bulletin Board on MitfordBooks.com, while other surveys were mailed to Mitford readers recommended by my friends and family, including the members of a Mitford book group affiliated with a Foursquare Gospel church. There were fourteen respondents from the South (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia), six from the Northeast (Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont), six from the Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin), and ten from the West (Arizona, California, Colorado, and Oregon). All but one were women, with an average age of fifty-six. They had read an average of eight out of nine Mitford novels, and most had also read companion books such as the cookbook and *Bedside Companion*. Not surprisingly, they were very sympathetic readers, with only four respondents claiming that they had “disagreed with or been offended by anything in the books” (all of them involving a character or plot event that they did not like, none of them concerning race or the South). Seventy-five percent of respondents claimed that the books were “realistic.” I created a list of eight possible reasons for enjoying the Mitford books based on comments that I had read and heard from readers. The respondents ranked them in the following order of enjoyment: characters; Christian values; the chance to experience a simpler, more caring world; humor; writing style; escape from everyday life; Southern setting; and sharing/discussing books with other readers.

## Works Cited

- Bryant, J.A. Jr. *Twentieth-Century Southern Literature*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1997. Print.
- Geist, Christopher D. "Popular Literature." *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Vol. 9. *Literature*. Ed. M. Thomas Inge. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2008. 117-24. Print.
- Grammer, John M. "Plantation Fiction." *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South*. Ed. Richard Gray and Owen Robinson. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 58-75. Print.
- Gray, Richard. *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2000. Print.
- Jones, Anne Goodwyn, and Susan V. Donaldson. "Haunted Bodies: Rethinking the South through Gender." *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*. Ed. Anne Goodwyn Jones and Susan V. Donaldson. Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1997. 1-19. Print.
- Karon, Jan. *At Home in Mitford*. New York: Penguin, 1994. Print.
- . *A Common Life: The Wedding Story*. New York: Penguin, 2001. Print.
- . *Home to Holly Springs*. New York: Viking, 2007. Print.
- . *In This Mountain*. New York: Penguin, 2002. Print.
- . *Jan Karon's Mitford Cookbook & Kitchen Reader*. Ed. Martha McIntosh. New York: Viking, 2004. Print.
- . *Light from Heaven*. New York: Penguin, 2005. Print.
- . *A Light in the Window*. New York: Penguin, 1995. Print.
- . *The Mitford Bedside Companion*. Ed. Brenda Furman. New York: Viking, 2006. Print.
- . *A New Song*. New York: Penguin, 1999. Print.
- . *Out to Canaan*. New York: Penguin, 1997. Print.
- . *Shepherds Abiding*. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.
- . *These High, Green Hills*. New York: Penguin, 1996. Print.
- Kreyling, Michael. *Inventing Southern Literature*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1998. Print.
- McElya, Micki. *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007. Print.
- Minnick, Lisa Cohen. *Dialect and Dichotomy: Literary Representations of African American Speech*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2004. Print.

- Monteith, Sharon. *Advancing Sisterhood? Interracial Friendships in Contemporary Southern Fiction*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2000. Print.
- . “Recent and Contemporary Women Writers in the South.” *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American South*. Ed. Richard Gray and Owen Robinson. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 536-551. Print.
- Olson, Ted. “Literature.” *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*. Ed. Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004. 165-78. Print.
- Perry, Carolyn, and Mary Louise Weaks. *The History of Southern Women's Literature*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002. Print.
- Romine, Scott. *The Real South: Southern Narrative in the Age of Cultural Reproduction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2008. Print.
- Tate, Linda. *A Southern Weave of Women: Fiction of the Contemporary South*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 1994. Print.
- Turner, Patricia A. *Ceramic Uncles & Celluloid Mammies: Black Images and Their Influence on Culture*. New York: Anchor, 1994. Print.
- Winchell, Mark Royden. *Reinventing the South: Versions of a Literary Region*. Columbia: U of Missouri P, 2006. Print.
- Yaeger, Patricia. *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930-1990*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000. Print.

# 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](mailto: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 500-1,000 words long and should (like article submissions) be emailed as an attachment of a Microsoft Word document with the contributor's surname in the file name. Queries are welcome.

## **Adapting Shakespeare for *Star Trek* and *Star Trek* for Shakespeare: *The Klingon Hamlet* and the Spaces of Translation**

In Leo Braudy's words, "a remake is always concerned with what its makers and (they hope) its audiences consider to be unfinished cultural business, unrefinable and perhaps finally unassimilable material that remains part of the cultural dialogue."<sup>1</sup> This statement goes firmly against those critical voices which diagnose the practice of rewriting as post-modern urge to imitate "dead styles" of the past,<sup>2</sup> or warn against culture "forgotten behind the rewrite."<sup>3</sup> Describing remake as partaking in an un-ending cultural dialogue, continued "not until it is finally given definite form, but until it is no longer compelling or interesting,"<sup>4</sup> Braudy alludes to an inherent referentiality or intertextuality of cultural production, where any given text can (or, in fact, must) be read in relation to other texts, as permutation of other texts.<sup>5</sup> This sense of textual kinship, grounded in some "unfinished cultural business," underlies any rewriting or adapting procedure: within the medium of film (as Braudy indicates), as well as within the literary field, and in any cross-exchange between the literary, visual, and performing arts. It is also what seems to underlie the translation, as it moves from one linguistic and semantic system to another in hope (forever uncertain) of capturing what made the original compelling and interesting, and in search (never accomplished) for – to use Walter Benjamin's term – the original's "after-life."<sup>6</sup> In this essay I want to explore this phenomenon of textual – or intertextual – afterlife, brought about in a series of interpretive moves, linking the practices of translating and rewriting, in a bold attempt at adapting

Shakespeare for *Star Trek* and *Star Trek* for Shakespeare. I will refer here to a curious case of the translation of two of Shakespeare's plays – *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* – into the Klingon language, a language of a fictitious alien species originating in the *Star Trek* television series and films.

These projects, aiming at translating two of the canonical texts of modern English literature into a language linked to one of the biggest popular culture franchises, emerge at the very center of critical theory's questioning of translation and its political and ethical engagements. Since Benjamin's definition of "the task of translator,"<sup>7</sup> the translation has lost its position of an innocent copy, a truthful representation of some original text. It is no longer viewed as recreation of the original, but rather as its displacement, which leads from, but always moves away from, the meaning of the original. The translation lives by the difference of meanings,<sup>8</sup> and of languages, and in uncovering this essential foreignness, it opens the space for the interaction of the self and the other. This interaction remains fragile and uncertain, as the translation inevitably seeks to substitute the original meaning with its own linguistic and cultural categories, thus leading to the erasure of the foreignness and the ultimate alienation of the other. At the same time, by confronting the familiarity of translator's own meaning with the alienness of the original, it also leads to alienation of that which is familiar in one's own language, and to the alienation of the self.<sup>9</sup> The Klingon translations of Shakespeare's works – through sometimes playful stylistic devices, presenting the translated texts as reconstructions rather than different language versions of the original, and locating them in a broader textual tradition or narrative reality – become interesting illustrations of those challenges and ambiguities inherent to the translation process: the spaces of translation. At the same time, by staging Shakespeare's early modern plays in the futuristic costume of alien civilization, they reveal – and creatively rework – certain representations of language, culture and their interrelations linked to the *Star Trek* films and series. All along, they raise questions about the notion of familiarity and alien-ness and the processes of cultural re-appropriation as enacted in and through language, thus contributing to the debates on cultural and language politics, emerging at the intersections between translation theory and postcolonial studies. They also illustrate cre-

ative links between the official and popular culture and the role of popular texts in both enacting and reworking established cultural imaginaries.

In the following parts of this essay I will explore some of those points, while engaging in a close reading of the Klingon translations of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, in the context of both Shakespearean tradition and the broader *Star Trek* narrative. I will start by looking at the links between Shakespeare's oeuvre and various incarnations of *Star Trek* narrative as both context and inspiration for the Klingon translations. Following the trope of a daring "cultural re-appropriation" of Shakespeare's work in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, I will examine the richly layered intertextual play involved in presenting the Klingon versions of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* as reconstructions or restorations, and I will question the consequences of such a bold reinterpretation for the understanding of translation as "an authentic copy." Finally, addressing briefly the issue of the apparent interplay of high and popular culture enacted in the Klingon translations, I will look more closely at the links between language and its cultural context: the colonial context of Shakespeare's plays and the science-fiction / fandom context of the Klingon translations recreating, to a certain extent, some of the colonial representations. In this final part of the essay I will illustrate the complexities of alienation enacted in these projects, and indicate their consequences for the understanding of the processes of cultural and linguistic re-appropriation. Throughout these discussions I will attempt to elucidate the double role of popular culture in both subverting and re-enacting some prominent cultural representations and practices.

— — —

Translating Shakespeare for *Star Trek* and *Star Trek* for Shakespeare, the Klingon versions of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* exercise a curious double bind of adaptation. They bring evidence of the afterlife of the *Star Trek* mythology, while at the same time illuminating the links of this mythology with the afterlife, or "unfinished cultural business," of Shakespeare's work. It has been remarked by some critics that Shakespeare's oeuvre seems particularly susceptible to the "use" and "abuse" of countless adaptations, remakes and reinterpretations.<sup>10</sup> This tendency appears linked to Shakespeare's curious and particular position in the cultural space of the (not exclusively) English-speaking world. This particularity resounds already in a moniker popularly attributed to signify both his person (however uncer-

tain his identity might be) and his cultural legacy: the Bard. To speak of “the Bard” is necessarily to speak of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare’s position, it seems, is characterized by certain dialectics. On one hand, he is perceived as a canonical source of cultural heritage; on the other hand, he appears as a sort of cultural icon and even a part of the ideational furniture of everyday life. His presence in popular imagination emerges as a network of, often disjointed or distorted, allusions and references. As such Shakespeare becomes a textual “fair play” for continued rewritings, borrowings and transformations from language to language, from medium to medium. The *Star Trek* franchise in its over 40-year-long history has often contributed to this phenomenon, freely borrowing ideas, quotations and imaginaries linked to Shakespeare’s authorship.<sup>11</sup> It has been argued that this ransacking of the Shakespearean oeuvre for plot devices and easily recognizable quotations was meant to serve as a tool for cultural legitimation of *Star Trek* as a popular (therefore less “respectable”) text, providing it with “a veneer of cultural sophistication.”<sup>12</sup> This argument seems to oversimplify the question of intertextual connections of this science fiction franchise with other texts, picturing it in terms of the stark opposition between the popular and legitimate culture. As such it fails to account for the complexity of multilayered textual play enacted in some of the *Star Trek* episodes and films, and especially in *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*.

Nowhere in the whole franchise is Shakespearean influence, this “unfinished cultural business,” more visible than in the sixth of the *Star Trek* films. It starts with the casting of Christopher Plummer and David Warner, two renowned Shakespearean-trained actors, in the roles of the leaders of the Klingons, a warlike alien species and the original villains of the franchise. Interestingly, this casting strategy seems to have gone against the earlier practices of the production team, which tended to associate Shakespearean references with the characters and deeds of the Federation officers. As the comments of the writer and director, Nicholas Meyer, suggest, the Shakespearean background of the actors led to the decision of incorporating a significant number of “Bardic” references into the screenplay, particularly in the part of infamous General Chang.<sup>13</sup> However, “the Shakespearean connection” of *Star Trek VI* cannot be judged as entirely accidental and dictated solely by the casting of the leading characters. It is inscribed much more deeply into the narrative structure of the film and

starts with its very title, subtitled *The Undiscovered Country*. This expression originates in Hamlet's famous soliloquy starting with the words: "To be or not to be" (Act III, Scene I). The meaning of this metaphor differs, however, from its original use: in *Hamlet* it refers to the unknown of death; in *Star Trek* it represents the unknown of the future. And it is brought forth in this context by the Klingon leader, Chancellor Gorkon, played by David Warner. Recalling Shakespeare's words, Gorkon alludes to the uncertainty of the political situation which establishes the dramatic center of the film: the end of the war between the Klingon Empire and the United Federation of the Planets, the end of the status quo of past decades, and the unsure prospect of an intergalactic peace. What is also alluded to in Gorkon's comment, and in other Shakespearean references attributed to the Klingons, is that those galactic villains represent, in fact, "a cultured and civilised race," "a life-form not dissimilar to ourselves."<sup>14</sup> There is, however, a curious twist to this new representation of the Klingons as well-read and Shakespeare-loving. While quoting liberally from various Shakespearean sources, the warlike aliens from *Star Trek VI* end up claiming the Bard as their own cultural property.

Chancellor Gorkon's (in)famous words: "You have not experienced Shakespeare, until you have read him in the original Klingon" have called for many different readings. Kay H. Smith interpreted them from the perspective of the cultural politics of the cold war era as a sign of displacement of the conflict between two intergalactic powers.<sup>15</sup> Paul Cantor entertained the idea that they may signify a disturbing identification of the dying culture of the warlike Klingons with the virtue of heroism and values of heroic literature. But in the end he decided to reduce their meaning and interpret them as a mark of postmodern referentiality and inclination for pastiche.<sup>16</sup> The audience of *Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country* may have simply seen the Klingon leader's comment as a joke: on a narrative level, Gorkon's joke about the sense of cultural superiority articulated by the Federation officers, on an extratextual level, the writers' mockery of Shakespeare's iconic status and his uncertain identity. But what would have happened if Gorkon's words were to be read literally? What would it mean for Shakespeare to be read as an alien author? What would it be to experience his work in "the original Klingon"? These questions, so readily dismissed by some critics as signs of postmodern pastiche, resonated strongly with a

group of *Star Trek* and Klingon fans, giving birth to the Klingon Shakespeare Restoration Project, a bold attempt at “cultural re-appropriation” of the great playwright’s oeuvre undertaken by the members of the Klingon Language Institute.<sup>17</sup>

Inspired by the half-serious, half-playful reference to Shakespeare’s authorship from *Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country*, and by the broader scholarly aspirations of the KLI, this project aims at translating or – in line with Gorkon’s words – restoring Shakespeare’s entire oeuvre into Klingon, “an artificial language originally created as nothing more than a prop.”<sup>18</sup> The involvement of the members of the Klingon Language Institute with Shakespeare and Klingon led to the production of two texts: *The Klingon Hamlet*, translated by Nick Nicholas and Andrew Strader and first published in 1996, and *Much Ado About Nothing*, or to use its Klingon title *paghmo’ tIn mIS* (literally: “The Confusion is Great Because of Nothing”), translated by Nick Nicholas and first published in 2001.<sup>19</sup> As with many other activities of the KLI, the task of “restoring” those two Shakespeare plays to their “original” Klingon was influenced by and grounded in scholarly attitudes and practices. According to Lawrence M. Schoen, it was a result of the KLI’s long efforts to study, teach and, consequently, use “the warrior tongue.”<sup>20</sup> Originating in a linguistically informed knowledge of language, the translated texts are presented as valid representations of the original, the outcomes of a legitimate translating procedure, not unlike other translations of Shakespeare. At the same time it should be noted that those texts are positioned in a project that re-addresses the issue of Shakespeare’s influences within the *Star Trek* universe as a textual source for the language. In the case of the Klingon renditions of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, the involvement with *Star Trek* textual reality is even stronger and more direct.

Not only does *The Undiscovered Country* serve as an inspiration for those translations, it also provides them with an elaborate “make believe” narrative context which takes Gorkon’s words at face value and presents the Bard as a Klingon playwright, Wil’yam Shex’pir, who “lived at a time of crisis for the Klingon Empire.”<sup>21</sup> In this bold move of “cultural re-appropriation,” much more radical than its cinematic source, the translators playfully redefine the tradition of Shakespearean scholarship, firstly offering alternative “Klingon” readings of Shakespeare’s characters and plots. And so a

difficult relationship of Benedick and Beatrice, now B'enerdik and B'eterirsh, serves as a model example of Klingon courting behaviour, while Hamlet's, or Khamlet's, story of revenge becomes "a chilling portrayal of malaise and decay"<sup>22</sup> and a study of "cultural dispossession": "while he retains a sense of Klingon honour, Khamlet is culturally dispossessed, given to rationalising and talk instead of action . . . His development through the play is seen as a voyage back to his true Klingon roots, until, at the conclusion of the play, he dies in honour."<sup>23</sup>

This playful redefinition and re-appropriation of Shakespearean tradition is carefully developed within the translated text, weaving the characters and events of those classic texts with elements of *Star Trek's* extended universe. *The Klingon Hamlet* relocates the main events of Shakespeare's play to Kronos, the Klingon Home World, with Claudius (or tlhaw'DIyuS) turned into the Klingon Emperor, and Fortinbras of Norway (now vortlbraS) pictured as "the most insubordinate head of the House of Duras."<sup>24</sup> Other places and characters undergo similar reimagining. The *Star Trek* context of the translated text becomes visible also in the sometimes very imaginative translations of particular lines or expressions. While the famous "What a piece of work is a man!" from Act II of *Hamlet* is literally (and unsurprisingly) rendered as "A Klingon is an impressive specimen," a playful exchange between the two Clowns in the first scene of Act V is re-worked into a carefully designed word-play, making use of both a reference to *Star Trek's* recurring humorous plot of "the trouble with tribbles"<sup>25</sup> and a more sophisticated linguistic pun. To quote both the original and the literal translation of this scene:

- What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?
- The gallows maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.
- I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee . . .
- Which of these is the most useful? the engineer, the communications officer, or the technician?
- A tribble merchant. He is useful to regulate the tribble population ....He buys (**je'**) hungry tribbles. If you don't feed (**je'**) an entity (**Dol**), you'll observe a funeral (**nol**). You can't trade (**bech**) tribbles for food. Therefore, you'll suffer (**Mech**) from a large

tribble population...

As the Appendix to *The Klingon Hamlet* explains, the humour of the translated version is based on the “dialectical puns derived from the standard ‘Dol’ and ‘nol’ (‘entity’ and ‘funeral,’ respectively), as well as ‘bech’ and ‘mech’ (‘trade’ and ‘suffer,’ respectively), sounding virtually identical in the [alleged] dialect.”<sup>26</sup> Examples of similar reinterpretation or re-appropriation of Shakespeare’s words can be found throughout the translated versions of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

But the re-appropriation of Shakespeare’s authorship goes beyond the text and incorporates the whole tradition of the Bard’s scholarship, as the authors of those “restored Klingon versions” present “so-called Shekisperian Criticism” as a “well-organised campaign” of fabrications and Shakespeare’s original works as “crude forgeries.”<sup>27</sup> In this fictive context of “the Klingon restored version,” *The Klingon Hamlet* and “The Confusion is Great Because of Nothing” seem to make an important point of the problematic relationship between the translation and its original, as it playfully undermines the apparent foundations of any translating procedure: the belief that the translated text is a reliable representation – an “authentic copy” – of the original. According to postmodern theory, this belief in translation’s fidelity and translator’s transparency is already and always illusory, as the translation inevitably substitutes the categories and meanings of the original with its own linguistic and cultural notions. But the embedding of the translated text in the re-appropriation of Shakespeare’s authorship – not only as Klingon-like, but as Klingon in origin – takes the practice of confronting the meaning of the original with that of the translated text, enacted in any translation, a step further. By means of the fictitious introduction, both texts seem to replace the original with the translation not implicitly, but in a very literal way. As the subtitle to both publications states, these are not only Klingon versions of Shakespeare’s texts, these are “restored versions,” returning Shakespeare’s texts to the proper form. The Klingon translation becomes a means of the reinstatement of Shakespearean original.

This notion of translation supplanting the original seems reminiscent of Emily Apter’s discussions of the scandalous cases of pseudotranslations, the literary fabrications which claim to be renderings of non-existent, imaginary sources.<sup>28</sup> In those translations with no source-text, the fantasy of translation’s fidelity can be finally exposed. What is equally revealed is an illusory dominance of the original. The pseudotranslation, the “reproduction

of absent original,” shows how the ambiguity of the relationship between a text and its translation is enacted on both sides of this dyad: in the fallibility of translation and in the absence of the original. The Klingon versions of Shakespeare’s works can perhaps be perceived as the examples of such pseudotranslation, but only in a most curious way. For they are not translations without the original, but the translations pretending to be the original texts. They exercise a double mystification: they present themselves as the originals and the originals as translations, which – through a “well-organised campaign” of fabrications – managed to falsely acquire the status of the origins. Attributing their own mystifying procedure to the original texts and building their fictive legitimization, the Klingon translations seem to disturb the rightful order between Shakespeare as the source-text and *Star Trek* as its reworking. In fact, what they disturb – just as pseudotranslation does – is the reader’s understanding of the relationship between the original and the version: translation or adaptation. This picturing of Shakespeare’s plays as “crude forgeries” of the Klingon original texts serves as a playful reminder that there is no end and also no beginning to the intertextual referencing and mirroring.

Juxtaposed to this playful redefinition of Shakespearean tradition is the actual presentation of the texts, which mirrors the format of the comparative translations and provides the English and Klingon texts side by side in apparently perfect structural correspondence. This structural likeness is particularly visible in *The Klingon Hamlet* that, according to its translators, manages to recreate iambic pentameter of the English original, or should we say “forgery.” To quote just few examples emphasized in Appendix II:

- / - / - / - / - /  
bijatlh ‘e’ mev! peqIm! DaH cholqa’ bIH!  
Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!  
/ - - / - / - - - / -  
taH pagh taHbe’. DaH mu’tlheghvam vIqeInIS.  
To be or not to be; that is the question.<sup>29</sup>

In both those instances the Klingon “restored versions” seem to make a claim implicit in all translations: that a translated text is an accurate or valid representation of the original. In the words of the members of the Klingon Language Institute, this claim of fidelity comes dressed in the costume of *Star Trek*’s textual reality:

If Humans and Klingons are to understand this play – and by implication the world in which the players inhabit – then surely the key is to be found in the language. Accuracy, a highly valued Klingon trait, is thus of critical importance.<sup>30</sup>

By contrasting the fictive context of Shakespeare's Klingon authorship with a respectful, scholarly, informed attitude to a corpus of his works, the Klingon Shakespeare Restoration Project becomes an interesting illustration of the politics of translation, and particularly its links with the processes of cultural re-appropriation. It also brings into light the complex and often problematic relationship between high culture texts and practices and their popular re-enactments.

— — —

Stating as its source *Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country*, the project readdresses the issue of Shakespeare's influences within the *Trek* narratives. Just as Shakespearean and other literary references included in the series and feature films did, it poses the question of the relation between Shakespeare as representation of high culture and *Star Trek* as the embodiment of popular culture, and at the same time questions the validity of such juxtapositions. If – as several critics claim<sup>31</sup> – the introduction of Shakespearean allusions is to grant *Star Trek* a “veneer of sophistication” or “cultural legitimation,” does the inclusion of *Star Trek* references into a translation of Shakespeare's plays in turn deprive the translated texts of their rightful place in the literary canon, of their high culture status? *The Klingon Hamlet*, with its images of Hamlet and William Shakespeare, bearing the features recognizable as typical for the Klingon characters from later TV series and films, and with the disclaimers stating that “Star Trek” and “Klingon” are registered trademarks of Paramount Pictures, seems to be making Shakespeare not only a part of the *Star Trek* universe, but also a part of its franchise. *The Klingon Hamlet* – like almost all Klingon publications – is a licensed product of Paramount Pictures,<sup>32</sup> and the same could perhaps be said of Wil'yam Shex'pir, the Bard's Klingon alter ego. But the issue of textual referencing between those two texts is much more complex. Shakespeare is not, and in fact cannot be made into a part of the *Star Trek* universe. He is already a part, by virtue of his partaking in the greater text of Western culture. *Star Trek*, both textually as a fictive projection of the civilization of the future having its roots in the past and present of the Western world, and extratextually as a contemporary popular text, belongs

to the very same tradition. And, in line with Kristeva's definition of intertextuality,<sup>33</sup> this greater text of Western culture is, in turn, a part of both Shakespeare's corpus and the *Star Trek* narrative. In the end the introduction to the "restored Klingon versions" of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, offering an elaborate reading of Shakespeare's extraterrestrial legacy, appears to be nothing other than a parody with its tradition (once again Western) of unsettling the relation between the official and the popular. As such it seems to work to counter those readings of *Star Trek* and Shakespeare which search to underline the opposition between high and low in culture.

Paradoxically, just as in the case of the dialectical reading of the relationship between the original and its translation, it seems to work also to counter the intentions of the translators who – to a certain degree – seem to share the notion of the validity of such orderings. As Sarah Ekstrom, the coordinator of the Klingon Shakespeare Restoration Project, explains its origins: "For some viewers the line [from *Star Trek VI*] produced hearty chuckles and knowing nods. Among others it served as inspiration. This volume is the finished product crafted by just a few from among the inspired."<sup>34</sup> The translations of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* are thus the result of a more serious, "inspired" reaction to interpretational possibilities opened by *The Undiscovered Country*. One cannot but notice, however, that – despite its subversive qualities – the introduction to those texts seems to contribute rather to those "hearty chuckles" and "knowing nods." It also undermines the claims of Lawrence M. Schoen, the director of the KLI, who presents the translations as an evidence of the development of the language from a television prop into a popular culture icon, and – more implicitly – of its elevation to the status of functional language, no longer just a part of the *Star Trek* franchise:

The volume you hold should be ample evidence of Klingon's evolution, from the sound stage to popular culture, from a back lot at Paramount Pictures to Klingon and *Star Trek* fans throughout the world. Working with only a thin grammar and a glossary of some two thousand words the membership of the KLI has studied the language, taught the language, engaged in word play from puns to palindromes, composed original poetry and fiction, translated books of the Bible, and now perhaps the most well known of Shakespeare's plays, *Hamlet*.<sup>35</sup>

And so the inclusion of the *Star Trek* narrative frame into the Klingon translation of Shakespeare's two plays both subverts and reinforces the oppositional orderings between high culture text and their popular re-enactments or reinterpretations. At the same time, it calls forth the question of the links between language and its cultural background, be it Shakespeare's early modern English verse with its colonial connotations, or invented alien idiom with its roots in science fiction franchise and its fandom.

— — —

Presenting the translated texts as elements of *Star Trek*'s reality seems to weaken the argument of the emancipation of the Klingon language from the textual context in which it originated. It appears that, despite the attempts of its propagators to employ it in many different cultural contexts, the language cannot escape its association with the phenomenon of *Star Trek*. One could ask, however, if such a divorce of the language and its textual source is even possible. Are not all languages always bound by their contexts, geographically, historically and politically located? It should not come as a surprise, then, that the Klingon language would be perceived as a language of a fictitious people, one of many populating the world of *Star Trek*. It is an inherent element of the *Star Trek* mythos, informed by this mythos, and in turn contributing to it. It is natural that this "mythical" or textual locality should penetrate translation made in this language. In this respect, the "Klingon restored versions" of Shakespeare's plays, particularly *The Klingon Hamlet*, demonstrate a curious parallelism with ethnically localized adaptations of Shakespeare's works, such as (as discussed by Catherine Silverstone) the case of *The Maori Merchant of Venice*.<sup>36</sup> This parallelism is not to be read in any instance as a relation of similarity. If there is a comparison to be made between those texts, it is not the one between the representations of the Maori language and culture and those of the *Star Trek* universe and the Klingons. The correspondence of these two cases resides purely in an enactment of certain textual techniques which calls for a deeper consideration.

*The Maori Merchant of Venice* is a cinematic adaptation of Shakespeare's play, which – in the words of its creators – uses "Maori language and cultural elements as a vehicle to be able to express the dynamics that Shakespeare came up with."<sup>37</sup> Silverstone draws attention to several aspects of the linguistic and cultural dynamics enacted in this translation / adaptation, considering the complex relationship between the lan-

guage of Shakespeare, which also happens to be the language of cultural colonization of the Maori people, and *te reo*, the Maori native language. She emphasizes the introduction of the qualifier “Maori” into the English title of the film, which differentiates this particular version from other renditions of the play, and at the same time displaces Shakespeare’s original title of *The Merchant of Venice* and his authority:

the use of the word Maori to supplement the English title partially displaces the primacy of Shakespeare from the enterprise: the promise of the title is that Shakespeare’s Merchant will be remade by Maori and in Maori. This process of displacement is further promised through the renaming of Shakespeare’s characters with Maori names: Hairoka for Shylock, Pohia for Portia, Anatonio for Antonio, Patanio for Bassanio.<sup>38</sup>

The importance of the Maori context is also enacted through the casting of Maori actors and introduction of objects and locations associated with the Maori culture. All those elements are, however, juxtaposed with the images of another cultural setting commonly associated with Shakespeare and his authorship: that of Elizabethan England. As Silverstone concludes, “*The Maori Merchant*, with its representation of Maori actors in Renaissance costumes, counterpoised against more familiar signifiers of Maori culture, seems to play parody with the notion of cultural authenticity and ‘exoticism.’”<sup>39</sup> In other words, it accentuates the difference between the original and the adapted text, between the language and culture of Shakespeare and the language and culture of the Maori people, thus revealing the mechanisms of alienation present in any cultural translation.

Paradoxical though it may seem, the Klingon translation / adaptation of *Hamlet* appears to mirror *The Maori Merchant of Venice* in all those instances, starting with the displacement of Shakespeare’s authority in the very title of the volume. It is *The Klingon Hamlet*, not “Shakespeare’s Hamlet rendered in the Klingon language.” In fact, the author’s name is not to be found anywhere on the cover or on the title page of this publication. It has been replaced by the two trademarked labels: “Klingon” and “Star Trek.” The title of the translated text seems thus to encourage a culturally specific reading of the play as located within the *Star Trek* universe and attributed to the fictitious Klingons. This interpretation is further supported by the transliteration of characters’ names according to the Klingon language spelling convention, turning Claudius into tlhaw’DiyuS and Ophelia into ‘ovelya.

The most explicit clue for the Klingon reading of the text comes, of course, in the form of the already discussed introduction.

*The Klingon Hamlet* mirrors the adapting procedures of *The Maori Merchant of Venice* also in its curious blending of a culturally located interpretation with the established Shakespearean tradition. This mixing of two textual conventions is conveyed in the visual imaginary connected to the work: in the cover illustration presenting the hero of the play and in a portrait of its author. The cover illustration, created by Phil Foglio, displays Hamlet standing on top of the battlements of a castle, holding a skull in an iconic pose associated with the soliloquy “To be or not to be.” In case the image does not recall this association, the scene is captioned with the famous phrase rendered both in English and in Klingon. The cover title pronounces that the text presented in the volume is a “Klingon Hamlet” and the illustration strives to support this claim through the physical appearance of the hero. Hamlet’s head, and the skull which he is holding in his right hand, are marked by the forehead ridges typical for the later imaginings of the Klingons. In his left hand he carries a bat’leth, the Klingon’s favorite weapon, and this element has clearly been added to redress the otherwise un-Klingon-like melancholic character of this scene. These images are contrasted with other visual clues referring in turn to Shakespearean tradition. And so Klingon Hamlet stands on the battlements of a seemingly medieval castle, and he is clothed in a Renaissance costume. What sets his clothing apart from other Shakespearean costumes is a subtle incorporation of the Imperial Trefoil, a symbol of the Klingon Empire, into its decoration. A similar blending of those two contexts is visible in a portrait of William Shakespeare, or rather Wil’yam Shex’pir, drawn by Gennie Summers. This picture combines the Klingon facial features with Renaissance costume complete with a moustache and a beard typical for more traditional representations of the Bard.

The images of Hamlet, or Khamlet, and Wil’yam Shex’pir seem to recall *Star Trek*’s long-standing tradition of the play-within-the-play episodes, especially the later introduction of holographic technology and a holodeck space, which allowed the characters to enact intertextual borrowings in full costume.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, by overemphasising the difference between the two contexts, they serve as a parody of both Shakespearean tradition and the representations of the fictive Klingon culture. And so, perhaps unconsciously, the creators of *The Klingon Hamlet*, and also “the

Klingon restored version” of *Much Ado About Nothing*, appear to be alluding to the spaces of difference and alienation governing the process of translation.

In Blanchot’s words, translation is “the very life” of the difference between the languages, and the translator, its “secret master.”<sup>41</sup> He or she reveals the foreignness of two languages: the language of the original and the language of its translation, the language of the author and his or her own language. In doing so, the translator makes visible “what makes this work such that it will always be *other*.”<sup>42</sup> This interplay between the self and the other, between one’s own meaning and the other’s, is a paramount feature of translation, which should never be perceived as an achieved work, but rather as a trace: a trace of history, a cultural trace, but most of all a trace of the other. For a translation can only, and only perhaps, be realized in “the possibility of anterior presence, without guarantees” of the other and his/her meaning.<sup>43</sup> This meaning is to be found in “a trace” of the other, which is never the same as “a sign,” and this terminological turn suggests how fleeting and ungraspable that meaning is. Of course, in view of Lévinas’ writings, it must remain such if we are still to speak of the relation of foreignness or otherness. To look into the forms of the other and find oneself is to equate him or her with the self, “[t]o translate the neighbour is to turn him/her/it into a category of our own language and so to deny him/her/it otherness.”<sup>44</sup> Translation is therefore always and inevitably also alienation. “What I translate is upset by the way I translate,” exclaims Lévinas, indicating how this process affects those who could never be understood.<sup>45</sup> Paul de Man reminds us that “this alienation is at its strongest in our relation to our own language,” its meaning stripped of its familiarity through the comparison with the foreign.<sup>46</sup> To translate is to alienate both the other and the self.

The Klingon versions of Shakespeare’s works seem to recall some of those arguments. In those texts a reader is confronted with several essential questions. Whose meaning is enacted in those translations? Whose otherness is emphasized? Whose language is alienated? In brief, who is “the other” in this particular “cultural translation”? The Klingon translations seem to offer several possible answers to this important issue, giving evidence of the complex play of alien-ness and othering enacted in these projects. The first and most obvious answer is that the other is in this case to be identified with an alien in its most literal sense: as an imaginary, warlike, nonhuman

people, the Klingons. And this interpretation gives perhaps the most accurate insight into the process of othering enacted in every translation. Translated into the linguistic categories of the self, presented as either the self's likeness or its absolute opposite, is not the other always necessarily imaginary? That would be the argument of Lévinas, Derrida, Spivak, and the post-colonial studies.<sup>47</sup> But the space of difference in Klingon translation is open for other interpretations. The mark of the foreignness may be fixed on an imaginary culture in an imaginary future, but it is the imaginary envisaged by Gene Roddenberry, the creator of the *Star Trek* franchise. And it is also this vision of the world, where the feudal, aggressive, expansionist, but heroic civilization of the Klingon Empire is confronted with and overcome by the rational, liberal, democratic and – one may add – sanitized culture of the Federation, that is alienated in these texts. Another space of difference called forth in *The Klingon Hamlet* and the Klingon version of *Much Ado About Nothing* is the difference of language itself, perceived on the metalinguistic level, not as much as a difference of meaning, but as a foreignness of a linguistic system. The Klingon language was famously constructed to “appear alien.” It is also this vision of linguistic “alien-ness” created by Marc Okrand that the Klingon translations uncover. The process of alienation is not necessarily limited to the *Star Trek* context of this translation. It may well be that – compared with the popular context of science fiction genre and fictitious culture of the Klingons – it is Shakespeare, his works and their cultural context, that appear “alien” to the eyes of the reader. Finally, as Paul de Man remarked, every translation brings forth the alienation of the translator's own language.<sup>48</sup> It can be argued that, in the end, those who are really alienated in the Klingon versions of Shakespeare's texts are Klingon users and translators themselves, confronted with various possible identities and various forms of otherness (as science fiction fans, linguistic scholars, Shakespeare aficionados, or geeky enthusiasts of obscure languages). And what is ultimately displaced in this process of “restoration” is the translators' own language (both English and Klingon!), their categories (of literary and scholarly work, of popular and high culture) and their imaginaries (of Klingon culture, Shakespeare's tradition, and the Klingon users' community).

— — —

The “Klingon restored versions” of *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* mark a particular re-incarnation of Shakespeare’s afterlife and also, one may add, that of the *Star Trek* franchise. By adapting Shakespeare for *Star Trek* and *Star Trek* for Shakespeare, they provoke reflection on the dynamics and politics of the processes of translation, adaptation and re-writing. In a playful form of Shakespeare’s Klingon identity, they bring forth the problems of the contested relationship between the original and its version, of the enactment and effacement of the difference in a translated text, of the inescapable alienation of the self and the other in translation. But at the same time, in the words of Lawrence M. Schoen’s Preface to *The Klingon Hamlet*, they remind us that reading is ultimately an exercise in “wilful suspension of disbelief,”<sup>49</sup> in accepting the author’s reality as actuality. If “translation is the most intimate act of reading,”<sup>50</sup> it is also necessarily a play of “make believe”: belief in the author’s presence, the translator’s transparency, and the illusion of absolute translatability. The Klingon translations give evidence of how the popular culture, with its re-enactments or reinterpretations of the official or high culture texts and practices, helps to uncover the mechanisms of cultural and linguistic alienation and re-appropriation, while posing the boldest challenges to its audience’s ability to suspend disbelief.

**Karolina Kazimierczak**  
**University of Aberdeen, Scotland**

### **Acknowledgements**

This work would not have been possible without generous help from Klingon fans. I am indebted to the members of, thlIngan Hol and the Klingon language mailing lists, and of the Internet messageboard: Klingon Imperial Forum, for kindly accepting my presence among them; and to other Klingonists for sharing their insights and experiences. I want to thank my supervisors, Professor Lucy Suchman and Dr Yoke-Sum Wong from the Department of Sociology at Lancaster University for their guidance during my doctoral research and help in shaping the arguments for this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Leo Braudy, "Afterword: Rethinking Remakes," in *Play It Again, Sam. Retakes on Remakes*, ed. Horton McDougal (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998), 331.

<sup>2</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 1, no. 146 (1984).

<sup>3</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Art of Novel*, trans. Linda Asher (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 150-51.

<sup>4</sup> Braudy, "Afterword," 331.

<sup>5</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 36; 66.

<sup>6</sup> See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator. An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*," in *Illuminations* (London: Fontana Press, 1992), 72.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-75.

<sup>8</sup> See Maurice Blanchot, "Translating," in *Friendship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 57-61.

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Eaglestone, "Levinas, Translation, and Ethics," and Henry Staten, "Tracking the "Native Informant": Cultural Translation as the Horizon of Literary Translation," in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Kay H. Smith, "Hamlet, Part Eight, the Revenge' or, Sampling Shakespeare in a Postmodern Age," *College Literature* 31, no. 4 (2004): 141.

<sup>11</sup> Shakespearean references in *Star Trek* franchise start with the titling of episodes, as in the titles of *The Original Series* episodes "Dagger of the Mind," "All Our Yesterdays" (borrowed from *Macbeth*), "By Any Other Name" (referring to *Romeo and Juliet*) or "How Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth" (taken from *King Lear*). The franchise also makes liberal use of the famous lines from Shakespeare's work included in the dialogue, as in a scene from *The Next Generation* episode "Hide and Q" where Captain Jean-Luc Picard refutes Q's accusations against humankind with *Hamlet's* words "What a piece of work is a man!" Finally, several episodes borrow from Shakespeare's oeuvre most directly by making the characters perform fragments of his plays. In *The Original Series* episode "The Conscience of the King" a travelling troupe of actors performs on board of the Enterprise scenes from *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*. Also, in one of the episodes of *The Next Generation* ("The Defector") Captain Picard interprets the role of Henry V; and in another ("Emergence") – he instructs one of the crewmembers, the android Data, in his rendering of Shakespeare's Prospero. For a more detailed account of Shakespearean and other high culture references in *Star Trek* narrative see: Larry Kreitzer, "The Cultural Veneer of Star Trek," *Journal of Popular Culture* 30, no. 2 (1996).

<sup>12</sup> Kreitzer, “The Cultural Veneer of Star Trek,” 1. See also Ilsa J. Bick, “Boys in Space: ‘Star Trek,’ Latency, and the Neverending Story,” *Cinema Journal* 35, no. 2 (1996).

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Meyer, interview included in the DVD Special Edition of *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, (Paramount Pictures, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Kreitzer, “The Cultural Veneer of Star Trek,” 9.

<sup>15</sup> See Smith, “Hamlet, Part Eight, the Revenge.”

<sup>16</sup> See Paul A. Cantor, “Shakespeare in the Original Klingon: Star Trek and the End of History,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 29, no. 3 (2000)., HTML version retrieved from: <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=3614982>.

<sup>17</sup> The Klingon Language Institute is an organization involved in the study and propagation of the Klingon language. For further information on the KLI see the website: <http://www.kli.org/>.

<sup>18</sup> Lawrence M. Schoen, “Preface,” in *The Klingon Hamlet*, ed. Mark Shoulson, Will Martin, and d’Armond Speers (Flourtown, Pennsylvania: Klingon Language Institute, 2000), ix.

<sup>19</sup> See William Shakespeare, *The Klingon Hamlet*, ed. Mark Shoulson, Will Martin, and d’Armond Speers, trans. Nick Nicholas and Andrew Strader (Flourtown, Pennsylvania: Klingon Language Institute, 2000), and William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing. paghmo’ tIn mIS*, ed. David Trimboli, trans. Nick Nicholas (Flourtown, Pennsylvania: Klingon Language Institute, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Schoen, “Preface,” ix.

<sup>21</sup> Nick Nicholas, “Introduction,” in *The Klingon Hamlet*, ed. Mark Shoulson, Will Martin, and d’Armond Speers (Flourtown, Pennsylvania: Klingon Language Institute, 2000), xiii.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

<sup>23</sup> Shakespeare, *The Klingon Hamlet*. “Appendix I,” 193.

<sup>24</sup> In the *Star Trek* universe the House of Duras is a powerful and treacherous family, involved in ruthless political struggles on the Klingon home world, Kronos. The members of the family were first introduced in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode “Sins of the Father” and became favourite Klingon villains of the series, later appearing also in episodes of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* and *Enterprise*, and in the seventh feature film: *Star Trek: The Generations*.

<sup>25</sup> In *Star Trek* universe tribbles are small furry animals whose population – due to an enormous breeding rate – is very hard to control. The on-going *Star Trek* joke, first introduced in *The Original Series* episode “The Trouble with Tribbles,” and then revisited in *Deep Space Nine* episode “Trials and Tribble-ations,” states that tribbles – found rather endearing by other humanoids – are generally detested by Klingons.

<sup>26</sup> *The Klingon Hamlet*. "Appendix I," 210.

<sup>27</sup> Nicholas, "Introduction," xiii.

<sup>28</sup> See Emily Apter, "Translation with No Original: Scandals of Textual Reproduction," in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> *The Klingon Hamlet*. "Appendix II: Notes of the Scansion of *Khamlet*," 215.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence M. Schoen, "Preface," in *Much Ado About Nothing. paghmo' thn mIS*, ed. David Trimboli (Flourtown: Klingon Language Institute, 2001), vii.

<sup>31</sup> See Bick, "Boys in Space"; Kreitzer, "The Cultural Veneer of Star Trek." Editor's note: Rhonda V. Wilcox counters this view in "The Aesthetics of Cult Television," *The Cult TV Book*, ed. Stacey Abbott (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 36.

<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, the Klingon version of *Much Ado About Nothing* seems to be an exception from this rule, as it doesn't bear any reference to Paramount Pictures, apart from a typical disclaimer of *Klingon* and *Star Trek* being registered trademarks.

<sup>33</sup> 'The text is therefore a *productivity* [...] it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another. [...] One of the problems for semiotics is to replace the former, rhetorical division of genres with a *typology of texts*; that is, to defined the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are part and which is in turn, part of them.' (See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, 36.)

<sup>34</sup> Ekstrom, "Foreword," xi.

<sup>35</sup> Schoen, "Preface," ix.

<sup>36</sup> Catherine Silverstone, "Speaking Maori Shakespeare: The Maori Merchant of Venice and the Legacy of Colonisation," in *Screening Shakespeare in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnet and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, 131.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>40</sup> For an interesting interpretation of the *Star Trek*'s 'holodeck episodes' as a re-enactment of early modern textual practices represented in a genre of masques see Jean E. Graham, "Holodeck Masquing: Early Modern Genre Meets Star Trek," *Journal of Popular Culture* 34, no. 2 (2000). For other accounts of the play-within-the-play device in the *Star Trek* franchise see Sarah Hardy and Rebecca Kukla, "A Paramount Narrative: Exploring Space on the Starship Enterprise," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 2 (1999), and Rhonda V. Wilcox, "Unreal TV," in *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*, ed. Gary R.

Edgerton and Brian G. Rose (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 211-212. Editor's note: See also Wilcox, "Shifting Roles and Synthetic Women in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*," *Studies in Popular Culture* 13, no. 2 (1991).

<sup>41</sup> Maurice Blanchot, "Translating," 59.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>43</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translating into English," in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 105.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Eaglestone, "Levinas, Translation, and Ethics," and Henry Staten, "Tracking the 'Native Informant': Cultural Translation as the Horizon of Literary Translation," in *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, ed. Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 136.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>47</sup> Without recalling any dubious similarities between the fictitious Klingon culture and the post-colonial context of indigenous cultures, it is interesting to note how the Klingon translators seem to make use – perhaps unconsciously – of certain colonial representations of familiarity and alien-ness. These representations may have their source both in Shakespeare's work, representing the worldview of the age of great discoveries and search for the "New World," and in the *Star Trek* narrative, recalling the notion of discovery and first encounter with the stranger in its imaginary of space, the final frontier.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in Eaglestone, "Levinas, Translation, and Ethics."

<sup>49</sup> Schoen, "Preface," ix.

<sup>50</sup> Spivak, "Translating into English," 94.

Call for Proposals  
PCAS / ACAS  
Savannah, Georgia  
October 7-9, 2010

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, American and world-wide. Here is a sampling of topic areas at last year's meeting: film, mass media, sports, myths, utopias, feminist and gender studies, religion, insanity, identity, humor, horror, literature, social history, cookbooks, rhetoric, aspects of material culture, consumerism, vampirism, military history. We encourage panels organized around one issue or theme. The program chairs will be glad to help you with that.

Papers are limited to twenty (20) minutes or less. All submissions will be acknowledged. Please send an abstract of at least 200 words, and with it your email address and cell phone or land line number to

[pcasacas2010@gmail.com](mailto:pcasacas2010@gmail.com)

Submission deadline: June 14, 2010

If you will need audio-visual support, please note that need on your abstract. We can only schedule overhead or DVD/VCR w/monitor--NO LCD projectors will be available. If you have any questions about any aspect of the October conference, please contact one of the Program Co-Chairs:

Dennis Hall: [dennis.hall@louisville.edu](mailto:dennis.hall@louisville.edu)

Tom Van: [tavan@digicove.com](mailto:tavan@digicove.com)

## The Jesus Fish: Evolution of a Cultural Icon

In the early third century, C.E., the North African lawyer and Christian apologist Tertullian published his work *On Baptism*, which included the following lines: “But we, little fishes, after the example of our ΙΧΘΥΣ Jesus Christ, are born in water, nor have we safety in any other way than by permanently abiding in water”(Tertullian 3). Tertullian’s observation is quite possibly the first Christian pop culture reference. At the very least, it likely marks the first time the street-level graffiti of a persecuted religious movement made its way into a theological treatise. The image of the ΙΧΘΥΣ carried rhetorical weight for Tertullian and his readers due to its familiarity within Christian circles. For modern-day evangelists, humorists, social theorists, and road-trippers, the prevalence of this icon has not abated, but merely assumed new forms. In the two millennia since the image first appeared, this crude likeness of an ancient Mediterranean dietary staple has undergone a cultural evolution, provoking myriad responses along the way. It has inspired everything from pious devotion to irreverent parody to a utilitarian appropriation for a bizarre but deafening ideological discourse carried out, to a large extent, on the bumpers of cars and trucks on America’s highways.

The ΙΧΘΥΣ, hereafter referred to as “the Jesus fish,” was an important sign in the apostolic age, when Christians were a minority sect in the midst of the Roman Empire. The sign consisted of two elements, which did not always appear together. The first was a picture, a simple representation of a fish formed by joining two arcs, often traced in the sand of a village

street or carved into the walls of an underground meeting place. The second element was the acrostic, ΙΧΘΥΣ. This word, translated as “fish” in Greek, can also be designated to stand for “Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτὴρ: Jesus Christ, son of God, Savior.” The fish had long been perceived as a sacred image within pagan religious systems. Franz Cumont, among others, sees the adoption of the fish image as evidence of the influence of other religious cultures on Christianity, particularly that of the Syrians, who considered eating fish taboo because of its associations with divinity (Stroumsa 200). As a largely Jewish movement in its earliest years, Christianity would have also drawn on the Jonah narrative in the Hebrew scriptures as a parallel to their own stories about Jesus’ death and resurrection (Stroumsa 201). Finally, the fact that those in the early Church encountered an abundance of fishing narratives in the gospels, including Christ’s invitation to become “fishers of men,” (Chadwick 56) would have further motivated them to make this image their own.

Believers in the nascent Church employed the icon in a variety of ways. For some the fish was possibly a secret code, used to identify themselves quietly to fellow Christians in a world hostile to their convictions. For others, it was simply a quick, formulaic way to express one of their core beliefs, the high Christology that separated Christianity from other religious movements in the Empire. For still others, tracing or drawing the fish made a political statement, leveling a subversive jab at the Roman emperors’ claims to divinity. If a Jewish carpenter’s son and friend of fishermen was the divine offspring of God, as this graffito declared he was, then Caesar, the enemy of the Church, wouldn’t be likely to share in the heavenly throne, and divine justice would one day be visited upon those in power. Thus we find, in the earliest displays of this icon, an anticipation of the motives embodied in its usage in a contemporary context—as a badge of identification, a method of evangelism, and a tool for polemic against the prevailing culture.

During the first four centuries of the Church’s existence, even as Christianity moved up from the catacombs and into the public square, the image of the fish continued to flourish, appearing on family seals and funerary monuments, in sacred works of art, and in treatises on the Eucharist and the heavenly banquet that awaits the faithful (Hassett). Gradually, however, the fish waned in popularity and yielded its place in the iconographic vocabulary

to such images as the cross, the dove, and the sheep. In the 1909 edition of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Maurice M. Hassett remarked that “After the fourth century, the symbolism of the fish gradually disappeared,” and that any occurrence of the fish in Christian art or iconography following this period was purely ornamental in nature (Hassett).

Hassett was likely not alone in assuming that the fish sign had become little more than an interesting encyclopedia entry, a memory of an ancient past when Caesar sat on the throne and persecution was an everyday threat. Few historians would have predicted the resurrection of this image as a Christian icon in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fewer still would have ventured to predict the various transformations this image would undergo on its way to becoming a cultural phenomenon, proudly displayed not just on t-shirts and car bumpers, but also on public property and in television comedies, internet videos, and other popular and viral forms of media.

The search for a missing link in this story of transformation, a piece that might help us to connect a first-century drawing with its twentieth century offspring, takes us to Sydney, Australia, in the 1960's. The Vietnam War was raging, student unrest was rising, and groups of Evangelical Christian students were growing in their awareness of anti-Church sentiment on their campuses. The Evangelical Union at Sydney University, in an attempt to stem this tide, eagerly sought a new sign that might identify them as Christians. They wanted to use an image that was distinctly Christian but unfamiliar to the general public, in order to prompt curious questions and to deepen the conversation. Like their first century forebears, the group chose to identify themselves with the fish and began displaying the image in various places on campus. In a guerilla-style promotional campaign, students drew fish outlines on the pavement with chalk, pasted multicolored prints of the fish in stairways, and managed to pique the curiosity of other students unaccustomed to seeing the image in a religious setting.

Because of the success of the Sydney campaign, other groups of Evangelical Christian students throughout Australia adopted and disseminated the image on their own campuses. A group from the University of Queensland became the first to take the image on the road. Attending the Aquarius music festival in May of 1973, they used the image of the fish to identify themselves, displaying it in the rear windows of their vans. Shortly thereafter, other groups

of Christians began to display the fish in the rear windows of their vehicles as well, and the image was soon affixed to automobiles not just in Australia, but around the world (Rives).

The proliferation of the Jesus fish image in the United States took off in the 1980's (Yoon, "Unexpected"). Ronald Reagan was in the White House, the Religious Right was an ascending power on the national political scene, and the "culture wars" were heating up. Far from being persecuted as a renegade sect, as in the first century, Evangelical Christians in America were enjoying a time of influence and relative prosperity. Paradoxically, even as they were gaining a place at the table and making more extensive forays into the corridors of power, many adopted a worldview that divided culture into categories of "us" and "them." Rehearsing the stories of the past, segments of the Church began to rediscover a history of persecution and to perceive themselves as an oppressed minority, one whose constitutional rights were eroding with every decision of the high court or every act of Congress. When this martyr mentality was joined with a desire to spread the message of the faith and to bring salvation to the masses, the resulting religious environment was one marked by intensity and urgency.

That members of the Church would begin applying the fish icon to their cars is not surprising. In car-crazy America, bumper stickers are one of the most available and most popular forums for the exchange of ideas. In a culture in which people are generally too busy or distracted to engage in real conversation, such stickers are sometimes the most effective form of discourse—bite-sized wisdom, with just a touch of humor or gravitas, which can be read in the time spent waiting for a traffic light to change. The Jesus fish takes this method one step further. Because it is a purely visual icon, it dispenses with the need for words. Its sleek appearance allows it to blend into the metallic design of any car seamlessly, so that at first glance it might appear to be a part of the car itself or an insignia applied by the designer. This makes the image less ostentatious and therefore more subversive than a bumper sticker espousing the virtues of a presidential ticket or an activist position would be. And so the fish, once used to identify early Christians to one another and to protect them from persecution as they passed through a busy marketplace, became for late twentieth-century Evangelicals a badge of faith as well as a tool that allowed them to spread their message of salvation

in Christ without having to leave their minivans or hatchbacks.

The back of a car, however, is not the only context in which one might find the Jesus fish. In keeping with a growing trend toward the marketing and merchandising of Christian paraphernalia for pious consumers, the image has also appeared on T-shirts, jewelry, and coffee mugs. In at least one case, the ΙΧΘΥΣ has even appeared on a municipal seal. In July of 1999, an observer of the Wiccan faith brought a lawsuit against the town of Republic, Missouri, which had exhibited the image of an ΙΧΘΥΣ on public buildings, structures, and property, such as water towers and official letterhead. The suit maintained that the city's use of the image made citizens who were not Christians feel like outsiders (Goodstein). The Missouri lawsuit was not the only indication that those outside the Church might respond in negative ways to the ubiquity of the sacred fish. Much like their spiritual ancestors, those members of the Church who proudly sport the Jesus fish on their vehicles have faced a fair amount of persecution, although not of the sort one reads about in Church history books. While drivers displaying Jesus fish will no longer face death in the coliseum or crucifixion outside the city gates, they have managed to provoke a sharp and often witty response from those who perceive this type of evangelism as so much self-righteous grandstanding. As with most cultural phenomena, especially those marked with the deadly quality of earnestness, it didn't take long for the Jesus fish to become fodder for humorists looking for an edgy but effective way to ridicule a group of people sometimes accused of taking itself too seriously.

Over the course of the next two decades, the Jesus fish began to crop up as a cultural footnote in a variety of media. Because of its connection to Evangelical Christianity, the faith of Tammy Faye Bakker and Ned Flanders, comedic references to the Jesus fish found a home among the irreverent humor of television series and comic strips like *Futurama*, *My Name is Earl*, and *The Far Side* (McKenna). In these contexts, the Jesus fish signified, in the service of comedy, the type of eager religious devotee with whom nearly every American shares a cubicle or a cul-de-sac. In modern America, a land of religious and ideological pluralism, the Jesus fish had been employed by the Evangelical subculture to denote membership in a kind of club. Ironically referencing or otherwise ridiculing the image provided a mode of expression for those left out. In the summer of 2006, the Jesus fish was even awarded

a starring role in its own show—albeit on the internet. An animated short appeared on SpikeTV.com entitled “The Adventures of Jesus Fish.” The inaugural episode introduced viewers to Jesus Fish, an ΙΧΘΥΣ sign with father issues called upon by his slacker friends, who are also fish, to turn water into wine. Fed up with having his powers exploited whenever his friends need a buzz, Jesus Fish transforms the ocean they call home into something resembling animated pinot noir, and then watches in passive delight as his friends drink themselves to death (*Adventures of Jesus Fish*). The narrative in this short film might not have presented the most accurate portrayal of the Jesus ethos, but it certainly resonated with those who think that his followers should lighten up.

A starring role in an internet cartoon might be a sign that an image is popular, but the most widely viewed reference to a Jesus fish sign had occurred several years earlier, when the image appeared as a central plot point on the most watched television show in America. When a 1998 episode of *Seinfeld* entitled “The Burning” referenced the Jesus fish as part of a story line, it became evident that this image was no longer from the esoteric provenance of a minority group, but had instead assumed the status of a cultural icon. In the episode, Elaine’s suspicions that her boyfriend, David Puddy, has converted to Christianity are confirmed when she finds a Jesus fish attached to the back of his car. Elaine responds by doing what many have desired but few have dared: she steals the fish as an act of protest. When Puddy informs Elaine that she is going to hell for her theft, his response exemplifies the narrow-mindedness that many observers already believe to be true about those who would advertise their faith by means of a silver fish on their bumper (Crittenden).

Elaine, it seems, is not alone in her seemingly rash impulse to pilfer Puddy’s fish emblem. The practice of “Jesus fishing,” which involves clandestinely removing the images from the bumpers of cars, has gained something of a following and has the potential to become the urban equivalent of cow tipping, a guilty pleasure that will certainly not remain underground for long (Forumer). But brazen theft is just one of the many aggressive responses that the Jesus fish has provoked from the irritated masses. Parody has proven to be a far more prevalent and effective way of answering the Jesus fish gospel. Although most information surrounding the birth of the Jesus fish parody

tends to be controversial and apocryphal, it seems likely that the first parodies began appearing shortly after the first Jesus fish showed up on American cars. In the mid-1980's, as one creation story goes, designer Chris Gilman, determined to find a secularist or naturalist equivalent to the Jesus fish he saw on the road, crafted a Jesus fish with feet to evoke Darwin's theory of evolution. Gilman's friends loved the representation, and within a few years the germ of an idea had evolved into a cottage industry. Today, through companies like Ring of Fire Designs and Evolvefish, the Darwin fish sign sells at the rate of 75,000 each year and generates an annual revenue of half a million dollars (Yoon, "Swimming").

In addition to its own success, the Darwin fish has spawned an ever-increasing number of offspring. A quick inventory of different variations on the Jesus fish theme reveals that there are more than fifty alternative fish emblems available for purchase, each of them managing to convey a unique idea and at the same time reference the original. Several cultures and subcultures have designed their own emblems, revealing that Christianity's claim to be a universal truth within a pluralistic society is subject to as many different responses as there are groups who feel excluded by such a claim.

Consumers who want to make a statement about their beliefs might purchase any one of the numerous Jesus fish parodies that serve to express sympathies with other religious faiths. The "Gefilte" fish, complete with a Star of David sign and Hebrew lettering, gives Jews an emblem they can call their own. The husky "Buddha" fish and the Hindu version with cow udders speak to those with inclinations toward the East. The "Pagan" variety is shown giving birth to a woman, reminiscent of ancient creation myths. Some variations choose to represent Christianity's antithesis, such as the "Satan" and "Sinner" models, both of which sport devil horns.

Not all of the parodies are religious in nature. There are several science fiction and fantasy-themed versions as well. In addition to the "Robot" fish depicted on *Futurama*, the highways also teem with pointy-eared "Yoda" fish, "Alien" fish, and "Flying Saucer" fish. The "Vampire" fish sports bloody fangs, and the "Gothic" fish proudly displays a number of body piercings. The most adventurous fish image is likely the "Freud" fish, a swimming phallic sign that only the boldest drivers would attach to their family sedans. Those who yearn for the days when a fish was just a fish can purchase the

“Sushi” model, the “Lutefisk” model, or the “Fish ‘n’ Chips” model, all of which remind us that before being appropriated by religious or philosophical ideologues, the fish was simply Jesus’ favorite meal (McKenna).

Despite the seemingly endless array of Jesus fish parodies, the Darwin fish still reigns as the king of highway humor. The clearest indicator of its supremacy among the imitators is the fact that the Darwin fish is the only model that has provoked a series of impassioned responses from the Jesus fish faithful. What began as a joke has in time escalated into a war of religious ideas. Theologians of the past employed public debates and polemical treatises as vehicles for advancing their claims, so that the historical controversies between Christian theologians and heretics or non-believers have led to the publication of some of the most stirring documents that the faith has ever produced. The works of Tertullian and his fellow defenders of the faith are still studied, almost two thousand years after they were written, for their polemical power, their rhetorical heft, and their doctrinal formulations. One wonders if the debates of today will have the same staying power. The modern arguments between faith and rationalism, religion and secularism, and even Creationism and Darwinism are being waged, in true 21<sup>st</sup> century style, on the bumpers of America’s cars, trucks, and SUV’s, with no end in sight. The creation of the Darwin fish was the first strike in this conflict. It was followed in short order by the “Truth” fish, the response by the Jesus fish people to what they perceived as an attack on their religious beliefs. The Truth fish is a much larger ΙΧΘΥΣ inscribed with the word “truth” and depicted in the process of devouring a Darwin fish. The initial appearance of the Truth fish prompted questions from Christians and non-Christians alike, who wondered whether this sort of puerile one-upmanship was really the best means of spreading the gospel, or the best demonstration of Christian love. Adapting to the new rules of engagement, the Darwin crowd was not silent for long, creating the “Reality Bites” fish, which was merely a bigger Darwin fish devouring the Truth fish. Not content to rest on this triumph, they soon followed the Reality Bites fish with a Tyrannosaurus Rex emblem, too big even to fit on smaller cars, which is shown taking a huge bite out of the Truth fish. It is unclear whether the next step, a giant asteroid labeled “God” or “Divine Justice” might one day send the T-Rex back into extinction.

In an attempt to understand the so-called “fish wars,” Tom Lessl, a

communications professor at University of Georgia, spent several months in the late 1990's interviewing and researching the motives of those who would display Darwin fish on their automobiles. Some of the responses intimated that Darwin fish enthusiasts simply wanted to annoy conservative Christians. In some cases, the intent was to advance the cause of evolutionary biology in the face of a growing interest in Creationism or Intelligent Design theory. Whatever the reason for purchasing and displaying a Darwin fish, Lessl concluded that the designation of "war" to this seemingly benign conflict was indeed appropriate. He describes affixing the Darwin fish to a car as "an act of ritual aggression," and likens it to the wartime practice of desecrating an enemy flag, reminding us that even a war that employs sarcastic pictography as its primary weapon is still a war (Williams). That the Jesus fish would be capable of starting such a war is simply one more testament to this icon's standing in our cultural consciousness.

From the first century to the twenty-first, the icon of the Jesus fish has evolved and adapted to the ever-changing currents of the times; so have the responses to this icon by the larger culture. In the earliest days of the Church's existence, those who used the symbol might have expected beating, imprisonment, or even execution. In a modern context, those who embrace the icon might expect to be ridiculed on a prime-time television series or an internet cartoon. But whatever the stakes may be, the Jesus fish icon still manages to serve the faithful as a badge of identification, a sign that distills their core beliefs into a simple formula, and a polemical weapon in the cultural battle for the highways, the parking lots, and the hearts of America.

**Todd Edmondson**  
**University of Louisville**

### Works Cited

- The Adventures of Jesus Fish*. www.spiketv.com First aired July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006. October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007. Web.
- Chadwick, Owen. *A History of Christianity*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Print.
- Crittenden, Jennifer. Script for "The Burning." *Seinfeld* season 9 (February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1998). Script at www.seinfeldscripts.com October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Web.
- Forumer. [www.forumer.com](http://www.forumer.com). September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007. Web.
- Goodstein, Laurie. "Judge Orders a City to Remove Fish from Official Seal." *New York Times* July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1999: A19. Print.
- Hassett, Maurice. "Symbolism of the Fish" in *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VI*. New York: Appleton, 1909. Reprinted at www.newadvent.org. October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007. Web.
- McKenna, Gene. "Darwin Fish." www.meangene.com/darwin/taxonomy. October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Web.
- Rives, Josh. "The Fish Wars." www.churchhopping.com October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007. Web.
- Stroumsa, Gedaliahu G. "The Early Christian Fish Symbol Reconsidered." *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity*. Ed. Ithamar Grunewald. Tubingen: Mohr, 1992. 199-205. Print.
- Tertullian. *On Baptism*. Kila, Montana: Kessinger, 2004. Print.
- Williams, Phil. "Bumper Battle." *Columns*. October 25, 1999. www.uga.edu October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Web.
- Yoon, Carol Kaesuk. "Unexpected Evolution of a Fish out of Water." *New York Times*. February 11, 2003. www.evolvefish.com, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Web.
- . "Swimming Upstream to Find the First Fish." www.theage.com October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007. Web.

## **The Politics of the "Open" Self: America in the Cinema of King Vidor and Robert Altman**

Few filmmakers have had the career longevity and success to create a body of work that deserves our attention for its serious political commentary. Two exceptions are King Vidor and Robert Altman. These individuals, whose collective output spans the full century of American film production, thoughtfully and skillfully brought their visions of American life and its implications for politics to the screen. Indeed, both accomplished what might be thought of as the triple crown of cinema—capturing essential elements of the nation’s political values and behavior, effectively communicating their unique perspective through film, and influencing America’s political consciousness.

As different as their approaches and times were, the films of King Vidor and of Robert Altman have much in common. Both were *auteur* directors,<sup>1</sup> who experienced many difficulties trying to work within the studio system of their time. Both loved all aspects of making movies, and each infused his work with distinctive themes and style. Commentators view both as technical innovators in the art of filmmaking, who purposely left “holes” in their characterizations and stories that would challenge the viewer to engage in dialectic with the film. Form and content found themselves intricately integrated in their work. Further, they relied on an interesting and gripping blend of documentary and fictional features in their films. Most importantly for purposes of this study, they share an initial position on the nature of the American “self,” a position that strongly influenced their under

standing of and approach to the political world. Rooted in a similar Myth of America, both directors' films portray "open" selves who experience difficulty handling mass society and the politics of the organization age. Their work provides cogent evidence for Lipset's argument that "culture matters"—both mass culture and the culture of "politically relevant" elites (Lipset, 2004: 187)—and Sheldon Wolin's view that a community's political health depends on its citizens' unity with others and unity with oneself (Wolin, 2004: chapter 10).

### **The Myth of America and the American "Self"**

To these directors America is an idea. The idea of America—its myth—includes many components. Most basic is the belief that American liberal democracy is the city on the hill, an exceptional political and social experiment that should be an example to all others. As Seymour Martin Lipset put it, liberal democracy is "the good society itself in operation" (Lipset, 1963: 439). In liberal democracy every human being possesses an inherent worth and dignity that must be respected. Therefore, equality, freedom, and individualism are essential aspects of the American idea. If one is talented, hard working, and virtuous, success will follow and will reverberate throughout the community. There is a common good that emerges from each individual's pursuit of her own private good as long as the individual remains rooted within a community. For in the Myth of America (a myth that existed before Weber named it the Protestant work ethic), individual success is nurtured and supported by the family and the community. And because the successful individual is grateful for that love, loyalty, and nurture, she will "give back" to the community through service, patriotism, obedience to the law, and support of those who have helped her.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, this myth contains many contradictions, contradictions observed by both visitors (Crèvecoeur and Tocqueville) and modern political scientists and sociologists (Lipset, Potter). Americans may appear to be both idealistic and materialistic, in search of freedom and in search of an escape from freedom, individualistic and conformist, supporters and opponents of individual civil rights, and equally committed to equality and to status.

This article argues that a certain type of consciousness underlies the

Myth of America and the American national character (with all its contradictions). Further, the films of King Vidor and Robert Altman show an insightful sensitivity to the potential consequences of that form of consciousness in a mass society—one characterized by what Max Weber called the rationalization of life with its disenchantment of the world, the routinization of daily life, and the fragmentation of social life in which the goals are efficiency, predictability, and the ability to calculate the means to achieving desired ends. This is the very sort of society that Alexis de Tocqueville believed would result in feelings of powerlessness and apathy but that Lipset argued would strengthen democratic consensus.

The political philosopher Eric Voegelin helps us gain insight into the consciousness that lies at the heart of the Myth of America. Voegelin's study of what he called the "American mind" led him to adopt the philosophical pragmatists' categorization of the American mind as an "open self" (Voegelin, 1995: 9). The open self is non-dialectical rather than self-reflective. It is sociable in that it seeks closeness with others and prefers the company of others to being alone. And the open self is outer-directed in that it seeks approval from those with whom it develops a sense of closeness or community and directs its actions toward service to or acceptance by the larger group. In Lipset's terms Americans are "sensitive" to others' judgment (1963: 449). The closed self, on the other hand, is dialectical, allowing its attitudes and beliefs to be challenged and engaging in dialogue with people, the culture, and the physical world. Neither form of the self is intrinsically preferable, but each carries implications. Both compete for attention in America's social and political consciousness and their interaction is the source of the contradictions in American values.

It is a democracy of open selves that is evident in the films of both King Vidor and Robert Altman. Their films display an ambiguous response to the open self and to the Myth of America on which it rests. On the one hand the open self is receptive to the notions of equality, cooperation, and sharing—especially within the context of the expanding frontier. On the other hand, the open self, because it may idolize like-mindedness, often results in closure toward difference and change accompanied by loneliness, restless *divertissement*, and alienation. It undervalues theory, objectivity, and asking "the impertinent questions" (Altman, *Tanner* '88). Further, in the face of mass society, the open self seems to lack the necessary resources to anchor a happy and meaningful life.

Robert Altman and King Vidor begin with a similar Myth of America, and viewers can find in their films evidence of the American preference for the open self. However, the films of both directors suggest two concerns regarding modernity's effects on the myth and on the consciousness that permeate American political and social ideas. The first concern centers on the loss of opportunities in a mass society for individual achievement—of any chance for separating oneself from the crowd within organizations that promise equal treatment and neutral criteria for selection and promotion but function as oligarchies (Michels, 2009). The second concern is the individual's inability to find the kind of closeness, communication, and community required if an open self is to find happiness. These two explicit concerns suggest a third, implicit, concern displayed in both Vidor's and Altman's work—liberal democracy's contemporary confusion of consensus with conformity and its subsequent implications for democratic citizenship.

Their work presents important questions for contemporary American political science and sociology. Vidor and Altman might very well agree with Lipset that institutions supportive of both conflict and consensus are important for the success of liberal democracy. Their concern would be how to incorporate them into the daily life of the open self. Altman and Vidor want us to understand that the bases of conflict and consensus are rooted in consciousness. Their films often awaken us to the dangers facing an open self in any society in which there are few outlets for the development of genuine consensus. One may need more than opportunity and hard work to succeed in such a world and the bases for genuine sociality are undermined. What Altman and Vidor demonstrate is the destructive tendencies of conformity in the absence of genuine consensus and community.

### **King Vidor**

King Vidor's films (except *War and Peace* and *Solomon and Sheba*) take the myth of America as their starting point and look at people trying to live it.<sup>3</sup> He has been called both right-wing and left-wing, but actually his work does not embody any ideology. Vidor's films generally demonstrate concern for lower middle class people in a variety of circumstances and environments. His films also exhibit a sense that moral community

is important. Plot summaries can make his films seem almost stunningly simplistic and banal. In that sense it is hard to do justice to his films. Far from being either simplistic or banal, King Vidor focuses on the complications present in apparently simple social and/or moral situations. His films often are examples of art as witness. Vidor's films view morality as complex; a connecting thread in his films is acceptance of "widely divergent, even opposite moral attitudes as spiritual integrity" (Durgnat and Simmon 2). Vidor's themes are freedom versus necessity, self in relation to community, ideas versus emotions, the advantages and costs of progress, spirituality versus religion, the vitality and weaknesses of the mass, and humanity versus nature. He seems to view these themes as a mosaic. Each individual film picks out one or two aspects of the mosaic to highlight, but most of these themes generally play some role in every film from 1925 (the period of his late silent films, such as *The Crowd* and *The Big Parade*) through 1955. He seems to be saying to us: "If we looked at the situation in terms of this person's perspective, what would it look like?" Or, what if necessity complicated the situation in this way? Or, what if this event happened to a strong person rather than a weak one? Instead of presenting answers, Vidor gives his audience glimpses of the contradictions of felt experience. He expects audiences to "understand that conflicting emotions comprise a kind of dialectic...rather than a logical consistency" (Durgnat and Simmon 13). And sometimes he seems to suggest that even sin may be redemptive.

One can understand King Vidor's films best by examining them from the framework of the open self. *The Crowd* exemplifies Vidor's approach. In an early scene in *The Crowd* an eclectic group of young boys (black, white, round, thin, light, dark) is speculating on what they want to be when they grow up. Johnny Sims's (born on July 4, 1900) answer is that his father says Johnny is "going to be somebody big." In the next scene Johnny's father is dead and in the next a grown John is crossing over to New York City on the ferry, about to start his working life. One of his fellow passengers warns him that "you have to be good to make it there" to which John responds "All I need is an opportunity."

The opening shots of the city are overwhelming. As seen from the boat, the city is a pleasant looking place. As seen from the streets, it is a huge, brooding, ominous presence. John works as an anonymous clerk at desk 137 on a floor filled with the desks of other anonymous clerks. On

his first date with his future wife, Mary, he shows her the crowd on the street. His comment is “Look at that crowd—poor boobs, all in the same rut.” That same evening he sees a clown in a sandwich board and makes fun of him, saying “I bet his father told him he’d be president.” He and Mary marry and have two children. After his first child is born, he tells his wife that the birth was the impetus he needed; he will “be somebody now, I promise.” He always believes he is about to make good, that his ship is about “to come in.” But there he is, stuck in the same rut as the rest of the crowd. In five years he receives an \$8 /week raise. He is not becoming “somebody.” Finally, he wins an advertising contest jingle. But the money he wins brings only tragedy. He calls to his children, who are playing down on the street, to come in and see what he has bought them with his windfall. Crossing the street, his youngest child is hit by a truck and killed. No one on the street seems to care. Life goes on around him just as before, and it becomes obvious that “We do not know how big the crowd is and what opposition it is until we get out of step with it” (*The Crowd*). After that, John no longer can focus at work and loses his job. He is totally out of step with the crowd and begins a downward spiral that takes him to the brink of suicide. But his young son expresses belief in him, and John begins to fight his way back. The job he takes is a juggling sandwich board clown—the very job he ridiculed earlier in the film. He still believes that all he needs is an opportunity. In the final scene, he uses some of his first earnings at this new job to take his wife and son to the vaudeville show at which he sits next to his first friend in the city, who did move up in the firm for which they both had worked. In the last shot, Vidor pans back from the family to show the entire audience, all of them laughing at the vaudeville sketch.

Everybody, it seems, believes they can “be somebody.” That is the promise of America. That promise is reinforced by the foundational belief that every human being has inherent dignity and moral worth. The problem is that there are so many of us. In a mass society, one has to “be good to make it.” We constantly are struggling to show how different, how “special” we are. Our private views of ourselves, our sense of who we are, and our private little worlds constantly are under attack, especially in the city where so many of us congregate. It is almost impossible to overcome the isolation of city life—to make ourselves more than just another anonymous piece of the crowd. Most of us just are not tough enough, motivated enough, or talented enough to be that “somebody.” We lack the vitality or we turn that

vitality into something self-destructive. To Vidor, we are creatures more of sentiment than of reason. We must become humble, accept our place in life's hierarchy, and rely on the small communities we form, especially family, to provide meaning in our lives.

These same ideas are present in *Our Daily Bread* and *An American Romance*. Both another John Sims (*Our Daily Bread*) and Steve Dangos (*An American Romance*) will take the risk that comes along with opportunity and, each rooted by the community he has founded, will find meaning. Both are films about the American dream and the individual who is willing to take risks, seize opportunity, succeed, and carry with him those (family, friends, and colleagues) who believe in him. The leader shares many of the characteristics of the open self but sees the tendency of the open self to passivity and conformity and rejects both. Yet each leader possesses some flaw that he must overcome with the help of family and some form of community.

In King Vidor's films nothing is shown without its contradiction. *The Wizard of Oz* is an accessible example. Vidor took over responsibility for shooting most of the black and white sequence of this film (as well as the final approach to Oz through the poppy field). This sequence of the film depicts all the vitality of nature, including human beings—a vitality that, through its excesses, can be either a positive and creative force (rain) or a destructive one (tornado). Dorothy's emotions are as tempestuous as the weather and also swing from the negative to the positive, the destructive to the creative. Through these scenes the viewer becomes emotionally as well as rationally acquainted with the place of this individual within a community. We see her place in a group, how that group feels about her, her strengths and weaknesses. We see how much she is loved. An immediate bond is forged that will carry the viewer through the rest of the film. We see the genuinely nice farmhands with their common sense, people-oriented morality and the morally conventional Miss Gulch's destructive righteous anger. Nature is an overwhelming force that may thwart one's best efforts. Emotion may often get the better of reason. But everything in life is not stimulus and response. There are choices to be made about handling the natural and social limitations that every human being faces. There is wisdom in the humbug and in the humblest, smallest, and weakest person. And we see in Miss Gulch's use of the law to seek revenge on Dorothy through Toto that civilization with its rules of comity does not always nurture the

human spirit or bring justice. Materialism and self-interest compete with genuine virtue.

The competing perspectives on these basic themes are present in all his films, but most prominently in the more personal projects he completed outside the confines of the studio system: *The Crowd*, *The Big Parade*, *Our Daily Bread*, and *Hallelujah*. King Vidor seems to suggest to us that the American self is primarily an open one, but that elements of the closed self exist side by side, although not always peacefully, with its more open aspects. We see within ourselves, as well as between individuals, competition between sentiment and reason, the desire for sociability and for isolation (for being one of the crowd and special), egotism and capacity for self-sacrifice, self-destruction and resiliency, and the force of both civilization and the wilderness. Most interestingly, we can see how these contradictions arise from elements located within the paradigm of the open self. The elements of sociability and desire for intimacy in relations with fellow human beings and with a personal god are what make the world human for us. These elements allow a sort of friendship among citizens. Human beings may be alone in the world, but we are alone together. Our aims are similar. We seem to be moving through our private space in concert and harmony with those around us. We can find human companionship and community, and the moral and social conventions arising from those forms of sociability and intimacy will ground us in the world. Together human beings can oppose their will to that of necessity and sometimes win the game. The practical application of theory allows that result, as does some subordination of the individual's desires to the common good. The human world is a whole. There are limits, but human beings experience freedom.

However, the open self's emphasis on sociability, intimacy, the priority of practice over theory, and a stubborn intellectualism that refuses to re-think its own premises also presents dangers. Passivity and conformity may result from deformed focus on sociability. As a result the open self may have a tendency to allow social injustices to continue and prevent new ideas from being accepted. The open self may confuse moral equality with equality of talent and refuse to listen or honor individual excellence. The focus on practicality may in the end choke off the kind of theoretical thinking on which practical invention always rests. In King Vidor's films, characters restlessly search for some balance between individuality and community, between the open self and the closed one. He celebrates the

positive aspects of the American mind, including its openness. However, he also warns us of both its dangers for society and for the individual who does not fit—dangers heightened in a mass society.

Those who ignore this advice do so at their peril (*Hallelujah!*, *Ruby Gentry*, *Duel in the Sun*, for example). They will destroy themselves. Still, each individual has some gift that in the right social setting might shine. The “crowd” is basically decent and responsible. *Our Daily Bread*, in particular, demonstrates this aspect of Vidor’s work. What democracy really offers us, it suggests, is opportunity—the chance for the individual of pluck and talent to succeed no matter what his origins or current circumstances. But we have to be willing to innovate and take risks, and we must remain rooted in some idea of the common good. Individuals possess moral equality, not an equality of talent. Sometimes, the crowd fails to recognize its limitations and that it needs inspired leadership by an individual with strength of mind and bold new ideas, but it is capable of insight (see *The Fountainhead* for an example).

## Robert Altman

Where King Vidor told a straightforward story, Robert Altman tends toward the episodic and anecdotal.<sup>4</sup> Altman seems drawn to themes that also interested King Vidor, including the effect of modernity, especially city life, on the open self and on the possibility of community; self-destruction and resiliency; the corruption of “the system” through greed and egotism coupled with a corresponding loss of private and public virtue; the vitality and weakness of the mass; and freedom versus necessity. Altman’s films witness an open self that has fallen victim to all the problems of which King Vidor warned us. He shows viewers the fate of an open self who attempts to live as an unencumbered self (See Sandel, 1984). As Altman stated in several interviews, he showed on the screen what he saw as true and real, often using a semi-documentary style and multiple soundtracks to heighten the sense of reality (Sterritt).

In his films there are no longer any roots, any real sense of community. The mass has been deadened and coarsened until it is almost hopeless to try to evoke a positive response from it. We no longer see any connections among us. Leaders fail as well. The “great man” always fails us. Greed

and materialism on the part of individuals, government, the military, and corporations belie the promise of America. Public space is non-existent. Culture is the site of politics, and there is no way for the individual or for new ideas to challenge the existing system. Altman said he made comedies, but they are tragic comedies of the absurd. We take ourselves so seriously, he seems to say, yet we ignore and destroy the sources of our humanity and everything that we really ought to be taking seriously.

Robert Altman wants to provoke thought and pull the viewer into the story as participant in the situation faced by the characters. He wants to know whether what he has put on the screen disturbs the viewer as much as it disturbs him. *M.A.S.H.*, *Streamers*, *Short Cuts*, *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Nashville*, and *The Player* suggest that America is sick—very sick. Greed is the root of that sickness, a greed that has been present throughout American history and has subverted all ideals and institutions.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, Altman's films leave one wondering whether human beings are not all frauds and murderers and whether the country as a whole is not engaged in some sort of common suicide pact. No matter how good our intentions, as long as we live in solipsistic little worlds frantically trying to protect ourselves, we cannot help but harm one another, often to the point of death.

If one were looking for the origins of this personal and social disorder, Altman seems to suggest we look no farther than *Secret Honor*, which follows a hypothetical typical late evening during Richard Nixon's retirement at San Clemente. Altman called this film a political myth. If it is a myth, it is one about the origins of American society and politics—institutions Nixon appears to see as flawed from the beginning. The real sins of the Committee of One Hundred, Nixon believes in the film, were that its members were nouveau riche and without long-standing social connections. The founders were no different from Charles 'Bebe' Rebozo. Neither was Nelson Rockefeller, Dwight Eisenhower, or John F. Kennedy. Power is the ultimate dream of politics. And in trying for that delicate balance of power and justice, justice never stood any genuine chance. "I really did want to grow up to be Abraham Lincoln," Nixon muses. The Nixon of this film sees himself as a man of the crowd, upholding the American dream of individual advancement through hard work. And he sees himself as a hero sacrificing himself for the good of that dream and the possible redemption of the country, as choosing "secret honor, public shame." If he had not resigned, The Committee of One Hundred would have brokered a new

constitutional amendment abolishing presidential term limits and seen to it that Nixon was drafted for a third, and possibly a fourth term. The committee's members would have done this in order to protect drug profits because they had made Nixon and therefore could "control" him. In the film Nixon appears to believe he was the only one in the government (maybe in the country) ultimately interested in justice. Conspiracy theory, paranoia, and delusions of grandeur aside, this film makes the viewer confront the spiritual substance of this country (or its lack). The myth of America is just that—myth. Greed has usurped the Protestant work ethic. Political realism has trumped the use of power for right. Freedom has become license. A belief in individual rights has been replaced by the view that we are all victims. A purely egoistic form of self-actualization has taken the place of self-reliance. Instrumental reason has replaced the rational examination of means and ends. Instead of working toward a better society, we seek to immanentize paradise. Instead of government by consent of the governed, we have government by mass opinion—Schumpeter's performance democracy in which citizens care only whether their politicians deliver on promises of material prosperity (Schumpeter, 1942). American life is totally dominated by the modern project and citizens really do not care.

For Altman, that sickness pervades every aspect of American life—music, politics, film, the exploration of new frontiers, and the heart of private life. *Short Cuts* follows the stories of eight couples and a mother and daughter. Each twosome has its own set of problems, but combining their stories highlights the commonalities of the issues they face and intensifies their dilemmas. A metaphor Altman uses in *Short Cuts* highlights his view of the individual in contemporary American life. Jack Lemmon's character, Paul Finnigan, carries an egg around with him. In Altman's films, human beings are like eggs—each egg in its own private little world, every egg fragile, jealous, insecure and easily broken. In fact, like the baker Jerry Kaiser and like Zoe Trainer, we have broken under the pressures of contemporary life. We try to form communities. However, they are fragile and temporary communities of expediency, acting only to incubate the disease and increase the pressures on us. Even family has betrayed us. The title (and theme) of the song that pulls together the film is that we are prisoners of life. Uncertainty is all we rationally can expect. When our egg cracks, what can we expect besides rage and violence? Throughout his films rage and violence are the seemingly inevitable results of the failure of individual

and communal life to live up to the myth.<sup>6</sup>

Even the American military—often cited as the last remaining citadel of honor, community, and the common good in America—has betrayed the myth of America. In both *M.A.S.H.* and *Streamers* there is neither community nor honor. The armed services have fallen prey to hatred and greed for glory and advancement. The military is *para noia*—beyond reason—a madhouse run by madmen at best and sadists at worst, with the wit and wisdom of high school sophomores. Any genuine sense of community remains inaccessible in these conditions. Rational planning and argument fall before greed. Thus, the only rational reaction to the madness and the power-hungry demand for total control is just as sophomoric as the original exertion of power. Every level of military life exhibits this common societal sickness. *Streamers* revolves around the corrosive effects of racism and homophobia on what should be the core of military community, the platoon. Jealousy and insecurity are the major emotions expressed. Carlyle's words "You got friends...people to talk to...a job. I ain't got nuthin'. Why I got to be here?" could have been uttered by any of the four main characters. The two sergeants, Mooney and Cokes, who spend their days drinking and playing stupid practical jokes, seem to share that view. The only rational response to the madness is the ironic cynicism of *M.A.S.H.*'s Hawkeye and Trapper John.

*Nashville* applies Robert Altman's favorite themes to America's popular culture through the country and western music industry. He frames the individual stories in relation to the fictional campaign for president of one Hal Phillip Walker, who heads the Replacement Party. Walker maintains we need "new roots" for the nation and advocates citizen engagement with the political rather than apathy. Citizens are involved in politics whether they know it and like it. If the people become involved, there can be change. But the words coming out of his loudspeaker truck have a darker undertone as he tells people on the street that we have a "vital interest in our management." No one seems to see the irony. A genuine leader does not "manage" citizens. Subjects are managed, not citizens.

Two songs set up the political themes that play off one another throughout the film. The first is "200 Years," recorded by one of Nashville's biggest stars. Its refrain "We must be doing something right to last two hundred years" expresses belief in the values of freedom, honor, duty, self-sacrifice, God, and community. The second song's refrain says, "You may say that

I ain't free, but it don't worry me." "It don't worry me" mirrors the apathy of contemporary American politics and the attitude of many citizens that, as long as government does not interfere in their private lives, politics is irrelevant. We will not worry about being managed as long as there are plenty of distractions to keep us busy and the possibility of personal fame. Would-be stars take turns singing during a NASCAR race—completely inaudible over the engine noise. We live in our own worlds, totally unreached and unreachable by others. No one genuinely hears us or wants to hear us. Just as it is too difficult and time-consuming for Del to "listen" to his two deaf children tell him about their day, we might as well all be deaf for as much as we listen to one another.

Over the course of the film Altman reveals a Nashville, and by analogy an America, in which the second song seems truer than the first, even to country music star Haven Hamilton, who "never takes sides politically." He gives money to all political parties and platforms. Barnette, husband and manager of country diva Barbara Jean (ultimately the target and murder victim of a deranged fan), also does not want her associated with any political candidate or idea. Protecting the stars' images in order to enhance record sales is the most important value.

The political campaign itself is not immune to the political corruption that candidate Walker supposedly opposes. Walker's political operative, Triplette, cuts deal after deal in setting up an open-air concert at which the candidate will speak. His manipulation of the would-be country star Suleen Gay demonstrates Triplette's belief that people can be "bought off"—even if it costs them their sense of dignity and self-respect. He hires Suleen to perform at a campaign fundraising function. She thinks she has been hired to sing. In reality Triplette hired her to strip.

In Robert Altman's films, Americans do possess a natural vitality. But contemporary American life does not seem to offer any creative or positive outlets for that vitality. His work assumes an open self that can find no satisfaction of its most human needs and so is corrupted by egotism, isolation, greed, and trivial diversion. Americans yearn for each other, for intimacy and social connection. They yearn for meaningful lives and a relationship with something bigger than themselves. But they can find intimacy and connection nowhere. The desire of the open self for sociability and intimacy, its tendency to discount originality and objectivity in favor of practical work in common with others, has morphed into isolation and, as Robert Kolker

argues, passivity. The tendency of the open self to accept only theories that can be used to solve practical current problems has become the mantra that whatever works is fine. All ideas, even the most cherished and vital pieces of our national myth, are subservient to power and money.

### **Implications for Politics: Community, Mass Society, and the Open Self**

Good narrative art, Nussbaum maintains, helps us understand the “ethical importance of contingency, a deep sense of the problem of conflicting obligations and recognition of the ethical significance of the passions” (Nussbaum 14). Such works do not merely present life; they also represent it as something. They suggest to us “what matters and what does not” (Nussbaum 5). Robert Altman and King Vidor offer us morality tales for the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and show us the contradictions experienced by the open self as it attempts to find meaning in a correspondingly contradictory national myth. Americans are sociable, non-dialectical and outer-directed. Yet each individual views herself as special. We live in our own little worlds surrounded by jealousy, insecurity, and hostile powers over which we have little or no control. Any sense of community is fragile, impermanent, superficial, and risky. For the most part, however, we are not special. Only a few possess the qualities needed to stand out and take their place in some sort of natural hierarchy of merit. Even they will often fail, falling victim to either some character flaw or the powers that exploit the masses’ timorousness, complacency, materialism, and jealousy.

Most of us will retreat into *ataraxy*— the search for peace through withdrawal from whatever it is that is found disturbing. It is a kind of willing blindness to social, political, and spiritual conditions through finding some other focus for life. The goal is a “resting of the mind” in the face of the breakdown of the political (Voegelin, 1957: 369). Passivity becomes the order of the day. They will focus purely on private life, as Richard Rorty wants the masses in liberal democracies to do. Others will achieve peace through giving up independent judgment to some charismatic group or leader, perhaps a David Koresh or an Aryan Nation. But some, unable to achieve peace in either of these ways, will “chew on themselves” like Dostoevsky’s underground man. We can see all these responses in Altman’s

and Vidor's films. Some (John in *The Crowd*, the citizenry of *Nashville*, several soldiers in *Streamers*, and Stella Dallas) will withdraw. Others will give up their independent judgment to some leader or, like *Nashville's* Suleen and Albuquerque, some dream. And some will stew in their rage and frustration, sometimes destroying themselves (Zeke in *Hallelujah!*, Billy in *Streamers*, Zoe in *Short Cuts*), sometimes destroying those around them (Jerry and Ralph in *Short Cuts*, Griffin in *The Player*, Sam in *Street Scene* from 1931, Tony in *The Wedding Night*, Warlock in the 1932 *Cynara*), sometimes destroying both (Ruby in *Ruby Gentry*, Carlyle in *Streamers*, Pearl in *Duel in the Sun*, the Richard Nixon of *Secret Honor*).

In the work of both these directors, one sees the divinization of the individual that has its roots in the original American myth's view of human beings as created in the image and likeness of God. The gods are gone. Human beings are the measure of all things. We pull the gods into ourselves and, as Neil Gaiman so aptly illustrates in his novel *American Gods*, our choice in living is reduced to sin or alienation. King Vidor chronicled the possibility. Robert Altman shows us the end result. In Altman's terms, American democracy has committed suicide. It has been painless and it has been a choice—or rather the culmination of many choices that individually appeared harmless. “The game of life is hard to play. I'm gonna lose it anyway. The losing card I'll someday lay, so this is all I have to say. Suicide is painless.”<sup>7</sup> Both believe that America is more and that Americans can change. For both of them, the key is overcoming passivity and accepting citizenship. Americans will remain open selves, but need to avoid the excesses of that self's personality—too much conformity, loss of concern for one another, too great a reliance on fact and technique, too much adoration of the self, and too great a concern for material prosperity. Twentieth century America may have engaged in a flirtation with suicide, but twenty-first century America can change its mind.

**Margaret Hrezo and William E. Hrezo**  
**Radford University**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Auteur directors are characterized by distinctive personal and creative styles and voices and seek to keep creative control of projects in their own hands.

<sup>2</sup>This description of the Myth of America fits well the description of the American political character found in Inkeles, 1979; Potter, 1970; and Lipset, 1963 and 2004.

<sup>3</sup>King Vidor films consulted in this research include: *The Big Parade* (1925), *The Crowd* (1928), *Hallelujah!* (1929), *Our Daily Bread* (1934), *Stella Dallas* (1937), *An American Romance* (1944), *Duel in the Sun* (1946), and *The Fountainhead* (1949).

<sup>4</sup>Robert Altman films consulted in this research include: *M.A.S.H.* (1970), *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971), *Nashville* (1975), *Streamers* (1983), *Secret Honor* (1984), *Tanner '88* (1988), *The Player* (1992), *Short Cuts* (1993), *Cookie's Fortune* (1999), *Dr. T and the Women* (2000), and *Tanner on Tanner* (2004).

<sup>5</sup>Altman talks about greed as the topic of his films often. See Sterritt, 2000, 157, 176, 181, 184-86.

<sup>6</sup>This is most obvious in *The Player*, *Nashville*, *Secret Honor*, *Streamers*, and *Short Cuts*.

<sup>7</sup>Mike Altman and Johnny Mandel. *The MASH Theme Song*. Copyright (C) 1970 by Twentieth Century-Fox Music Corporation, 8544 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, Twentieth Century-Fox Music Corp. Ltd., London W1, England.

## Works Consulted

- Baxter, John. *King Vidor*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976.
- Dowd, Nancy and Shepard, David. *King Vidor: A Directors Guild of America Oral History*. Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1988.
- Durnat, Raymond and Simmon, Scott. *King Vidor, American*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Gaiman, Neil. *American Gods*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2003.
- Inkeles, David. "Continuity and Change in American National Character." *The Third Century*. Ed. Seymour Martin Lipset. Hoover Institution, 1979. 390-416.
- Karp, Alan. *The Films of Robert Altman*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1981.
- Kolker, Robert. *The Cinema of Loneliness*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963.
- . "A Changing American Character." *The Character of Americans: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Michael McGiffert. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1970. 269-93.
- , Ed. *The Third Century*. Hoover Institution Press, 1979.
- and Jason M. Larkin. *The Democratic Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004.
- Michels, Robert. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. Cornell University Library, 2009.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Love's Knowledge*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Plecki, Gerard. *Robert Altman*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985.
- Potter, David M. "The Quest for the National Character," *The Character of Americans: A Book of Readings*. Ed. Michael McGiffert. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1970. 21-36.
- Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Sandel, Michael, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self." *Political Theory*, 12 (Feb., 1984): 81-96.
- Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. New York: Harper, 1942.
- Sterritt, David, ed. *Robert Altman Interviews*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000.
- Vidor, King. *A Tree is a Tree*. Hollywood: Samuel French, 1981.

Voegelin, Eric. *Israel and Revelation*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1955.

—. *Plato and Aristotle*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1957.

—. *On the Form of the American Mind*. Ed. Jürgen Gebhardt and Barry Cooper. *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin: Vol. I*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 77-128. Ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. Oxford, 1946.

## **Like a “Whopper Virgin”: Anthropological Reflections on Burger King’s Controversial Ad Campaign**

The increasingly complex interplay between corporate fast food and non-Western societies took a new and improbable turn recently with the launch of Burger King’s “Whopper Virgins” advertising campaign.<sup>1</sup> This series of web and television ads showcasing the company’s iconic flame-broiled sandwich began airing in December 2008. Featuring a novel variation on the familiar “Pepsi Challenge” taste-test format, this integrated promotional effort specifically targets industry bellwether McDonald’s, most notably its top-selling Big Mac sandwich. At a deeper level, it also reveals the sometimes thorny issues that can arise amid intersections of global fast food, U.S. popular culture, and indigenous populations.

In the commercials, selected participants, dubbed “virgins” since they have purportedly never been exposed to industry marketing, much less eaten fast food hamburgers, are asked to sample both a Burger King Whopper and McDonald’s Big Mac and then indicate which sandwich they like best. The ad campaign’s offbeat and quirky tone, not to mention the provocative, if even overtly sexual, connotations of its title, is in keeping with Burger King’s recent marketing efforts. Indeed, it appears specifically designed to appeal to modern American television viewers’ hip and ironic sensibilities.<sup>2</sup> These same qualities, however, belie more serious matters related to the commercials’ caricatured portrayal of taste-test participants and their respective communities.

What is so troubling about the “Whopper Virgins” promotion from an anthropological perspective is that, instead of gauging the brand preferences of U.S. consumers, the commercials focus on those small-scale and often vulnerable societies traditionally studied by ethnographers. In this case, taste-test participants are drawn from three widely known and geoculturally distinct indigenous groups: the Hmong (China and mainland Southeast Asia), Inuit (Arctic Canada, Greenland, Russia, and Alaska), and Maramures (northern Romania and western Ukraine).

As detailed in several “Whopper Virgins” television spots and an expanded eight-minute “making-of” web feature, a “documentary” film crew travels to the remote villages of Baan Khun Chang Kiean, Thailand; Isortoq, Greenland; and Budesti, Romania, to record the seemingly unbiased views of local folk about the global fast food rivals’ signature products. The sounds of epic orchestral music play satirically in the background as an animated map documents the filmmakers’ trans-global journey somewhat like the famous scene from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Participating villagers are filmed not in everyday attire, but in more elaborate traditional garb, awkwardly sampling both Whoppers and Big Macs and offering sometimes droll comments in their native tongues about the burgers to off-screen handlers. The spots are directed by former professional skateboarder turned award-winning filmmaker, Stacy Peralta (*Riding Giants*, *Dogtown and Z-Boys*).

This article’s primary objective is to critically assess the “Whopper Virgins” ad campaign from an anthropological perspective. Of particular interest are the portrayals of traditional peoples featured both in the Burger King commercials and associated manifestations of American popular culture. While recognizing that these small screen promos are meant to be subversively humorous, it is still important to address the problematic depictions of indigenous groups that such web and television advertising perpetuate.

Clearly, the “Whopper Virgins” ad campaign can be approached from various critical perspectives. Scholars in media studies, semiotics, marketing, sociology, and other related fields are well-equipped to critique aspects of this controversial marketing effort, especially matters dealing with the aesthetics of “reality” and representation in television and other media formats that inform these commercials (Alvarado et al 153). Anthropology

provides a useful vantage point from which to consider the Burger King ads given the taste-test participants' traditional backgrounds and stated unfamiliarity with corporate fast food. Among other things, contemporary cultural anthropology concerns itself with human cultural variation and the subtle and profound impact of global economic and political processes on local cultural realities, particularly within non-Western contexts. The fact that a growing number of socio-cultural researchers like anthropologists (Matejowsky 146) have turned their attention to matters of fast food globalization/localization and its myriad popular culture associations only serves to bolster this view (Bosco 23). Indeed, this collective body of research has done much to elucidate the intricacies and contradictions that characterize corporate fast food's growing influence beyond North America and Europe (Wilk 19; Editor's note: See Minjoo Oh, *Studies in Popular Culture* 31.2).

After briefly considering past Burger King ad campaigns amid its ongoing rivalry with McDonald's, attention turns to the public reactions and corporate responses that have emerged in the wake of the "Whopper Virgins" commercials. Notably, details of how the web and television promos were conceived, developed, and implemented are addressed in this section. Next, so as to better situate this marketing effort within a broader popular cultural framework, an overview of U.S. television adverts prominently featuring depictions of indigenous peoples is presented. After that, the Burger King commercials are critically analyzed, before shifting focus to the perspective that anthropologists can bring to bear on the "Whopper Virgins" debate. Taken as a whole, this work highlights the various distortions that commonly inform portrayals of native populations in Western popular culture.

### **Burger Battles and "Whopper Stoppers"**

The "Whopper Virgins" advertising campaign is not Burger King's first attempt at supplanting the Golden Arches as the world's leading hamburger chain through an intensive multipronged promotional strategy. Rather, it is one in a series of marketing efforts designed to expand the restaurant's customer base and strengthen its global brand image vis-à-vis McDonald's. With varying degrees of success, these mass-market adverts have helped alter the fast food landscape in Burger King's favor by pitting their most

popular menu items against those of its chief competitor (Smith 20).

Since the early 1980s, Burger King has engaged in several cross-media ad campaigns that specifically take aim at McDonald's. The company gained some ground on the Golden Arches in 1983 after launching a number of similarly themed "broiling versus frying" commercials. As the name suggests, these spots emphasize distinctions between the restaurants' differing cooking styles. This campaign was followed two years later by a series of print and television adverts urging McDonald's patrons to make "The Big Switch" (ibid). Some of Burger King's assertions in nationally broadcast promos got the chain embroiled in a high-profile lawsuit from McDonald's that came to be known as the "Battle of the Burgers" (Jakle and Sculle 119).

The litigation centered on McDonald's accusations of false advertising against Burger King over claims that its burgers were more popular than those of its closest rival. Rather than face the prospects of a costly and protracted legal battle, Burger King eventually opted to settle out of court (ibid). Despite this setback, it appears that McDonald's recognized the continuing threat posed by Burger King and the popularity of its signature Whopper sandwich. In response, McDonald's developed a number of hamburgers across various regional and international markets that effectively duplicate the Whopper's size, ingredients, and flavors. These so-called "Whopper Stoppers" include the McDLT, the McLean Deluxe, and the Big N' Tasty.

As it currently stands, Burger King still lags behind McDonald's in most key markets including the U.S., where 66 per cent of its 11,550 outlets are located. With a modest to significant market presence in over 70 countries, it is notable that very few Burger King restaurants operate as company-controlled branches. Instead, some 90 per cent of all brand affiliates are privately owned and operated franchises. By the time the "Whopper Virgins" ad campaign was launched towards the end of 2008, Burger King employed more than 37,000 workers serving approximately 11.4 million daily customers (BKC Publications).

## **“Whopper Virgins”: Public Reaction and Corporate Response**

Given its novel and provocative core concept, the “Whopper Virgins” promotion drew sharp public criticism almost immediately. Indeed, snippets of the short teaser ads that aired just prior to the campaign’s official launch were enough to trigger adverse audience reactions. Segments about the growing uproar were soon featured on ABC’s *Good Morning America* and *Fox News*. By mid-December 2008, newspapers in the U.S. and abroad including *USA Today* and *The Guardian* had run stories about the public furor sparked by the adverts. Despite such mainstream media coverage, the most intense criticism of Burger King was in the blogosphere, where debates ranging from corporate exploitation to world hunger raged (Vranica). Essentially at issue was the filmmakers’ apparent ignorance of matters relevant to contemporary indigenous populations.

Many bloggers and other critics reacted strongly to the commercials’ failure to acknowledge the ongoing problems of poverty and hunger that continue to beset some of the regions where the ads take place, especially in rural Thailand (Morrissey; Schrambling; Steinman). Some questioned just how many local villagers can afford the associative costs of dining at Burger King, McDonald’s, or other fast food restaurants when faced with these kinds of persistent hardships. For many, the incongruity of marketing efforts promoting a style of cuisine widely recognized for its excessive attributes within or near impoverished areas underscores the lack of coherent foresight that went into the “Whopper Virgins” campaign, particularly as it relates to how such discrepancies would be greeted by viewers (Steinman).

It is important to recognize that not everyone regards the ads negatively. As reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, Lo Neng Kiatoukaysy, Executive Director of the Milwaukee-based nonprofit, Hmong American Friendship Association, said she and some of her Hmong coworkers viewed and liked the teaser promos (Vranica). Even with such approval, public clamor over the “Whopper Virgins” promotion grew to the point where Burger King felt compelled to answer its critics. In a carefully crafted response to one “Whopper Virgins” detractor accessible through a link in *The Wall Street Journal* Business Technology blog (December 9, 2008), Susan Robinson, Vice President of Corporate Communications for Burger King, defended the commercials. Significantly, her letter provides a more

detailed account of how the “Whopper Virgins” promotional campaign was developed and its involvement with the indigenous groups coordinated (LaVallee).

The “Whopper Virgins” project was created by Crispin Porter & Bogusky, a Miami-based advertising agency whose client list includes Microsoft, Volkswagen, and American Express. Notably, the firm has produced many successful and edgy promotions for Burger King over recent years, including the notorious “Whopper Freakout” television spots from 2007 and 2009’s short-lived “Whopper Sacrifice” web campaign. In these former pseudo-guerilla style commercials, hidden cameras reveal the sometimes upset reactions of real customers after being informed that the top-selling Whopper has been removed from local Burger King menus (Vranica). The latter on-line promotion involves Facebook users dropping or “defriending” ten individuals from their social networking contacts’ list in exchange for a free Whopper coupon (Morrisey).

Crispin Porter & Bogusky also created a minor uproar not long after the “Whopper Virgins” controversy with 2009’s now infamous “SpongeBob Square Butts” television commercials. These ads promote BK Kids’ meals by spoofing old-school rap videos, primarily Sir-Mix-a-Lot’s 1992 hit “Baby Got Back,” with gyrating hip hop dancers in rectangular-shaped short-shorts. The spots culminate with Sir-Mix-a-Lot quipping from his couch, “Booty is booty.” Numerous parental groups including the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood voiced outrage at the “sexualized” nature of these commercials for kids’ meals (Elliot).

According to Robinson, an independent “third-party” firm was commissioned by Burger King and Crispin Porter & Bogusky to develop the “Whopper Virgins” research methodology, gain access to selected testing locations, secure local individuals as test participants, and oversee the taste-tests. In all three countries, the tests were carried out away from the villagers’ home communities, usually in the largest neighboring metropolitan center. Accordingly, around 15 locals from each settlement were transported or flown to these adjacent urban locales. For the Inuit participants, this meant flying from Greenland to testing locations in Reykjavik, Iceland. Robinson also states that Burger King and Crispin Porter & Bogusky personnel were not present during any of the tests. The Big Macs and Whoppers consumed by on-camera participants were prepared locally at

nearby competing Burger King and McDonald's restaurants. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Whopper ultimately emerged victorious over the Big Mac as the most favored burger amongst taste-test participants.

It should be noted that, besides treating villagers from all three communities to free Whoppers, Burger King also provided the groups with either material goods or support as a gesture of appreciation. Appropriate contributions for each community were determined after ad personnel consulted with local leaders. As Robinson points out, learning materials were donated to the Hmong villagers in Thailand, while the Inuit community in Greenland received educational children's toys. In Romania, where numerous Maramures wooden churches have been designated as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Sites, the company helped underwrite a restoration project for a 17<sup>th</sup> century church.

Information presented in Robinson's letter raises a number of intriguing questions about the planning, implementation, and coordination of the "Whopper Virgins" campaign. For example, were the opinions of anthropologists or other social scientists who conduct ethnographic work amongst the Hmong, Inuit, and Maramures consulted by Burger King or Crispin Porter & Bogusky at any point during (pre/post-) production? Similarly, what was the background and training of those serving as the independent "third party" that directly interacted with the indigenous taste-test participants and their village communities? Finally, how much or in what way were individual participants compensated for their involvement in the commercials and ad campaign? Answers to these questions would go some way towards addressing the concerns of those who view the "Whopper Virgins" promos as little more than crass exploitation.

### **Television Commercials, Indigenous Peoples, and Popular Culture**

Commercials with depictions of indigenous peoples are nothing new to U.S. television viewers. Over the years, a number of spots featuring real or *faux* tribesmen showcasing various products or social causes have gained

wide exposure on the small screen. While some stand out in the public imagination more than others, many of these advertisements are characterized by either caricatured portrayals of traditional groups or some other dubious element.

Indeed, most commercials in this genre follow a basic storyline involving tribal folk confronting or utilizing manifestations of Western consumer culture for seemingly the first time. Their response, whether humorous or serious, usually provides the set-up for the ads' scripted punch line or otherwise climactic moment. Obviously, such advertisements are not meant to raise awareness about the plight of indigenous communities but to sell products and, perhaps secondarily, entertain or inform viewers. Yet, in mostly subtle ways, the depictions of traditional peoples within these promos arguably contribute to prevailing notions in the U.S. and elsewhere about native lifeways and the linkages these groups maintain with the wider world. With no context for critical reflection, adverts of this type can easily obscure or skew everyday perceptions about indigenous populations and their viability vis-à-vis encroaching global modernity.

What follows is a brief review of three television commercials that in many ways exemplify this advertising genre. Dating back some four decades, these adverts reveal the various distortions and limitations that can arise when depictions of indigenous peoples and their relationships with developed societies are presented within a mass-market format comprised mainly of 30 and 60 second promotional spots. Such critical examination provides a fitting backdrop against which elements of the more recent and arguably more problematic "Whopper Virgins" campaign can best be evaluated.

***Keep America Beautiful: The "Crying Indian" (1971)***

Perhaps this genre's most memorable ad is the iconic "Crying Indian" promo from the *Keep America Beautiful* public service announcements that hit the airwaves on Earth Day 1971. Although not commercially-oriented, this spot, featuring a Native American tearfully confronting the waste and pollution of American mass consumption, is surely ingrained into the consciousness of television viewers of a certain age. So resonant is the "Crying Indian" commercial to most Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, in fact, that its title character has pretty much devolved into stock parody, emerging as a recurring motif in diverse areas of American popular culture, espe-

cially film and television. Notably, he has been spoofed or satirized in episodes of *The Simpsons*, *Futurama*, and *Mystery Science Theater 3000* as well as the feature film *Wayne's World 2*.

Ironically, the actor's ethnicity is not even true-born Native American but rather Sicilian. The character actor Iron Eyes Cody (1904-1999) had a long and successful career portraying Native Americans in over 200 Hollywood Westerns including John Wayne's breakout film *The Big Trail* (1930) and *A Man Called Horse* (1970) with Richard Harris. His tribal chanting even appeared prominently in the 1988 Joni Mitchell song "Lakota." News of his non-Indian ancestry became public when a 1996 story in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* was picked up by several national wire services. Although actively involved in Native American issues for much of his life, even going so far as to adopt two Native American children, these revelations could not help but damage his credibility and effectively tarnish the legacy of the "Crying Indian" promo (Mikkelsen).

### ***Nike: Just Do It (1989)***

Possibly just as relevant as the "Crying Indian" ad but almost certainly less familiar to today's television viewers is a Nike *Just Do It* commercial from 1989 ("If the Inamuk"). The spot, filmed mainly on location in Kenya, culminates with a Samburu tribesman in swooshed hiking shoes speaking into the camera in his native Maa language as English subtitles with the translation "Just do it" appear on screen.

With its cutting-edge imagery and high end production values, the commercial embodies nearly all of the qualities that have made Nike's *Just Do It* ad campaign one of the most successful marketing efforts of recent times. Notably, however, the advert's depiction of the Samburu tribesman is clouded by one significant factor. He is not actually reciting the company tagline as the captioning suggests but rather humorously requesting larger and more comfortable footwear.

As cultural anthropologist Lee Cronk, who conducts fieldwork in Kenya amongst the neighboring Mukogodo-Maasai, pointed out at the time, in 1989, the Samburu actor does not, in fact, say "Just do it," but rather, "I don't want these. Give me big shoes." After this dialogue flub became a minor news item in *Forbes* magazine, it soon gained mention in other widely read publications, including *USA Today* and the *New York Times*. Over

subsequent years, the *Just Do It* ad has taken on a life of its own as an Internet story that many continually mistake for an urban legend (Mikkelson).

For its part, Nike issued various statements on the matter after the advertising blunder became public. One explanation suggests that the company was well aware of the incongruity between dialogue and subtitles. The erroneous captioning was retained simply because the tribesman's original remarks sounded better than the more stilted Maa translation of "just do it." Another, perhaps more plausible, account was that no one at Nike anticipated that an American Maa speaker would see the commercial, much less raise issue with it (Cox). All things considered, Nike did not suffer any strong public backlash from the story. By making light of their mistake, even going so far as sending Cronk a free pair of hiking boots for his clarification, the company effectively neutralized any public relations fallout and generated some free national publicity in the process (Mikkelson).

### ***Toyota 4Runner: Singers (2005)***

Another television commercial with depictions of indigenous peoples is the 2005 *Singers* Toyota 4Runner ad. This 30-second spot features a Western couple negotiating harsh jungle terrain in a new Toyota SUV as the entrancing sounds of tribal chanting play in the background. Upon arrival at their destination, it is revealed that the otherworldly music is emanating from inside the vehicle. Five scantily clad Brazilian Yanomami Amerindians variously adorned with painted skin, bodily accouterments, and distinctive bowl haircuts are packed into the 4Runner's rear seats. Presumably, the quintet is vocalizing harmonically either as a way to entertain their hosts or pass the time while hitching a ride to their remote *shabono* (large circular hut).

Notably, the *Singers* spot features actual Yanomami tribesmen as the ad's main characters. These first-time actors, along with the set and production, give the promo a semblance of authenticity that appears all but genuine in most key respects. For logistical reasons, however, the commercial was filmed in a temperate New Zealand rainforest and not the tropical jungles of Amazonia. Filming in this non-tropical locale not only gave the Yanomami actors their first opportunity for international air travel, it also subtly skews audience perceptions to some degree (Lemann).

Yet, what is perhaps most problematic about the *Singers* spot is not so much its depiction of indigenous peoples nor its mock village locale but rather the incongruity of having Yanomami Amerindians as the focal point of an American SUV ad. The unintended irony, of course, is that over recent years gas-guzzling SUVs like the Toyota 4Runner have emerged as potent symbols of rampant Western consumerism, a process closely associated with natural resource depletion like the destruction of the Yanomami's rainforest habitat. Although Toyota SUVs and Amerindian passengers make for a curious juxtaposition in this context, the *Singers* commercial does suggest rather accurately that few, if any, contemporary tribal societies remain so isolated that they are untouched by processes of global consumer capitalism.

### **Anthropology and the Marketing of "Whopper Virgins"**

As the preceding television commercials illustrate, depictions of indigenous peoples are subject to varying levels of refraction through the obfuscating lens of this fast-paced and until recently largely ephemeral advertising medium. Yet the shortcomings of the aforementioned promos appear relatively slight compared to those characterizing the "Whopper Virgins" adverts.

What makes the Burger King television and web spots both so distinctive and problematic is that they feature actual villagers from indigenous communities on camera in unscripted situations. Other commercials in this genre rely primarily on the performances of either traditional peoples or professional actors in scripted and staged productions. As the disclaimer on the "Whopper Virgins" web feature states, "Whopper Virgins are real people doing real taste-tests. No actors were used in this film." While such statements may seem to legitimize the adverts' authenticity and depiction of village folk, the commercials actually run counter to local realities in several key ways.

The fact that test tasters are labeled "virgins" seems to suggest that groups like the Hmong, Inuit, and Maramures somehow remain pure and unsullied in the face of encroaching global modernity. From scenes of idyllic rural life to their ornate traditional dress, the commercials simplistically

portray participants and their respective communities as little more than modern-day “noble savages,” living an Edenic existence beyond the corrupting influence of Western society.

An on-screen web film participant alludes to this when he tells the documentary crew, “You’re going to go all around the world and find people that are really off the grid, who perhaps don’t have televisions, who don’t have access to restaurants and what-not, who really live outside of things.” Certainly, the idea that these groups “live outside of things” or “off the grid” is open to criticism, as it comes across as more than just a little patronizing and ethnocentric.

If recent ethnographic work amongst indigenous peoples teaches us anything, it is that nowadays very few small-scale societies remain beyond the transformative sway of global consumer capitalism and the state systems that support it (Bodley). Far from being unaffected by forces of globalization and mass consumerism/media, the groups featured in the “Whopper Virgins” ads are variously enmeshed in webs of social and economic linkages underpinning an increasingly ubiquitous global culture of consumption. Indeed, it is unlikely that these villagers are as unfamiliar with manifestations of Western society as the filmmakers seem to indicate. The fact that two of the communities are within traveling distance to urban centers with Burger Kings and McDonald’s restaurants suggests that local folk are more than vaguely acquainted with processes of market-based consumer capitalism.

No less troubling, the diets promoted in the commercials are far from nutritious. In numerous tests, the trans fats commonly found in fast food cuisine have been shown to negatively impact bodily health (Popkin). Significantly, the spread of corporate fast food outside of the U.S. and Europe has paralleled a rise in obesity and obesity-related conditions like cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes across what was once called the Third World. This rapidly emerging trend of “globesity” stands as a serious health challenge for governments and health care systems worldwide (ibid).

More implicitly, the ads suggest that the “Whopper Virgins” participants have less-sophisticated palates compared to those of Western fast food consumers. The diets and foodways that have sustained these indigenous communities for generations are presented in something of a comical

light, as if they do not really measure up to the bountiful offerings of corporate fast food. Notably, one clip shows a Hmong villager confronting a hamburger with the narration, "They've never seen such a piece of foreign food before. And they didn't even quite know how to pick it up." Arguably, the filmmakers would have just as much difficulty, if not more, negotiating the table etiquette and cuisine of these traditional groups.

Overall, the subtle and not-so-subtle forms of "othering" conveyed in the "Whopper Virgins" spots effectively perpetuate stereotypical and one-dimensional notions of indigenous cultures, particularly those related to their taste preferences. They also, conversely, reveal much about the uniformity underlying current American consumer tastes and foodways. An obvious subtext communicated by Burger King and Crispin Porter & Bogusky in the commercials is one whereby America essentially is a land of convenience and abundance; a society that others will naturally strive to emulate if only properly enlightened about its plentiful offerings.

### **Burger King Backlash?**

Clearly, the "Whopper Virgins" ad campaign is designed to push the envelope, if not openly stir up controversy. While this style of advertising is an increasingly common ploy to grab the attention of jaded consumers in the high-density and heavily trafficked 24/7 commercial terrain of modern mass media, it seems that Burger King misjudged public sentiment to their edgy marketing efforts in this instance. The use of actual tribal folk in fast food taste-tests spotlights the lengths to which today's companies sometimes go to cut through the seemingly endless barrage of competing media and commercials to make an impact on viewers.

Yet, questions of whether or not the depictions of traditional peoples in the "Whopper Virgins" promotion trigger a significant consumer backlash against Burger King appear unlikely at this point. If the response of fast food patrons to the infamous "Whopper Freakout" campaign from 2007 is any indication, the company may actually benefit from the increased, albeit largely negative, media attention. According to ABC News, the restaurant chain reported a significant 20 per cent sales increase after this earlier

earlier marketing promotion hit the airwaves (Alfonsi, Bunn and Ibanga). Moreover, given the short shelf life of fast food television commercials nowadays, any residual negativity generated by the “Whopper Virgins” spots may be minimal once the ads cycle out of viewing rotation.

## **Conclusion**

The “Whopper Virgins” controversy presents anthropologists and others concerned about contemporary indigenous peoples with opportunities to assert a more resonant voice in public discourse about issues relevant to traditional groups like the Hmong, Inuit, and Maramure. Among other things, the value of preserving local foodways amid the growing influence of global food systems in non-Western societies surely warrants advocacy. At the very least, the “Whopper Virgin” commercials offer a timely and familiar example to generate discussion in and out of the classroom regarding the varying levels of misrepresentation and distortion that traditional groups face in Western popular culture.

**Ty Matejowsky**  
**University of Central Florida**

## **Acknowledgements**

The author wishes to thank Martha Heine, Dr. Leslie Sue Lieberman, Dr. John Lynxwiler, Lorena Parker Matejowsky, and Dr. John Walker for their valued contributions to this work. Moreover, gratitude is extended to the University of Central Florida (UCF)’s Department of Anthropology and the UCF Southern Region for their support during the preparation of this article.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This paper developed out of my brief letter to *Anthropology News*, the official newspaper of the American Anthropological Association, in April 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Given their decidedly edgy tone, it is probably unsurprising that most Burger King ads like the "Whopper Virgins" spots are aimed at the 18-35 male demographic (Horovitz 2007). Notably, the "Whopper Virgins" commercials aired during NFL football games and popular and sometimes controversial animated series such as *Family Guy* and *American Dad*.

## References

- Alfonsi, Sharyn, Jim Bunn and Imaeyen Ibanga. "Burger King Ads Flame-Broiled in Controversy." 9 Dec. 2008. *ABC News*. 19 Mar. 2009. <<http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/story?id=6423256&page=1>>.
- Alvarado, Manuel, Robin Gutch and Tana Wollen. *Learning the Media*. London: Macmillan, 1987.
- BKC Publications. "Burger King Holdings." 9 Mar. 2009. <[http://media.corporate-ir.net/media\\_files/irol/87/87140/BurgerKing\\_2008\\_AR\\_FINAL.pdf](http://media.corporate-ir.net/media_files/irol/87/87140/BurgerKing_2008_AR_FINAL.pdf)>.
- Bodley, John H. *Victims of Progress*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2008.
- Bosco, Joseph. "An Anthropological View of the Hong Kong McDonald's Snoopy Craze." *Hong Kong Anthropologist* 12:23-30, 1999.
- Cox, James. "Nike Tongue Twister." *USA Today*. 8 Feb. 1989: A1.
- Elliot, Stuart. "Activists Reject Having it Burger King's 'Square Pants' Way." 10 Apr. 2009. *Media Decoder*. 29 Jul. 2009. <<http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/10/activists-reject-having-it-burger-kings-squarepants-way/>>.
- Horovitz, Bruce. "Burger King of Cool?" *USA Today*. 7 Feb. 2007. <[http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/food/2007-02-06-burger-king-usat\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/food/2007-02-06-burger-king-usat_x.htm)>.
- "If the Inamuk Fits..." *Time*. 20 Feb. 1989: 75.
- Jakle, John A. and Keith A. Sculle. *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- LaVallee, Andrew. "Whopper Virgins Ads (and Controversy) Break." 9 Dec. 2008. *Wall Street Journal*. 19 Mar. 2009. <<http://blogs.wsj.com/biztech/2008/12/09/whopper-virgins-ads-and-controversy-break/?loc=interstitialskip>>.
- Lemann, Mariana. "Rincón Creativo." 6 March 2006. *Ad Week's Marketing Medios*. 9 Mar. 2009. <[http://www.marketingymedios.com/marketingymedios/creative/article\\_display.jsp?vnu\\_content\\_id=1002116625](http://www.marketingymedios.com/marketingymedios/creative/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1002116625)>.

- Matejowsky, Ty. "Global Tastes, Local Contexts: An Ethnographic Account of Fast Food Expansion in San Fernando City, the Philippines." *Fast Food/Slow Food. The Cultural Economy of the Global Food System*. Richard Wilk, ed. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2006. 145-59.
- "McDonald's hoping new burger a Whopper Stopper." 2 Jul. 1997 *Augusta Chronicle*. 9 Mar. 2009. <[http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/070297/fea\\_whopper.html](http://chronicle.augusta.com/stories/070297/fea_whopper.html)>.
- Mikkelson, Barbara. "If the Shoe Fits..." 25 January 2007. *Snopes.com*. 9 Mar. 2009. <<http://www.snopes.com/business/hidden/nike.asp>>.
- Mikkelson, Barbara. "Iron Eyes Cody." 9 Aug. 2007. *Snopes.com*. 9 Mar. 2009. <<http://www.snopes.com/movies/actors/ironeyes.asp>>.
- Morrissey, Brian. "Crispin brings BK food to the unenlightened." 1 Dec. 2008. *AdFreak*. 19 Mar. 2009. <<http://adweek.blogs.com/adfreak/2008/12/crispin-brings-bk-food-to-the-unenlightened-.html>>.
- Morrissey, Brian. "Burger King Makes 'Sacrifice' on Facebook." 8 Jan. 2009. *Adweek*. 25 Jan. 2010. <[http://www.brandweek.com/bw/content\\_display/news-and-features/digital/e3i9953839003c11ce8270c77cb5f750f06](http://www.brandweek.com/bw/content_display/news-and-features/digital/e3i9953839003c11ce8270c77cb5f750f06)>.
- Popkin, Barry M. *The World is Fat: The Fads, Trends, Policies, and Products that are Fattening the Human Race*. New York: Avery, 2008.
- Schrambling, Regina. "Billions and billions and billions." *Gastropoda.com*. 19 Mar. 2009. <<http://gastropoda.com/2008/12/billions-and-billions-and-billions/>>.
- Smith, Andrew F. *Encyclopedia of Junk Food and Fast Food*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006.
- Steinman, John. "Whopper Virgins. How Burger King's latest marketing strategy is broiling up a lot of controversy." 17 Dec. 2008. *Deconstructing Dinner*. 19 Mar. 2009. <[http://www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/column\\_whoppervirgins.htm](http://www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/column_whoppervirgins.htm)>.
- Vranica, Suzanne. "Fresh Palates for Burger King. Chain goes to Transylvania and Beyond to Conduct Taste-tests." 4 Dec. 2008. *Wall Street Journal*. 19 Mar. 2009. <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122834728675077461.html>>.
- Watson, James, ed. *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Wilk, Richard, ed. *Fast Food/Slow Food. The Cultural Economy of the Global Food System*. Lanham, MD: Alta Mira Press, 2006.

*Elizabeth Monk-Turner, Mary Heiserman, Crystle Johnson,  
Vanity Cotton, and Manny Jackson*

---

---

## **The Portrayal of Racial Minorities on Prime Time Television: A Replication of the Mastro and Greenberg Study a Decade Later**

Exploring how racial minorities are portrayed on television is valuable for two primary reasons (Mastro & Greenberg 2000). First, it is socially important to document how minorities are depicted on television as well as how such portrayals have changed over time. Second, as a cultural artifact, television reaches a wide audience. Many maintain that the way racial minorities are represented contributes to stereotypical images, whether positive or negative, that viewers develop (Potter, 1994; Potter & Chang, 1990; Bodenhausen et al., 1995; Devine & Baker, 1991; Persson & Musher-Eizenman, 2003; and Ford, 1997). As Signorielli (2001) observed, television has become the “nation’s primary story-teller” (36).

This study replicates earlier work by Mastro & Greenberg (2000) who explored the representation and depiction of Caucasian, African American/black and Latino characters on prime time television. Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found that, compared to Caucasians and African Americans, Latinos were under-represented on primetime television, where they comprised only 3% of television characters. The Mastro & Greenberg (2000) study is important because they reported that Latino television characters were not as negatively stereotyped as African American television charac-

ters. While they found more African American representation on television, the roles and behaviors portrayed were negative characterizations (see too Weigel et al., 1995; Greenberg & Brand, 1994; Ford, 1997). Specifically, Latino characters were generally respected and the least lazy of any group, while African Americans were the laziest, least respected, and dressed most provocatively (see too Fyfe, 1999). The conversations of African American characters fared better in that they were most relaxed and most spontaneous, while the conversations of Latinos were least articulate, most accented, and least spontaneous. The work of this article replicates the earlier study by Mastro & Greenberg (2000) by exploring the representation, appearance, conversational characteristics and personal characteristics among Caucasian, Latino and African American characters on prime time television a decade later.

Mastro & Greenberg's (2000) work is notable because Latino representation was included in better understanding minority portrayal on prime time television. According to the U.S. Census, Latinos are the nation's largest ethnic or race minority as well as the fastest growing minority group (2008). Today, 15% of the U.S. population is Latino and one of every two people added to the population is Latino (U.S. Census, 2008). The U.S. Census estimates that by 2050, a fourth of the population will be Latino. While the size of the Latino population grows, research attention, notably representation and portrayal on television, lags. Therefore, it is important to track media images and how they have changed over time.

According to Nielsen Media, CBS, NBC, Fox, and ABC remained the top viewed networks on prime time television which were broadcast over the air (2009). CBS came in first place with 5.81 million prime time, with ABC trailing at 5.51 million prime time viewers. Over the period of this study, cable and satellite programs, as well as other niche networks, have competed for viewers; however, the major networks remain in the lead for the television viewing audience in general (Nielsen Media, 2009). Still, other outlets, such as the Spanish language network's Univision, which claims 3.21 million viewers, have changed the landscape of the media and television (Nielsen Media, 2009). Nevertheless, we argue that the images viewers see on major over-the-air channels continue to have the potential to impact how minority and majority group members are perceived in the wider society.

## Background

Early work by Goffman (1974) posited that media images and messages work as a cognitive filter to help individuals make sense of the world. Others (Tan, Ling & Theng, 2002) have argued that television has the “potential to reach the most private realms of the human psyche” (853). If television images contribute to stereotypes, Graves’ (1999) finding that racial minorities were generally negatively stereotyped on television is troublesome (see too Mastro & Robinson, 2000). Such negative stereotypes could shape how viewers think about racial minorities (see Graves, 1999).

Gerbner et al. (2002) argued that television continuously feeds “mainstream” views over a period of time. Proposing a cultivation hypothesis, Gerbner et al. (1994) posited that television images inform public opinions about the social world (see too Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Specifically, cultivation theory proposed that heavy exposure to media, television in particular, shaped how viewers saw the real world. What such viewers deem as appropriate role portrayals, values and ideologies are, over time, increasingly in line with those delivered on screen (Gerbner et al. 2007). Likewise, Robinson et al. (2007) argued that media images, along with lived experience, significantly shaped children’s feelings of others.

Content analyzing animated Disney film images, Robinson et al. (2007) maintained that media images can “form, change, and reinforce stereotypes” (203; Editor’s note: See Alexander M. Bruce, *Studies in Popular Culture* 30.1). Even if one does not accept the proposition that such images shape mental formations, Berg (1990) found that images seen on television validated existing stereotypes of the viewing audience and gave them additional credibility (see too Potter, 1994). Further, Greenberg (1988) suggested that certain images, particularly those that stand out to the viewing audience, may be more important in shaping racial attitudes than the mere number of minorities characters shown.

Bodenhausen et al. (1995) found that exposure to media images of successful African Americans may have positive effects on the racial attitudes of whites. Specifically, Vrij et al. (1996) argued that television images may change prejudiced racial attitudes. They found three characteristics were critical for such change to occur. First, television images

needed to stress similarities between majority and minority group members. Further, these images needed to include multiple minority group members, not merely a token minority group member. Finally, the anti-discrimination message should be clear in the images shown (see Vrij et al., 1996). If minority characters were presented in a positive way, according to the five-point Likert scale used in our content analysis, we examined the explicitness of such positive characterizations. Again Vrij et al. (1996) argued that these factors were essential components of media portrayals of minority characters if negative racial stereotyping is to be lessened.

## Method

Prime time television shows (8-10 p.m. EST) were content analyzed during a two-week period beginning in early March 2007. During this period, a one-week sample of all shows and characters shown on ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX was recorded and content analyzed (sports and news programs were excluded from the analysis). Thus, one complete prime time week (Monday to Friday) for each of the four networks was content analyzed. Our unit of analysis was the television character that appeared on these prime time shows, and both major and minor characters were included. The use of a one-week sample followed the pattern established by others who have maintained this type of sample provides a reliable portrait of television portrayals (see Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Pfau, Muller & Garrow, 1995).

Coded variables replicated those used by Mastro & Greenberg (2000), who originally selected variables “to reflect the frequency and prominence of minority portrayals” (p. 693). These variables, they argued, were the attributes that past literature found “as primary components of image formation and stereotyping” (Mastro and Greenberg, 2000:p. 693; see also Berg, 1990). Coded variables included: race, age, network, income level, gender, and role prominence. If characters were major or main characters, those essential to the plot or story line, then their *role* prominence is coded as 1. Other characters were considered minor characters (0). Background characters who appeared on screen but were non-essential (people on the street or characters seen in the background in public areas) were excluded. *Race* is operationalized as Caucasian, African American, Latino/

Hispanic, Asian American and all others. This categorization is in line with new Census race categories as well. *Age* is coded as less than 10, 10-20, 20s, 30s, and 40+. Perceived *income* level is coded as low (<\$20,000 per year), middle (\$20,000-\$70,000), or high (over \$70,000).

Next, we coded four sets of variables, again in line with Mastro and Greenberg (2000), on a five-point scale (bipolar adjective scales) (p. 694). Again, these items were originally selected because they reflected “an attribute or characteristic which has been associated with an ethnic stereotype” (p. 694). Five *physical characteristics* are content analyzed: weight (thin-obese), height (short-tall), hair color (blonde-black), skin color (fair-dark skin), and accent (no accent-heavy accent). A second set of six variables content analyzed *behavioral characteristics*: articulate-inarticulate, quiet-loud, passive-aggressive, lazy-motivated, ridiculed-respected and dumb-smart. Next, we coded a set of six variables to capture *appearance differences*: excessive makeup-no makeup, excessive accessories-no accessories, provocative attire-conservative attire, casual attire-professional attire, disheveled-well-groomed, and dirty-clean.

Finally, we note attributes that pick up *conversational characteristics*, whether the conversation was tense-relaxed and/or premeditated-spontaneous. To ensure reliability in coding, two coders content analyzed each television program. Intercoder reliability was high (89% agreement across all categories). When there was a disagreement with regard to coding, coders came to an agreement as to the best way to categorize the characterization. Clearly, coding television images is subjective as is how viewers see such images on screen.

## Results

Most (74%) of our sample was comprised of Caucasian television actors, 16% of prime-time actors were African American, 5% were Latino, <2% were Asian Americans and <3% were of another racial category. In their work, Mastro & Greenberg (2000) also found that 16% of prime-time television actors were African American; however, in their work only 3% of such actors were Latino. Over a period of ten years, the racial representation of television actors has not changed significantly. White actors continue to be in a distinct majority position, African American repre-

sentation is in line with their percent of the U.S. population and the representation of Latinos continues to be in a distinct minority.

Like Mastro & Greenberg (2000), we did not find a significant difference by race, gender, or income. Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found that female characters, regardless of race, were in a minority position (around 37%) among prime time television actors. Our results show that female actors were better represented in prime time—especially among African American actors. Three fourths of African American actors on prime time, a decade later, were female, while 64% of Latino characters and 56% of white characters were female (see Table 1). The vast majority (74% and 73% respectively) of white and Latino characters fell in the middle income category; however, only 67% of African American characters were located here.

In their work, Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found Latinos were significantly younger than other characters. We did not observe significant age differences by race. In our sample, approximately a third of all characters were in their 30s. On the other hand, Mastro & Greenberg (2000) did not observe a significant difference by race and whether the television character was in a major or minor role. Our results show that the vast majority (91%) of Latino characters were portrayed in major television roles, along with 77% of white characters; however, only 61% of African American characters were observed in this role ( $X^2 = 5.43$ ;  $p = .06$ ).

Next, we explored differences in appearance, conversational style and personal attributes among racial groups. Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found significant differences by race in four of their six appearance characteristics. They found that Latinos wore more accessories and jewelry than whites and that they were the best groomed. Alternatively, African Americans were least well groomed and were more provocative in dress than white characters. A decade later, we found no significant differences by race on any of these six measures. Likewise, Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found significant conversational differences by race. They found that Latinos were most tense and least spontaneous especially compared to blacks. As was true for appearance characteristics, a decade later we found no significant differences by race with regard to these two conversational characteristics (tension and premeditation).

Finally, we content analyzed 11 personal characteristics. Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found significant differences by race for eight of these measures while we found significant differences for six personal characteristics. Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found significant race differences for height, hair, skin color, accent, articulation, respect, aggression, and laziness. We found significant differences for all of these variables save height, aggression, and laziness; however, unlike Mastro & Greenberg (2000), we found significant race differences by intelligence. Mastro & Greenberg (2000) argued that significant race differences by these personal characteristics was an indication of straightforward stereotyping.

Our results show that Latinos continued to be portrayed as having a heavier accent than other racial groups. Most (64%) Latino characters have a heavy accent; however, few (<1%) white or black (3%) characters were portrayed in this way ( $X^2 = 139.56$ ;  $p < .0001$ ). Likewise, the trend continues that Latino characters were portrayed as the least articulate of all television characters. A fourth of all black characters were depicted as most articulate along with 30% of white characters; however, no Latino characters fell in this category ( $X^2 = 25.68$ ;  $p = .003$ ). Not surprisingly, we noted that Latino and African American characters had the darkest hair ( $X^2 = 79.66$ ;  $p < .0001$ ) and African Americans had the darkest skin color with Latinos intermediate and whites the fairest ( $X^2 = 226.99$ ;  $p < .0001$ ). Unlike Mastro and Greenberg (2000), we found significant race difference by intelligence. Half (52%) of all African American actors were depicted as the most intelligent compared to 43% of whites and 27% of Latinos. At the same time, more African Americans (15%) and Latinos (18%) were depicted as least intelligent compared to <4% of whites ( $X^2 = 23.86$ ;  $p = .02$ ). This finding offers limited support for the idea of counter-stereotyping; however, the fact that so many more minority characters were deemed least intelligent compared to whites is of concern.

Mastro and Greenberg (2000) found three relationships that ran counter to traditional stereotypes. They found that Latinos were the least ridiculed (or most respected) characters shown on prime-time—a counter-stereotypical finding. A decade later; however, we found a reversal of fortune as Latino characters were most likely to be ridiculed and least likely to be respected compared to either white or black characters ( $X^2 = 30.41$ ;  $p = .002$ ). Mastro and Greenberg (2000) also found that Latino characters

were least lazy and most motivated and that African American characters were least aggressive especially compared to whites. Our work found no significant differences by laziness or aggression. Thus, our work found no counter-stereotypical findings by race. In fact, with regard to being respected, our work shows that Latinos were negatively portrayed in this respect.

Finally, we content analyzed whether television actors were depicted as moral-immoral and whether or not they were portrayed as more admirable or despicable. Our work shows that significantly more African Americans and Latinos were shown as immoral (9% and 18% respectively) compared to only 2% of white television actors ( $X^2 = 22.12$ ;  $p = .04$ ). Likewise, significantly more African American and Latino characters were portrayed as despicable, rather than admirable, on television (9% and 18% respectively) compared to only 3% of white television actors ( $X^2 = 22.93$ ;  $p = .02$ ). This finding, coupled with the fading of counter-stereotypes observed by Mastro and Greenberg (2000) ten years ago, is troublesome.

### **Discussion**

This work replicated the earlier work of Mastro and Greenberg (2000), who explored the portrayal of racial minorities on prime time television. Significant race differences in appearance and conversational style, observed by Mastro & Greenberg (2000), were not present a decade later. Unlike the earlier work, our results show that the vast majority of Latino (91%) and white (77%) characters were in main roles, while only 61% of African Americans were depicted in such a television role. Thus, the few Latino actors that appeared in prime time were in main roles. While African American characters were three times more likely than Latinos to appear on television, they were more likely to be depicted in minor roles. Still, the sheer representation of minority characters is lacking—especially Latino and other minority characters. Only 5% of all television actors observed were Latino, up only two percentage points from the prior study a decade earlier. The representation of African Americans remained constant over this time period at 16% of all television prime time actors. Thus, while some similarities appeared between characters, regardless of race, salient differences were present as well.

Mastro & Greenberg (2000) found counter-stereotypical images for three of the 11 personal characteristics they content analyzed. They

found that their Latino characters were the least lazy and the least ridiculed (or most respected) among prime time television characters. Further, blacks were least aggressive, especially compared to white characters. Vrij et al. (1996) argued that such positive characteristics of minority characters were essential to diminish negative stereotyping by race. Unfortunately, we did not find such counter-stereotypes in our work. We found no significant differences by race with regard to being lazy or the display of aggression. Notably, we observed that more Latinos were ridiculed than was true for either whites or blacks (18%, <1%, and 0% respectively). Both African American and white characters were most likely to be respected and least likely to be ridiculed. Thus, if there was a counter-stereotype in our data, it was that black characters were frequently (45%) portrayed with the most respect along with white characters (36%). However, we posit that it is troubling that significantly more Latino (18%) and African American (9%) characters were portrayed as immoral compared to white (2%) characters. This coupled with the fact that significantly more Latino (18%) and black (9%) characters were viewed as despicable television characters, rather than admired ones, compared to white (3%) characters does nothing to counter negative racial stereotypes.

Like Mastro & Greenberg (2000) we found significant differences by race with regard to hair, skin color, accent and articulation. Notably, no Latino characters were portrayed as most articulate; however, approximately a fourth of black characters and 30% of white characters were shown in this way. Unlike Mastro and Greenberg (2000), we found that black and Latino characters were significantly more likely to be shown as being less intelligent compared to whites. Only 3% of all white characters were perceived as least intelligent compared to 15% of blacks and 18% of Latino characters. At the same time, the majority of African American television characters were portrayed as most intelligent (52% of all African American characters) compared to 43% of whites and only 27% of Latinos. One could argue that these images send mixed messages rather than the clear positive stereotype that Vrij et al. (1996) maintain is necessary to dismantle negative racial stereotyping.

The counter-stereotypical racial images Mastro and Greenberg (2000) observed were lacking in our sample. If positive characterizations are essential to lessening negative racial stereotyping, then prime time tele-

vision is not providing such portrayals of minority characters. Rather, viewers still see Latinos as having heavy accents, with little articulation skills, and as generally not well respected—especially compared to either African Americans or whites. It seems that Latino representations have lost the most ground over this ten-year period. Viewers of prime-time television see few images to dent any negative stereotypes they may harbor about racial minorities; however, positive images of white characters continue. White prime-time television characters are solidly middle income, fair with regard to skin and hair color, devoid of a heavy accent, articulate, respected, viewed as moral and admirable characters.

Media images contribute to both positive and negative social stereotypes. Race differences in appearance and conversational style have significantly diminished over time; however, the representation of minorities on prime time has not changed over time. What message do viewers take away from media exposure when so few characters are Latinos? Do they notice that many of the African American characters on prime time appear in minor roles? Counter stereotypes observed by Mastro & Greenberg (2000) were not as marked ten years later. Now, of the few Latinos one sees on prime time, significantly more are ridiculed compared to other characters. On a positive note, African American characters were depicted, along with whites, as respected and intelligent characters. This is negated, though, by more minority characters, both Latino and African American, being portrayed as more immoral and despicable compared to whites.

Why, academics and viewers alike might ask, do significant differences remain in the depiction of prime time characters by race? Why hasn't the media done more in producing counter stereotypes of racial minorities to help diminish race stereotyping and social prejudices? Even if one does not accept that the media can reduce such social beliefs, why do the negative minority stereotypes continue? If Goffman (1974) correctly posited that such images are cognitive filters and shape popular meaning, what responsibility must the media accept in the creation and perpetuation of negative racial stereotyping? We argue that the depiction of minority characters on prime time has changed little over recent time. Counter stereotypical images have faded for Latinos and mixed media messages exist for African American characters. Given that media images are viewed

not only by a national but by a growing international audience, we argue that the media must wrestle with these constructed images.

**Elizabeth Monk-Turner, Mary Heiserman, Crystle Johnson,  
Vanity Cotton, and Manny Jackson  
Old Dominion University**

**Table 1. All Characters by Race**

	<b>Caucasian</b> (157)	<b>Latino</b> (11)	<b>African American</b> (33)
<b>Income</b>			
% middle	74%	73%	67%
<b>Age</b>			
% in 30s	34%	36%	33%
<b>Role</b>			
% major	77%	91%	61%
<b>Gender</b>			
% female	56%	64%	73%

## References

- Allan, K., & Coltrane, S. (1996). Gender Displaying Television Commercials: A Comparative Study of Television Commercials in the 1950s and 1980s. *Sex Roles*, 35, 185-204.
- Atkin, D. (1992). An analysis of television series with minority-lead characters. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 9, 337-349.
- Bartsch, R., Burnett, R., Diller, T. & Rankin-Williams, E. (2000). Gender representation in television commercials. *Sex Roles*, 43, 735-743.
- Bazzini, D., McIntosh, W., Smith, S., Cook, S., & Harris, C. (1997). The aging woman in popular film. *Sex Roles*, 36, 531-543.
- Berg, C. (1990). Stereotyping in films in general and of the Hispanic in particular. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 2, 286-300.
- Bodenhausen, G., Schwarz, N., Bless, H., & Wanke, M. (1995). Effects of Atypical Exemplars on Racial Beliefs: Enlightened Racism or Generalized Appraisals? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 31, 48-63.
- Coltrane, S. & Adams, M. (1997). Work-Family Imagery and Gender Stereotypes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 323-347.
- Coltane, S. & Messineo, M. (2000). The Perpetuation of Subtle Prejudice. *Sex Roles*, 42, 363-389.
- Craig, R. (1992). The Effect of Television Day Part on Gender Portrayals in Television Commercials. *Sex Roles*, 26, 197-211.
- Davis, D. (1990). Portrayals of women in prime-time television. *Sex Roles*, 23, 325-332.
- Devine, P.G. & Baker, S.M. (1991). Measurement of racial stereotype subtyping. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 44-50.
- Ford, T. (1997). Effects of stereotypical television portrayals of African-Americans on person perception. *Social Psychological Quarterly*, 60, 266-278.
- Fyfe, J.J. (1999). Police use of deadly force: research and reform. In L.K. Gaines and G.W. Cordner (Eds.), *Policing Perspectives: An Anthology*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.
- Gerbner, G. & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: the violence profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26, 173-199.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M. & Signorielli, N. (2002). Growing up with television: The cultivation perspective. In J. Bryant and D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Goffman, I. (1974). *Frame analysis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Graves, S.B. (1999). Television and prejudice reduction: When does television as a vicarious experience make a difference? *Journal of Social Issues*, 55,707-725.
- Greenberg, B. (1988). Some uncommon television images and the drench hypothesis. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Applied Social Psychology Annual* (Vol. 8) Television as a social issue. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Greenberg, B. & Brand, B. (1994). Minorities in the mass media: 1970s to 1990s. In J. Bryant and D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Greenberg, B. & Collette, I. (1997). The changing faces on TV: A demographic analysis of network television's new seasons. 1966-1999. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 41, 4-13.
- Hurtz, W. & Durkin, K. (1996). Gender role stereotyping in Australian radio commercials. *Sex Roles*, 36, 103-114.
- Lauzen, M. & Dozier, D. (2005). Recognition and Respect Revisited. *Mass Communication and Society*, 8,241-256.
- Lee, E. & Li, K. (1997). The myth of the Asian American super-student. *A Magazine*, 1, 44-47.
- Leslie, M. (1995). Slow Fade to ?: Advertising in Ebony Magazine, 1957-1989. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 72, 426-435.
- Mastro, D. & Greenberg, B. (2000). The Portrayal of Racial Minorities on Prime Time Television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, Fall, 690-703.
- Mastro, D. & Robinson, A. (2000). Cops and crooks: images of minorities on primetime television. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 28, 385-396.
- Mayeda, D. (1999). From model minority to economic threat. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 23, 203-217.
- McArthur, L.Z. & Resko, B.G. (1975). The Portrayal of Men and Women in American Television Commercials. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 97, 209-220.
- Merlo, J. & Smith, K. (1994). The Portrayal of Gender Roles in Television Advertising. Society for the Study of Social Problems Paper.
- Millard, J. & Grant, P. (2006). The Stereotypes of Black and White Women in Fashion Magazine Photographs. *Sex Roles*, 54, 659-673.
- Nakayama, T.K. (1988). Model minority and the media. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 12, 65-73.
- Nielsen Media. (2009). Nielsen Media Research Data. Most Watched Prime Time Television.
- Paek, H. & Shah, H. (2003). Racial Ideology, Model, Minorities, and the "No-So-Silent Partner." *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 14, 225-243.
- Persson, A. & Musher-Eizenman, D. (2003). The impact of a prejudice-prevention television program on young children's ideas about race. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18, 530-546.

- Pfau, M., Mullen, L. & Garrow, K. (1995). The influence of television viewing on public perceptions of physicians. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 39, 441-458.
- Potter, W. (1994). Cultivation theory and research. *Journalism Monographs*, 147, 1-3.
- Potter, W. & Chang, I. (1990). Television exposure measures and the cultivation hypothesis. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 34, 113-333.
- Robinson, M., Callister, M., Magoffin, D., & Moore, J. (2007). The portrayal of older characters in Disney animated films. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 3, 203-213.
- Shim, D. (1998). From yellow peril through model minority to renewed yellow peril. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 22, 385-409.
- Signorielli, N. (2001). The picture in the nineties. *Generations*, 25, 34-38.
- Signorielli, N. (2004). Aging on television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 48, 279-301.
- Steenland, S. (1990). *What's wrong with this picture: The status of women on screen and behind the camera in entertainment TV*. Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Working Women of Wider Opportunities for Women.
- Stern, S. & Mastro, D. (2004). Gender Portrayals across the Life Span. *Mass Communication and Society*, 7, 215-236.
- Tan, T.T., Ling, L.B., & Theng, E. (2002). Gender-role portrayals in Malaysian and Singaporean television commercials: an international advertising perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 10, 853-861.
- Tang, J. (1997). The model minority thesis revisited. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 33, 291-315.
- Taylor, C. & Lee, J. (1994). Not in vogue: Portrayals of Asian Americans in magazine advertising. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 38, 608-621.
- Taylor, C. & Stern, B. (1997). Asian Americans: Television advertising and the model minority stereotype. *Journal of Advertising*, 26, 47-61.
- U.S. Census. (2007, 2008). (Online). <http://www.census.gov/population/projections/nation/nsrh/nprh0610.txt>.
- Vrij, A., van Schie, E. & Cherryman, J. (1996). Reducing ethnic prejudice through public communication programs. *Journal of Psychology*, 4, 413-420.
- Weigel, R., Kim, E. & Frost, J. (1995). Race relations of prime time television reconsidered: patterns of continuity and change. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 223-236.
- Wilkes, R. & Valencia, H. (1989). Hispanics and Blacks in Television Commercials. *Journal of Advertising*, 18, 19-25.

## *Book Reviews*

---

**Allen, Glen Scott.** *Master Mechanics & Wicked Wizards: Images of the American Scientist as Hero and Villain from Colonial Times to the Present.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009. 304 pages; index, footnotes.

Americans loathe theoretical scientists, seeing them as aristocratic “wicked wizards” cut off from family and community and bent on world domination. Americans love engineers, seeing them as pragmatic “master mechanic” everymen producing useful inventions for their communities. As Glen Scott Allen reports in his provocative, wide-ranging and extremely bleak cultural history, these are the two kinds of scientists typically found in American popular culture: villainous intellectuals and heroic inventors. Allen argues that there is a prejudice against theoretical science in American culture that is rooted in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Puritan culture’s anti-intellectualism, and this prejudice has shaped not only how Americans represent scientists but also what kinds of science actually gets done in America. Allen stresses in his introduction that he is not writing about science but rather about images of scientists in popular culture, but despite his initial protestations to the contrary his true object really is the history of American science. The two archetypes he has identified have changed very little since their inception in colonial times, he holds, and since then they have wielded tremendous propagandistic power, shaping “the public conception and professional practice of American science over the next two hundred years” (235).

When it represents science, Allen argues that popular culture serves as a vehicle for America’s dominant anti-intellectual Puritanical ideology, an ideology that privileges the makers of things over the makers of theory. Rife with imagery of “wicked wizards” (aka mad scientists), Romantic fiction, pulp SF, sci-fi films, spy thrillers, and television shows about ghosts and vampires have all paved the way for such irrational follies as the manned space program and the nuclear arms race and sown the seeds of American culture’s current distrust of the theories of evolution and climate change. Allen begins his study by analyzing the split that arose between “applied” and “pure” science in the 19<sup>th</sup> century American academy. Certain Bostonian theorists walled themselves off from society in elitist clubs such as the

American Association for the Advancement of Science, earning the scorn of the nation as a result. Thus the American scientific community itself began to conform, at its inception, to the prejudices of American society, separating into warring camps of theoreticians vs. applied scientists. We don't find this kind of anti-intellectualism in aristocratic Europe, which has a long tradition of lofty scientific inquiry (as well as a history of distrust of technology); it is an American invention, Allen discusses in the following chapter, coming to full flower in figures such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's mad scientists, Aylmer and Rappaccini, men so distracted by their wicked intellects they are driven to murder. Victor Frankenstein is the character that most people think of when they think about mad scientists, and in an extended discourse on the staged and film versions of Shelley's story Allen shows how this paradigmatic narrative meant very different things for American and European audiences and was thus revised accordingly. The European romantic critique of the material and revolutionary forces threatening the continent's status quo becomes, for American audiences, a Puritanical story about an egomaniac intellectual who does nothing useful for society. (Here Allen makes the fine point that much of the iconography of Hollywood's Frankenstein, the emaciated outlaw researcher with a stooped assistant, derives more from Hawthorne and later stage adaptations of *Frankenstein* than from Shelley.)

The corollary to the Romantics' wicked wizards can be found in the archetype of the "master mechanic," the figure to whom Allen then turns in his analyses of the technological utopianism evident in the various World's Fairs and utopian literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here science becomes a kind of technological spectacle devoid of theory and presided over by heroic engineers doling out gadgets. Allen finds a link between the development of philosophical pragmatism in Emerson and James and the rise of the industrial, goal-oriented master mechanic heroes in Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*, the film *Things to Come*, the social planning of the Technocrats, and the "World of Tomorrow" exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair. In this era, technology and a cult of efficiency seized the public's imagination while government funding for basic scientific research was non-existent. Across culture, master mechanic inventors and showmen were valorized while theoreticians were either ignored or cast as wicked wizards. Even the SF pulps at this time did little but reproduce American culture's of

anti-scientific biases, Allen asserts, their authors churning out poorly written and nearly identical tales about world-dominating “mad scientists” (64) and their “evil assistants” (65) held in check only by brawny adventurers.

Allen then turns to extended analyses of two technological systems whose development has been heavily shaped by the propagandistic power of American culture’s concept of the scientist as either master mechanic or wicked wizard: the nuclear weapons and space programs. For both, theoretical science was slaved and even sacrificed to the cause of technological spectacle. The atomic scientists and the Mercury astronauts were forced to conform to the conservative image of the master mechanic and serve the technological needs of the cold war weapons state. American culture turned the visionary atomic scientists who first built the bomb into scapegoats solely responsible for the nuclear age’s perils, dismissing the grand anti-nuclear “one world or none” theories of Robert Oppenheimer as the ravings of a mad scientist. After the launch of Sputnik, the nation turned its nuclear missiles into yet another technological spectacle with little scientific merit: manned space vehicles. In both the iconography and the actual planning of America’s space race, the early astronauts are not scientists or high-tech warriors but rather “Master Mechanics with a pilot’s license” (163). Theoretical science becomes something very scary for American audiences from this time onwards. All those sci-fi films from the 50s about invading monsters which we assumed were metaphors for communist infiltration are really anti-intellectual expressions of American culture’s fear of theoretical science, Allen argues, as are *Star Trek*, James Bond films, and films about artificial intelligence for that matter.

I certainly agree with Allen that there is a strong anti-intellectual streak in American culture. Allen shows how the stereotypical “wicked wizard” mad scientist has not only long been a central character in scientific popular culture, especially in visual media, but also how that character has been used to demonize certain kinds of science. He is to be credited for documenting how another less obvious character, the “master mechanic” heroic engineer, has remained just as potent a character through two centuries of popular culture as well, often serving as an ideological foil to those mad scientists. At the same time, I wish Allen had devoted at least a few pages to discussing popular images of scientists that don’t conform to his two archetypes and, better yet, to discussing texts that resist the ideological formation he describes (they’re out there). Allen finds little of intellectual

value in popular culture, especially as it pertains to science. He goes out of his way to disparage the quality of writing in pulp SF (64), calls the sci-fi films of the 50s “schlock” (92), judges all films and television shows about artificial intelligence to be “superficial” (196), and deems all television shows about the paranormal from *Buffy* to *The X-Files* to be “anti-rationalist” (248). Perhaps because he finds so little of value in popular culture, Allen treats many of his cultural texts broadly, finding whole subgenres to be devoid of scientific intellect. Sometimes this treatment feels overly broad. For example, in his discussion of the role of scientists in pulp SF Allen claims the pulps are full of little but stereotypical mad scientist “would-be world dominators” (65). However, he doesn’t discuss a single author or a single story from the pulps in this section (the only sources he cites here are two slight commercial booksellers’ websites, one of which is littered with dead links and is less than half complete). Instead, Allen relies on a few examples of pulp cover art and the *Flash Gordon* film serials to represent every story about scientists throughout pulp SF (a quick check of the entry on “scientists” in Nicholls’s and Clute’s *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* reveals that there are several kinds of scientists in pulp SF—heroic, eccentric, absentminded, and villainous alike—and that there are sane, socially conscious scientist heroes in later print SF as well). While full of technological marvels, Allen finds that popular culture is a scientific wasteland. Scientists are partly culpable for this state of affairs, he concludes. They let tinkerers like Ben Franklin become the model for American science instead of theoretical visionaries like Robert Oppenheimer. Scientists need to do a better job explaining what scientific theory is and they have to take more personal responsibility when their abstract ideas are put to dangerous use. But they will get no help doing so, it seems, from the makers of popular culture.

**Doug Davis**  
**Gordon College**

**Beeler, Karin.** *Seers, Witches and Psychics on Screen: An Analysis of Women Visionary Characters in Recent Television and Film.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008. 219 pages; bibliography, index.

In *Seers, Witches and Psychics on Screen*, Karin Beeler has produced a tight, thorough, and highly readable study of the representation of what she terms “women of vision” in film and television since the 1990’s. The “tightness” of the study is due to a clear analytical mission, which she lays out in the introduction, revisits in each of the twelve chapters with her discussion of each character addressed in the book, and sums up in the conclusion. This is particularly laudable given that this thorough study considers 17 contemporary film and television texts as well as the literary figures of Cassandra and Joan of Arc and a variety of what she describes as “postmodern” and “postfeminist” commentators. The clarity of focus keeps the book from becoming unwieldy or scattered and contributes to its readability, to its scholarly but engaging tone and style.

Beeler is clearly a veteran scholar of popular culture and of gender, and she knows her fields well, contextualizing this book with reference to television studies (Abbott; Lavery; Wilcox), to feminist criticism (Baumgardner and Richards; Daly; Mulvey), to postcolonial theory (Bhabha), and to the study of myth and literature (Aeschylus; Campbell; Purkiss). The book is admirably researched, both with respect to her careful analysis of the film and television texts in question and with respect to the secondary sources she uses to structure that analysis. I can imagine using this book to teach gender and popular culture at the advanced undergraduate level in two ways: as scholarly commentary for my class to study and critique and as an example of how to do studies of popular culture.

Beeler’s argument hinges on three central terms: the “postfeminist,” the “postmodern,” and “hybridity.” I am not entirely comfortable with these terms, especially the first two, because they are often too loosely applied and prone to misinterpretation, but Beeler states her decision to use them clearly. In her introduction, she writes:

This book examines how these television shows and films reflect third wave feminist or postfeminist (and postmodern) ideas

including an emphasis on negotiation or mediation of the female visionary who is the protagonist of these works in many cases. These women experience shifting or hybrid identities and also serve as a means of advocating cultural, sexual, or social diversity, thus challenging a narrow definition of what it means to be “normal.” (1)

Later in the introduction, Beeler elucidates what she means by “postfeminist,” pointing out that she does not use the term to refer to anti-feminism, as it is often meant. Rather, she equates it with Third Wave feminism, which has “embraced the contradictions and diversity among feminists instead of focusing on feminist solidarity” (14).

This flexibility of perspective seems key to how Beeler understands postmodernism and hybridity as well, as she writes, “Like post-colonialist theorist Homi Bhabha, postfeminists and postmodernists also recognize the importance of contradictions, difference, and changing identities” (27). She borrows and reframes the concept of the “third space” from Bhabha, arguing that “it is an effective term to apply to women with visionary powers, since they often live in a hybrid world, acting as mediators between different worlds of experience” (2) and quotes Shugart, Waggoner, and Hallstein in writing, “Postmodernism... is premised... on the understanding that all knowledge is relative and multiple” (28). While I can certainly accept this claim for the reading of this study, this assertion is not an uncontested one. I would have appreciated a deeper engagement with the fields of postcolonialist and poststructuralist theory in explaining and justifying the specific ways that she dips into and borrows from them. While she adds to her explication of how she uses “postmodern” at several points throughout the book, and the term, in this context, becomes more intuitively clear, I would have liked to have seen postcolonialism or postmodernism receive the same sort of designated treatment in her introduction or conclusion that postfeminism did.

This is even more the case because there is a question of race and racialized privilege (or lack thereof) at the heart of all postcolonialist theory and of Bhabha’s work. Beeler is aware of this, and she does address race explicitly at some points, especially in her discussion of the character Oda Mae in *Ghost* and of Native American figures in the series *Wonderfalls*. Further, I recognize that issues of race and racism are sometimes addressed

in fantasy media through metaphor and have presented on this idea myself, with reference to the series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. However, by far, most of the characters analyzed in Beeler's book are white, with an unproblematized racial identity. I bristle slightly at the application of a concept developed for the understanding of postcolonialism and hybrid racial and ethnic identities to women whose hybrid statuses are fantasized ones rather than lived reality.

Regardless, Beeler's critique is consistent and illuminating, and I found her chapters on the character River Tam (from *Firefly* and *Serenity*), on Joan Girardi (from *Joan of Arcadia*), and Melinda Gordon (from *Ghost Whisperer*) to be particularly strong. This was especially interesting to me because I am not familiar with the latter two texts, but Beeler provided enough background that I was able to follow her argument throughout but not so much that the writing became murky or cumbersome. Reading these chapters made me want to watch these series, and her chapters on series with which I am more familiar (*Angel*, *Firefly*, *Tru Calling*, *Charmed*) impressed me with the amount of detailed evidence she offered to support and illustrate her well articulated argument. Beeler's analysis of gender comprised, amongst other issues, the questions of female agency, female sexuality, Third Wave political resistance, and the relationships between Second Wave mothers and their Third Wave daughters.

In sum, I enjoyed reading Karin Beeler's book, learned a great deal from it, and found myself stimulated to continue on and do my own studies of several of the texts she introduces, both to test her analyses and to develop my own. I also think it could be a valuable teaching resource and do believe it makes an important contribution to the fields of popular culture studies, literary studies, and women's/gender studies.

**Ananya Mukherjea**  
**CUNY – College of Staten Island**

**Di Liddo, Annalisa.** *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2009. 211 pages; bibliography, index.

If nothing else, Annalisa Di Liddo's *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* is useful for its development of the debate over what constitutes a graphic novel. Her brief history of the debate includes not only the arguments of comic critics, but those of authors Eisner, Spiegelman, and Moore as well. In fact, she devotes several pages of her introduction to revealing the political, corporate, and other complications that make "graphic novel" so problematic, all in the name of demonstrating Alan Moore's transcendence of the genre — that he is, as she argues, "a performing writer" (22).

Fortunately for readers, she has much more to say. Though not a definitive look at the body of Alan Moore's literary work (and graphic novels are literary — financially, politically, and artistically), this text is certainly a very good glimpse at Moore's collaborative efforts, and clearly identifies some essential characteristics of Moore's style. Specifically, Di Liddo demonstrates that the conscious interweaving of literary, historical, and popular culture references allow Moore to use his fiction as a means of dissecting Western ideology — to perform a social and cultural critique.

Though the content is interesting and insightful, there are flaws in the text that can be difficult to overlook, the most glaring of which is that the book reads like a dissertation, which it was. It is from this point of origin — that of a dissertation — that the other stylistic issues seem to emerge. First person perspective permeates much of the work, most glaringly at the beginnings and endings of chapters. The effect of this perspective is that time and space are wasted discussing Di Liddo-as-researcher, rather than focusing on the text. On at least two occasions, the author also reminds readers that her work is not exhaustive, that there are perspectives and texts beyond the scope of her argument. This point is obvious from the focus of the text and the occasional references to works outside the sphere of her analysis.

More problematically, there are times when this text is "more trees and less forest"; that is, the depth of the analysis, and the winding nature of

Di Liddo's arguments, makes it difficult to keep readers oriented on the larger arguments that she is trying to weave together. Indeed, her conclusion seems to lay out her argument more effectively than her introduction, and her chapters lack the kinds of introductory and closing remarks that weave together the larger picture, although they clearly outline the goals of the chapters themselves. In one specific example, Chapter Two opens with arguably superficial coverage of Bakhtinian theory, specifically the subject of chronotope, which she intends to use to highlight the space/time connection in comics. By the end of the chapter, her point about the space/time connection has been proven, though with little actual connection to Bakhtin, and her transition to the subsequent chapter and the larger argument is a short sentence expressing a desire to "confirm and consolidate this analysis" (101).

Fortunately, and begging Bakhtin's pardon, though they must be considered together, the content of this text is overall much stronger than the form. Di Liddo successfully weaves together Moore's texts into a reasonably clear argument about the author's use of intertextuality as a form of performance for cultural and social criticism. Despite some arguable stylistic choices, Annalisa Di Liddo's *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel* is an overall pleasing book for scholars and critics of the graphic novel and comics genres.

**Robert T. Koch Jr.**

**University of North Alabama**

**Waksman, Steve. *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 398 pages; bibliography, index.**

Waksman's book takes its title, appropriately, from the opening track on Blue Oyster Cult's 1976 album, *Agents of Fortune*, which has since become regarded as a classic of the heavy metal genre. "This Ain't the Summer of Love" is an abrasive but anthemic proclamation of the triumph of heavy rock over Seventies American youth culture at mid-decade and an

anti-nostalgic dismissal of everything associated with late-Sixties hippiedom. Such gestures were, of course, familiar to fans of the nascent punk scene in the mid-to-late Seventies; conventional wisdom has it that they would have not been so familiar to the fans of the “dinosaur rock” popular between 1970 and 1980. For the punk explosion of the late Seventies, according to the major cultural histories of that movement, such as Greil Marcus’s *Lipstick Traces* or Jon Savage’s *England’s Dreaming*, marks a clean break with everything—including heavy metal—that preceded it.

Waksman’s book, however, tells a different story. The broad thesis of *This Ain’t the Summer of Love* is that, from their inception in the same historical moment (roughly, the early 1970s), the musical styles that later came to be known as heavy metal and punk rock have (in spite of the popular conception of each as sharply differentiated from the other) repeatedly cross-fertilized one another, dissolved the putative boundaries between themselves, and participated in many of the same gestures.

Waksman revisits the “punk vs. metal” debate that raged in the rock press during the late Seventies and early Eighties, a casual overview of which might lead one to conclude the two styles constitute completely different genres, saturated with opposing values, appealing to two completely distinct taste publics. But his careful examination of these arguments in the “letters” sections of publications like *Creem* and *Rolling Stone*, in which fans struggled with one another over the meaning of these genres, shows that the boundaries between the two styles were constantly being revised and negotiated. As the rest of *This Ain’t the Summer of Love* shows, the constant revisions, negotiations, and re-negotiations are emblematic of the larger relationship between heavy metal and punk over the course of three decades, one characterized by interconnectedness and mutual dependence rather than pure antagonism.

After outlining, in the introduction, the theoretical underpinnings of the project (which owe much to earlier work on genre by Simon Frith and Franco Fabbri), the book goes on to trace the intertwined paths of metal and punk from the 1970s through the 1990s. Waksman’s narrative begins with the live performances of Grand Funk Railroad, Alice Cooper, and Iggy Pop, groups in which the “arena rock” approach and rock theatricality first intersected. After a discussion of the ways in which mid-Seventies garage-rock acts such as the Dictators and the Runaways paved the way for the fusion

of punk and metal that would later become known as “crossover,” Waksman devotes a chapter to the apotheosis of the crossover style, the band Motorhead (famous for its cross-genre appeal to both punk and metal fans). Significantly, Motorhead would become one of the key influences on the “New Wave of British Heavy Metal,” a more energetic, abrasive, and urban form of metal pioneered by acts like Iron Maiden and the Tygers of Pan Tang, notable for their distinctive punk influence. Waksman includes a discussion of three of the most important independent record labels of the 1980s—Greg Ginn’s SST, Brian Slagel’s Metal Blade, and Bruce Pavitt’s Sub Pop—and examines their significance as sites at which metal and punk redefined themselves through bands such as Black Flag, Slayer, and Soundgarden. The final chapter focuses on the musical aesthetics of punk and metal, around which many of the stylistic distinctions between the two forms have revolved. As Waksman shows, these aesthetic conventions are fluid and unstable at any given moment; speed and virtuosity are prized at one time, slow tempos and primitive riffing at another, for a variety of reasons.

Waksman’s revisionist account of post-Sixties rock history is a brilliant and highly original intervention into the ongoing conversation among cultural studies scholars interested in heavy metal and/or punk rock. It is, without doubt, the most significant scholarly book on heavy metal since Robert Walser’s *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993) and it is the first book on punk rock to take punk and metal’s shared history and stylistic interrelationship seriously. *This Ain’t the Summer of Love*’s richly textured analysis of a phenomenon heretofore ignored in discourse on these two genres is a resounding affirmation of what many punk and metal fans have known to be true all along—that the two forms are positions on a continuum, not aesthetic enemies.

**Charles Grey**  
**University of North Florida**

***Remember to visit the PCAS/ACAS  
website***

***and  
the online Studies in Popular Culture  
at***

***<http://www.pcasacas.org>***

***for information on future conferences,  
issues of the PCAS/ACAS Newsletter, the  
SPC cumulative index, archived issues, and  
much more.***

***Please note that our archiving is still in process,  
but many volumes can be accessed already.***

## *Contributors*

---

**Todd Edmondson** is a Ph.D. student in the Humanities at the University of Louisville, where he teaches World Religions. He has presented and published numerous essays on religion and literature and religion and popular culture, and is currently working on his dissertation on Spirituality and Embodiment in the Fiction of Wendell Berry and Cormac McCarthy.

**Margaret S. Hrezo** is professor of political science at Radford University, where she teaches political philosophy and constitutional law. **William E. Hrezo** is professor of political science at Radford University. He teaches American government, public administration, urban politics, and state and local politics. Both William and Margaret Hrezo's research interests focus on the interaction of politics and popular culture, especially film and literature.

**Karolina Kazimierczak**, after completing in 2009 a doctoral thesis on the cultures of Klingon and Tolkien fans in Sociology at Lancaster University, has moved to the University of Aberdeen, where she works as a researcher in the Institute of Applied Health Sciences and as a teaching assistant in the Department of Sociology. Her research interests combine different theoretical and disciplinary traditions (sociology, cultural studies, literary theory, communication studies, and recently health studies) and center on the complexities of exchanges between the 'popular' and 'authorised,' between the values and activities attributed to 'high culture' domains of art and scholarship and their (re)enactments in lay expertise, fan discourse, popular texts, and everyday practices.

**Ty Matejowsky** is an Assistant Professor with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Central Florida. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology from Texas A&M University in 2001. His fieldwork in the Philippines has examined a number of issues related to globalization, including fast food, urban development, disasters and international migration. Recent publications include "Fast Food and Nutritional Perceptions in the Age of 'Globesity': Perspectives from the Provincial Philippines" in *Food and*

*Foodways* (2009) and “SPAM and Fast Food ‘Glocalization’ in the Philippines” in *Food, Culture and Society* (2007).

**Elizabeth Monk-Turner** is professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Old Dominion University. Her work focuses on gender issues especially in work environments. **Mary Heiserman, Crystle Johnson, Vanity Cotton,** and **Manny Jackson** were students in Sociology/Criminal Justice at Old Dominion. This paper is a revision of work submitted for the senior capstone class, which requires original data collection and analysis.

**Eleanor Hersey Nickel** is an English professor at Fresno Pacific University in California. Her published articles have focused on contemporary American literature and culture, including the roles of race, romance and marriage, and Christian faith in popular fiction, film, and television.

**Delia Poey** is Associate Professor of Spanish and the Coordinator of the Division of Spanish and Portuguese, Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, at Florida State University, Tallahassee. She is the coeditor of *Iguana Dreams: New Latino Fiction* and *Little Havana Blues: A Cuban-American Literature Anthology*.