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Joshua Meyer

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Strategies for Challenging Homophobia in Islamic Malaysia and Secular China¹

By Walter L. Williams

Recently I served as an expert witness for a gay Malaysian who is applying for asylum in the United States Immigration Court. There is a provision in the U.S. immigration code that offers asylum based on persecution “on the basis of membership in a particular social group” that is discriminated against. During the Clinton administration, Attorney General Janet Reno issued a declaration that LGBT people constituted “a social group” that can be considered under this provision of the law. Since that time, quite a number of immigrants have won asylum on this provision.

The first court case on which I served as an expert witness was the case of a gay man from China. In 1998 I was called as an expert witness due to work I had been doing with Dr. Wan Yan Hai, China’s leading gay activist and AIDS educator. In 1997 my longtime activist friend Lyle Henry, who has traveled widely in China, asked me to try to bring Dr. Wan to America. I was able to arrange for him to be accepted as a visiting scholar at USC so that he could continue his work under my direction. It was crucial at that time for Wan to be granted this official academic position, because he was on the verge of being arrested by police due to his AIDS-activist political activities in China. Fortunately, USC approved my request quickly, and Wan was able to receive a formal invitation as a visiting scholar at the University. With the offer of this position he was able to receive a visa from the Chinese government. In this case, the Chinese government’s desire for its scholars to receive international recognition trumped its police department, or perhaps they were just happy to see this troublesome activist leave the country.

I was also able to use my position with another organization to help Wan. Since 1989 I have been a member of the board of directors of the Institute for the Study of Human Resources (ISHR), a foundation that was established in 1964 by ONE founder W. Dorr Legg and female-to-male activist Reed Erickson, in support of the work of ONE Institute. In the decades since then ISHR has had a huge influence on reducing homophobia by awarding many fellowships and grants for research on human rights. ISHR has also been a major supporter of the INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN REVIEW² which I founded in 1996 and served as its first editor. I am also extremely grateful to ISHR for a grant in support of my research.

In addition, the directors of ISHR have awarded fellowships to a large number of scholars who I have recommended. Quite a number of important Ph.D. dissertations, journal articles, and award-winning books have been published as a result of ISHR's support. Especially important books by Chuck Stewart, Mark Blasius, Holly Devor, Jim Kepner, Martin Dupuis, James Green, and others, have been published.³ Many dissertations were also sponsored by ISHR. It is an unsung organization that has had a tremendous influence, and one of the greatest legacies of gay rights pioneer W. Dorr Legg. Recently ISHR has merged into the Williams Institute for Sexual Orientation and the Law, as sponsor for researchers coming to its programs at the University of California, Los Angeles.⁴

Probably the most influential grant that ISHR has ever made was to Wan Yan Hai. Subsequently, a friend of mine who is very generous offered to underwrite a contribution to ISHR for another grant to be made for Wan to stay in America longer. Lyle Henry generously provided Wan a place to stay in the guest bedroom at his house. Wan has now made several research trips to America, and he is internationally known for his work in AIDS education.

When Wan first came to Los Angeles in 1997, James T. Sears and I were just publishing our book, *Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia: Strategies That Work* with Columbia University Press. Dr. Sears is the nation's leading expert in challenging homophobia in schools, and at that time he was Professor of Education at the University of South Carolina. He had been subjected to intense criticism from fundamentalist Christians in South Carolina, so even though I had never met him I offered him a free room to live in my house for a year. I wanted to give a worthy scholar a respite from the torment he had undergone, and I considered my offer as a sort of in-kind "Walter Williams Fellowship" that I did again later with Sabina Lang from Germany and several other researchers who wanted to come to Los Angeles to do research at ONE Institute.

Professor Sears was able to take a leave from his university and he was happy to come to gay-friendly Los Angeles and work at ONE. My house, which is only a block from ONE, is an ideal location for visiting researchers. While he was resident in my house, Dr. Sears and I planned our book. We gathered the testimony of lesbian and gay community activists, elementary and high school teachers, college professors, religious leaders, and anti-homophobia education pioneers like Warren Blumenfeld and Sylvia Rhue. The purpose of this book, which received awards from the Gay and Lesbian Support Education Network (GLSEN) and the Institute of Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies (IGLSS), was to figure out which techniques are most effective in reducing homophobic prejudice.

Wan Yan Hai read this book when he arrived in Los Angeles, and in conversations with me he decided to apply its strategies to combat heterosexism and homophobia in China. In our conversations we decided that the main focus of this effort should be to persuade the Chinese Psychiatric Association to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Some activists in China had been trying to do this, but without success.

As luck would have it, some of the leaders of the Chinese Psychiatric Association were visiting Los

Angeles for an international meeting of psychiatrists. Wan was able to convince them to come to talk with me. I met with them at ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives. After touring them around the building, which houses the world's largest collection of GLBT books, papers and materials, I gave them what amounted to a lecture on why homosexuality should not be considered a mental illness. At the time I was teaching a USC graduate seminar in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, and I considered this lecture a distillation of that entire course, plus all the two decades of research I had done on homosexuality in non-Western cultures, condensed into a two-hour talk. The Chinese visitors, who all spoke good English, took in what I had to say, and asked intelligent and pertinent questions. Wan and I had a good discussion with them. After they left I felt that this was probably the most important single lecture I had ever given.

Wan and I also organized the first conference of the Chinese Society for the Study of Sexual Minorities, which was held at USC in 1997. Chinese LGBT people came from all over the world to participate in this conference, and I was happy that I was in a position to be able to provide a free space for this conference. In many ways like this, the University of Southern California has been a major supporter of the struggle for gay and lesbian rights. Since 1956, when USC Professor Merritt Thompson was a co-founder of ONE Institute, USC has been in the forefront of development of the field of Gay and Lesbian Studies. The course that I now teach at USC on Transgender Studies, which was the first such course to be offered at a major research university, continues in this pioneering tradition.

After working with me for two years, Wan returned to China. Though I was nervous about his return, this brave man vowed that he wanted to go back to be able to have the maximum influence. Fortunately, by the time he returned the police authorities had forgotten about his earlier activities and he was not arrested. With a few other activists, Wan coordinated a brilliant campaign to convince the leaders of the Chinese Psychiatric Association to change their attitude toward LGBT people. In 2001, the Chinese Psychiatric Association made front page headlines in newspapers around the world when they voted to remove homosexuality from their list of mental disorders. Wan and a small number of other brave activists in China had made history. Their effort is a case study in how to change governmental attitudes.

The Chinese Psychiatric Association is an official organ of the government of China, and after this vote the government made a substantial change in policy. Before this time, China considered homosexuals to be mentally ill and to come under their legal classification of "hooligans." It was not uncommon for police to attack gays and beat them viciously. I have interviewed Chinese gay men who have had their teeth knocked out, or bones broken, in some of these police attacks. After 2001 that police behavior changed, and I no longer hear of reports of such violence. The situation is hardly perfect for Chinese LGBT people today, and there is still much social and job discrimination, but the legal situation is vastly improved. Considering that China is the world's largest nation, containing nearly one-fifth of all humanity, this change in policy directly led to the improvement in the lives of literally millions of people.

This work also led directly to my being called upon as an expert witness in the asylum cases of several Chinese gay men and lesbians. In the first such case I did, in 1997 before the U.S. Immigration Court

in Las Vegas, there were several witnesses lined up to testify. The attorney had scheduled me as the last witness, in hopes that my testimony would be foremost in the judge's mind when he reached a verdict. But to my surprise, after hearing the testimony of the asylum applicant himself, the judge announced that he wanted to hear from "the USC professor" before any of the other witnesses. It was at that point I realized the prestige that a professorship at a major university carries with these judges. I nervously took the witness stand, having never testified in an immigration court before, and told everything I knew about the terrible situation facing gay people in China. The judge asked me several pointed questions, and after I answered he thanked me and I stepped down.

Then the judge announced to the court that after hearing my testimony he had decided to dismiss any more witnesses and he would decide the case solely on what I had said. As the applicant stood up to hear the verdict, the judge announced that on behalf of the United States of America he was granting political asylum effective immediately. The Chinese man turned to me and burst out crying. This case was one of the precedent-setting cases, and since then many more LGBT people have been provided asylum in the USA.

I was so proud to be an American at that point, and to recognize the role that America, Sweden, the Netherlands and other European countries have played in being a refuge for those people who are persecuted for their sexual orientation. When word got out from attorneys that I am an effective and credible witness, I started receiving more phone calls and emails begging me to testify for their client. Since that time I have served as expert witness for over forty asylum seekers. I am proud to say that every single case for which I have provided testimony has resulted in the granting of U.S. residency. So far, not one of these asylum seekers has been deported to face the consequences in their home country.

In many of these cases, judges have announced that my testimony was the crucial basis on which they made their decision. In one court appearance, I knew that the applicant had won when I saw the judge's eyes filling with tears as I described the kind of persecution that gay people face in that country. For a hardened judge, who has to listen to immigrants begging for admission to the United States day in and day out, to have that kind of reaction told me that my effectiveness as an expert witness is a responsibility I have to provide to people in need. When I see the dramatic impact that my research on homosexuality in other countries can have, on the real lives of real people, suddenly academic theory takes a back seat to the life-or-death questions facing these people.

Due to the significant improvement in China, asylum is not being sought by Chinese LGBT people in the way it was before 2001. Nowadays, the most calls I receive are from asylum applicants from Islamic nations. I have not done research in the Middle East, and as such I am not able to accept solicitations to testify for immigrants from those countries. But I have testified for many asylum seekers from the Muslim nations of Indonesia and Malaysia. In 1987-88 I was Fulbright Professor at Gadjah Mada University in Indonesia, and I wrote two books on gender and sexuality in Indonesia. After leaving Indonesia, I also made a month-long trip to do research on the situation of gay people in Malaysia.

The most recent asylum case, for which I testified over the phone from my research site in Thailand

today, was for a Malaysian gay man who came to the United States on a student visa to the University of Kentucky. After graduating he moved to San Francisco because of its reputation as a gay Mecca.

Except for that first asylum case in Las Vegas, and another case in Seattle, every asylum seeker with whom I have worked has ended up gravitating to either San Francisco, Los Angeles, or New York. It is these three cities that are the most heavily gay in the United States, and that is where these immigrants prefer to live. It is no surprise that, just as I and millions of other LGBT Americans have refuged to one of these cities from more homophobic parts of the country, gay immigrants from abroad would also want to make their future there. I remain personally grateful to the city of Los Angeles for providing me with a good home for the past quarter of a century. At this point LA is one of the few places in the United States where I would even consider living. Most of America is just too prejudiced for my taste, and even liberal California pales in comparison to Thailand. But, despite its problems, LA is a great city for minorities of all kinds.

In this latest asylum case, I received a phone call that was very brief. The judge thanked me for agreeing to provide testimony from so far away, and asked if I stood behind every statement that I made in my written affidavit. I said yes. The judge then declared that on the basis of my affidavit he was granting asylum. I was very happy as I hung up the phone, and I am sure the applicant was as well. But, in truth, it is not difficult to make a case for asylum from Malaysia and many other Islamic nations today. I am happy for the asylum applicants that I have been able to help, but sad for the much larger number who will never be able even to escape from the hell in which they have to live.

The terrible situation facing LGBT people in Malaysia is a direct result of the continuation of a British colonial-era sodomy law, but that law's continued enforcement in an independent Malaysia is due to powerful political factors combined with the influence of Islamic religious beliefs. Though in the past many Islamic traditions were not as homophobic as the European Christian tradition, it is ironic that at this point in history many of the most homophobic nations on earth are Islamic. It is also important not to sweep under the rug the fact that dominant Muslim thought today is quite oppressive to gay and lesbian people.

Malaysia's sodomy law prohibits anal intercourse. This law could theoretically apply to male-female couples, but Malaysia's sodomy law is not applied equally. It has been selectively and systematically enforced to vilify and persecute homosexuals. In Malaysia's Penal Code, Section 377, the sentence for conviction of sodomy is flogging, plus up to twenty years in prison. Victims are flogged with a bamboo cane that is split into several strips. When bamboo is split it has extremely sharp edges, which slice the skin like knives. Flogging is quite bloody, and leaves permanent scars. In addition to Section 337, just to prevent any homosexual from escaping conviction, Section 337A provides for a male to receive up to two years in prison for any act of "gross indecency with another male person." This vague wording allows prosecution for any kind of erotic interaction between two males. This law is explicitly applied only to homosexual behavior among males, and female-female sexual behavior is not specifically mentioned in the penal code, but lesbians also suffer discrimination. There have not been prominent cases of persecution of lesbians in Malaysia, but they are oppressed by other rules which attempt to enforce dress codes and restrictions on women in general. A female who does not conform to gender expectations in Malaysia can

expect harassment both from police and from the general population.⁵

The United States State Department 2006 Country Report on Malaysia concluded that these anti-gay laws “exist and were enforced. Religious and cultural taboos against homosexuality were widespread.”⁶ Although the existence of this law in and of itself should be enough to warrant a decision in favor of asylum for a homosexual from Malaysia, there is further evidence that demonstrates the particularly strong and heinous vilification, discrimination and persecution that is happening to homosexuals in Malaysia today.

Though I have not been in Malaysia recently (due to fears about my own safety if I went there), I have continued to do research on the plight of homosexuals in Malaysia. I follow the literature, including periodicals and websites that address and report on gay culture and community issues in Malaysia as well as the rest of Southeast Asia. I have interviewed many gay people from Malaysia, and others who have knowledge of the national climate today. I have a good understanding of the current situation there.

It is clear from the evidence that in the last decade the situation has worsened for gay men and lesbians in Malaysia. Partly this is a reflection of a recent crackdown on homosexuals in many Muslim nations. In U.S.-allied Saudi Arabia the punishment that has been meted out for “sodomites” is beheading. In what is probably the understatement of the year, even the U.S. Department of State 2007 country report for Saudi Arabia acknowledged that “sexual activity between two persons of the same gender is punishable by death or flogging. It is illegal for men ‘to behave like women’ or wear women’s clothes and for women to wear men’s clothes. There were reports of societal discrimination based on sexual orientation. There were reports of discrimination, physical violence, and harassment toward homosexuals. In October a court in al-Baha Province sentenced two men to 7,000 lashes each for engaging in sexual intercourse with other men.”⁷

Most people know that the Taliban in Afghanistan were infamous for forcing accused homosexuals to stand next to a tall brick wall, while a tank pushed the wall over onto them to crush them to death. But even more extreme is the Islamic republic of Iran. The exiled gay Iranian group Homan estimates that over 4,000 Iranians have been executed for sodomy during the 1980s and 1990s. These executions are often public beheadings or hangings, being stoned to death, being split in half by a sword, being burned alive at the stake, or being thrown from a tall building or mountain cliff. Homan made a statement saying “Lesbians and gay men living in countries dominated by the New Dark Ages of Islamic Fundamentalism cannot afford the liberal luxury of tolerating religious fanaticism. For them, the politically correct arguments about cultural sensitivity smack of surrender to the extremists who jeopardize their freedom and even their lives.”⁸

These mass killings of homosexuals, which have been justified in the name of Islam, constitute a major human rights violation of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Even the secular government of Egypt provoked international criticism in 2001 and 2002 due to a campaign of arrests of people who were accused of homosexuality. Many of those convicted of participating in consensual sexual acts with another person

of the same sex were sentenced to prison for several years.⁹ In 2005 in northern Nigeria a man accused of homosexuality was sentenced to die under that territory's Islamic Shariah law. The list of examples could go on. In short, for any country where fundamentalist Islamic influences are dominant, homosexuals are in grave danger of being killed or imprisoned.¹⁰

Malaysia's government defines itself as a government based on "Islamic principles," as a way of avoiding the limits placed on constitutional democracy. Its recently-retired Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, held massive political power for 22 years. In 1998 Islamic homophobia and Malaysian politics intertwined as Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim made a major break with Mahathir due to his economic policies, and pressured him to institute democratic reforms. The Prime Minister responded by charging that Anwar had sex with two men. Anwar refused to be intimidated by what he called an untrue smear, and led protests against the dictatorial policies of the government. Mahathir then used the existence of the sodomy law to have his major political rival arrested.¹¹

While in custody, Anwar was severely beaten by the chief of police. Two men testified at his trial that Anwar had sex with them. But both of them later recanted their stories, and admitted that they had been pressured by government officials and police to make the accusation of sodomy. Mahathir obviously believed that the charge of homosexuality would be so damning that most people in Malaysia would withdraw their support for Anwar and his call for democratic reforms would be discredited. While many Malaysians supported the Deputy Prime Minister, and joined protests on his behalf, most of them have done so only because they believe he did not really commit homosexual acts.

In reaction to the Anwar case in 2000 a report by the International Bar Association, after its on-site study of justice in Malaysia, concluded that "the extremely powerful Executive in Malaysia has not acted with due regard for the essential elements of a free and democratic society based on the rule of law."¹²

In response to mounting international criticism, the government established a National Human Rights Commission, but the man placed in charge of this commission is a supporter of Prime Minister Mahathir. The Commission defines human rights solely as those provided for in the Malaysian Constitution, and this does not include rights for homosexuals. There is no challenge to Malaysia's sodomy law, which criminalizes all those who engage in same-sex relationships.

Instead of retreating, Mahathir's government justified its position on Anwar by stiffening their attacks on homosexuality. Government officials joined in a rising chorus of condemnations of homosexuality. In *Time Magazine's* web-edition of September 26, 2000, Abdul Kadir Che Kob, a top government official at Malaysia's Islamic Affairs Department, was interviewed. In this interview, Abdul Kadir said: "Homosexuality is forbidden in Islam. It is a crime worse than murder. Homosexuals are shameless people." When asked by the interviewer if people should not have the right to choose who they want to be with, Abdul Kadir replied: "What right are you talking about? This is a sin, end of story. How can men have sex with men? God did not make them this way. This is all Western influence." He explained that police use anonymous tips to trap homosexuals: "Usually people give us precise information like where

these men are. We then go to the place, say, a hotel room. We knock and force them to open the door, but they are usually fully clothed by then. We still charge them for attempting to commit homosexual acts. We charge them in court, but before that we put them through what we call Islamic counseling sessions. They recite the Koran everyday and we will tell them they have committed a grave sin. We have to tell these people they are doing something very wrong in the eyes of Allah. It is a major sin.”¹³

Prime Minister Mahathir has made repeated attacks on homosexuals. These attacks are not marginal to his argument, but are a central point of his rhetoric. For example, in his speech to the General Assembly of the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), on June 19, 2003, the Prime Minister ominously titled a section of his address “The Dangers We Face.” He stated that the main danger facing Malaysia’s future is a campaign by Europeans and Americans to force Malaysians to adopt Western freedoms. He said, “Our minds, our culture, our religion, and other things will become the target. In the cultural and social fields they want to see unlimited freedom for the individual.... They accept the practice of free sex, including sodomy, as a right.... The culture and values which they will force us to accept will be hedonism, unlimited quest for pleasure, the satisfaction of base desires, particularly sexual desires.”¹⁴

With this kind of rhetoric from the Prime Minister, Malaysian officials at the United Nations took a leadership role in denouncing sexual minorities. For example, during a United Nations General Assembly session on the HIV/AIDS epidemic, delegates from Malaysia were highly critical of any recognition of sexual minorities. That is, they were even prepared to prevent effective efforts to address the epidemic, if it meant recognizing gay AIDS organizations that were attempting to curtail the spread of HIV. The international watchdog group, Human Rights Watch, highlighted Malaysia in its *World Report 2002: Special Issues and Campaigns*. This report pointed out that government “inspectors have forced AIDS prevention groups in Malaysia to stop distributing condoms, at a time when HIV infections are rising.”¹⁵

A year later, Malaysia’s government took the lead in killing a resolution in the United Nations that called for the end of executions and imprisonment for homosexual behavior. According to England’s August 25, 2003 issue of *The Guardian*, “A landmark U.N. vote on homosexual human rights was on Thursday derailed at the last minute by an alliance of disapproving Muslim countries—Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Libya and Saudi Arabia.... Same-sex relations are harshly repressed in Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia, and Pakistan.”¹⁶ When the resolution was brought up again a few months later, the Islamic website Islam Online reported on February 9, 2004: “Malaysians Protest U.N. Resolution on Sexual Orientation: Malaysians urged the United Nations not to issue a resolution recognizing the rights of gays and lesbians, saying Muslim countries should derail any vote on sexual human rights.” This Islamic website directly stated that gay and lesbian rights are “an offence to Islam and to Muslims.” This source quotes Dr. Rais Yatim, a deputy minister in the Prime Minister’s Department, saying “We must pray that the U.N. fails in its attempt to impose the acceptance of gays and lesbians.... [This resolution] is horrible.”¹⁷

Mahathir has continued his scapegoating of gay people even after his retirement. In a statement reported by the Associated Press on January 9, 2007, the former prime minister reiterated his belief that Anwar is a homosexual: “I have no doubt that he has been proved to be a homosexual.” Moreover, he said that

gay people should not be allowed to participate as part of the government: “Gay people should not govern mostly Muslim Malaysia.... I strongly believe we cannot have a prime minister who is homosexual. Malaysia is officially an Islamic country.”¹⁸

Despite the rather obvious political nature of the government’s prosecution of its leading proponent of democratic reforms, the prejudice against homosexuals is so severe that Anwar was discredited. During his trial the judge made many questionable rulings that denied Anwar a fair opportunity to defend himself. The judge even sentenced Anwar’s lawyer to three months in prison for “sedition” for protesting this unfairness. In 1999 the Malaysian court convicted Anwar of sodomy, and he was sentenced to nine years in prison. Because of Anwar’s poor health resulting from the police beating, he was finally released from prison after serving for six years. He felt so threatened by the stigma of being labeled as homosexual that he fled the country and was granted asylum by Germany. After Mahathir retired, Anwar came back to Malaysia to try to clear his name, but he has been muted in his criticism of the current government.

While many have complained that Prime Minister Mahathir made his accusations of sodomy in a cynical attempt to rid himself of a political rival, it was an effective ploy. In order to justify this prosecution, the government responded with a general campaign about the evils of homosexuality, and by a crackdown against homosexuals. In 1998 the supporters of Mahathir organized “Pasrah,” a new political group called “The People’s Voluntary Anti-Homosexual Movement.” Pasrah’s goal is to “wipe out” homosexuality in Malaysia by calling for severe legal penalties against same-sex behavior. The Malaysian human rights group Suaram has protested against this government-supported organization, saying Pasrah’s attempt to incite discrimination and condemnation of gay men and lesbians is a misguided form of political support for the Prime Minister. Suaram has concluded, in my opinion quite accurately, that homosexuals have been made the scapegoat in the government’s attempt to keep itself in power.

Ibrahim Ali, the chairman of Pasrah, is a member of the Supreme Council of the United Malays National Organization Party. This is the party that is in control of the government, even after Mahathir’s retirement. The new Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is the handpicked successor of Mahathir, and continues to follow his policies. Pasrah’s stated goal is to “educate the public” about the “moral danger of homosexuality.”¹⁹ The leaders of Pasrah have stated that Malaysia’s current sodomy law, with its punishment of flogging and imprisonment for twenty years, is too lenient. The main opposition party is supported by fundamentalist Muslims, who are even more inclined to support executions for homosexuals. In this context, Mahathir’s party takes a “moderate” position by only favoring imprisonment for those accused of homosexuality.²⁰

In addition to all this that is happening on the national level, Malaysian women’s rights activist Zaltun Mohamad Kasim points out that local laws are becoming even more repressive. She has been speaking out publicly about the dangers of increasingly strident attacks on sexuality by Muslim leaders. She gave a speech at an international human rights conference in 2004 in which she stated that in Malaysia, “Sexuality [is] Under attack....Inspired by the ideology of Islamic conservatism, there is a growing obsession with... guarding and policing morality.” One of the most insidious new laws, that was passed with hardly any

objection, provides that “anyone who gives, propagates, and/or disseminates any opinion contrary to any fatwa [Islamic directive] in force commits a criminal offense.” Since a fatwa issued by Muslim leaders states that homosexuality is a sin, anyone in Malaysia who tries to suggest otherwise is subject to arrest merely for stating their opinion.²¹ Zaltun also points out that:

The state-administered Islamic or Shariah laws are ostensibly only applicable to Muslims. However, what has been happening in effect is a quiet redefinition of what is considered ‘matters related to Islam.’ The scope of Shariah laws in the country has slowly widened, from personal status laws on marriage, [to] divorce [and] sexual orientation.... State governments have also used this provision to enact their own versions over and above the existing [national laws]. [These local and national] laws contain numerous provisions that blatantly and facially disproportionately discriminate against and violate the rights of women and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The Shariah laws have also found their way into municipal laws, subsidiary legislation, regulations and policy directives that affect both Muslims and Malaysians of other faiths.²²

Gay people, she points out, are often falsely charged with violations of prostitution laws, and other laws that are deemed to protect public morality, simply because homosexuality “is demonized as unIslamic, unnatural, disgusting, and a crime worse than murder.... They become vulnerable to legal prosecution under both the civil and Shariah legal systems as well as being easy targets for public persecution, sexual and physical violence, and harassment.... The growing conservatism in the country has also given rise to self-appointed vigilante Islamist groups or individuals in the universities, the workplace, and also in public spaces, who have taken it upon themselves to harass and police other individuals and groups.”²³ Some non-masculine males who are suspected of being homosexual have been expelled from Malaysian universities “and told to come back when they become ‘real men.’”²⁴

Gay people have no one to speak up for them in Malaysia. Even academic researchers are intimidated by being dependent upon government appointments and funding. Faculty at Malaysian universities are prohibited from engaging in political debates. For example, several teachers were dismissed by the government’s Teaching Service Commission just for assigning students to debate political policies in a debate competition. Without any public discourse on the subject of equal rights for homosexuals, there is little opportunity for changing the attitudes of the public or government authorities.

In this context of rising intolerance, Malaysia’s Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat announced a policy that the government will not allow any known gay man, lesbian, or transvestite to appear on television programs. He stated: “Any artist who is proven to be a gay will come under the ban. We do not want to encourage any form of homosexuality in our society.”²⁵ This policy is frighteningly similar to laws passed by the Nazis in 1930s Germany, prohibiting Jews from appearing in any of the mass media. These laws proved to be a prelude to the concentration camp policies that followed.

The chances of these policies being changed due to pressure from the media is very slim, because

publishers must apply annually to the government for a permit to publish their newspapers, books, or magazines. The fact that most of the major media in Malaysia are owned by top government officials means that the media do not challenge any government policy. In addition, the government censorship board prevents publication of “malicious news,” and censors discussion of any kind of sexual matters in the press. *The Sun*, a leading newspaper in Malaysia, even went so far as to say on August 13, 2007 that “The government should strip the citizenship of Malaysians who betray the country by making comments that humiliate Islam.”

Therefore, since the Malaysian government considers homosexuality to be an affront to Islam, any news relating to gay and lesbian rights, especially including calls for ending discrimination against homosexuals, is suppressed. For example, on February 22, 2006, the main newspaper *The Malay Mail* in a front page story not only did not criticize the government for police raids on gay businesses, but even joined in on the raids by taking and printing photographs of the men who were arrested. In lurid tabloid style, the article compared gays to prostitutes. On the same day, the Bangkok-based Utopia-Asia gay news website commented:

Human rights in Malaysia took another downturn today as the English-language newspaper, *The Malay Mail*, used their front page to equate homosexuals with prostitutes. Referring to recent high profile police raids on Kuala Lumpur discos, spas and saunas popular with gay men, the paper used local slang to slur the country’s gay citizens: ‘Round-up of the Day! Chicks [female prostitutes], Ducks [male prostitutes] and Gays.’ In a full page exposé, the paper chose to display pictures of patrons shot by police inside a private men’s club, unprecedented behavior from the local media. An article which appeared last week in the Malay press, luridly detailing suggestive activities inside a popular local men’s spa, seems to have been the trigger for the police actions against a number of clubs, saunas, and massage businesses. Subsequent one-sided articles have appeared in the press from a Muslim group asking for harsher penalties against homosexual activities and even interviewing a Mom who was surprised to learn that her son was gay and blamed Malaysian gay Internet sites for his natural inclinations.²⁶

This kind of police raiding, aided and abetted by a scandal-hungry media, continues. For example, at 7:30pm on November 4, 2007, police raided a gay party in Penang, and brought along reporters who took pictures of the gay men at this party. The police claimed there was sex going on at this party, though all of the photos that were made as soon as the police burst into the scene showed the men all fully clothed. Participants said that it was a purely social gathering, and denied there was any sex going on.²⁷ Whether there was sexual behavior or not, what is important is that this was a private gathering of consenting adults in a closed private business.

Penang police chief Azam Abdul Kadir was quoted by the Associated Press (November 6, 2007) as saying that this raid was part of what he called “Operation Clean” that was being conducted to prevent vice activities. He proudly recounted how his department had conducted similar raids on other gay parties on

April 3, and hinted that other sites were under surveillance if they did not stop hosting gay parties. Azam said the hosting of such events “is against our culture, our way of life.” By defining homosexuality as “vice” this “Operation Clean” demonstrates the extreme discrimination against gay people in Malaysia. Gay Malaysians living in exile responded that Operation Clean should be used to clean up rampant government corruption, and that police would be more useful in cleaning up the dirty streets of the city than in persecuting gay people.

The fact that homosexuals are so commonly arrested is itself a sentence of punishment. A person who is arrested for a crime in Malaysia often has to wait in jail for a long time, sometimes up to eight years, before being brought to trial. Guards regularly beat prisoners. Torture of prisoners is justified by the sentence of being flogged with a cane that is often meted out by the courts. This practice of caning is so severe that prisoners often faint from the pain, and are left with permanent scars. In the case of prisoners who are homosexual, the extensive publicity regarding government condemnation of homosexuality has sent the message to the police and others that persecution of homosexuals is acceptable.

As evidence of this, I include here an interview of an ethnic Chinese Malaysian gay man who fled to Los Angeles in 2006. His story is all too common among those Malaysian gay men whom I have interviewed, in Malaysia, Thailand, and America. This is what he told me about Malaysian police:

The police have the mindset that if you are gay you deserve the death penalty. No matter who you are or how successful you are, as long you are gay you are finished. If you are gay and something happens to you, you will not get any protection from the police. I heard so much about gay people getting persecuted, beaten, harassed, and tortured. Hearing these things makes you so fearful and you live in depression.

In July 2006, one evening I was sitting in a car with another man in a public park, in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur. We were just talking, there was nothing sexual going on. This park is known among gay people as a place to hang out. We call it “lost world.” Around 10pm, a police patrol car with two police officers pulled up. I still remember that moment. I thought I was going to die. The officers were both Malay Muslims. They quickly approached the car and grabbed us. One officer dragged my companion about six to eight meters away. They pushed us each to opposite sides and quickly grabbed our IDs. They tried to force us to admit that we were doing something wrong so that they would have a reason to bring us back to the police station. I only had one thing in my mind there. I was so frightened. I thought that I am not going to see the morning tomorrow.

The police officers made us stand with our backs to them facing the car and put our hands on the car. We said we did nothing wrong. They said two men inside a car in a public park was already wrong. I said again to them, “We did nothing wrong.” One officer said, “Don’t lie to me. We all know what people are doing in the park at this hour.” I said, “Officer, I don’t know what you had the occasion to catch people doing in the park at this hour but I am telling

you the truth.” I was afraid because I knew that if I admitted I was gay I would be in serious trouble. I tried to act regretful, hoping they would have some pity and soften up. I was praying that the officers would believe me.

The policemen searched our car. In Malaysia, it is different than in the United States. While you are in the police officers’ hands, your life belongs to them. They told us, “There is no place at all in this world for people like you guys. You guys are disgusting. You’re animals and do not deserve to be born to this world. The only place for you is in hell.” They wanted to arrest us and bring us back to the station. I knew that if they took us to the station, they could charge us with immoral activities. It is a matter of a life threatening situation. I had no choice. Very fast the thought came in my mind to bribe them. I gave them 200 Malaysian Ringgit. That is what saved us. But before they left, they warned us, “You guys better pray,” and they told us they better not catch us again anywhere anytime, “or else you guys are dead.”²⁸

Fearing for his life, on the following day this man went to the American embassy and was able to obtain a visa which he used to escape from Malaysia. This man’s fear of being arrested was based on a realistic fear of what happens to gay people who come under the control of the law enforcement system. In its December 24, 2004 report “Malaysia: Freedom—the Human Imperative,” Amnesty International quoted the statement of Dr. Munawar Anees, a microbiologist who was convicted under Section 337D of “unnatural offenses.” Dr. Munawar testified: “The infamous Malaysian Special Branch [secret police] taught me how it feels to be searched and seized, disallowed to make phone calls, handcuffed, blindfolded, stripped naked, driven in an animal cage, shaven bald, endlessly interrogated, humiliated, drugged, deprived of sleep, physically abused [and] barely surviving on a meager diet of rancid rice and chicken.”²⁹ While imprisoned he was kept handcuffed around the clock to his bed for nearly four months. After he was finally released, he recounted his ordeal, saying: “Slowly but painfully, the wounds of physical torture may heal. In time, the psychological anguish may subside. But the freedom that is lost is never regained.”³⁰

If even a respected scientist like Dr. Munawar was persecuted so severely, I would expect that the average person would meet an even worse fate. Given the government’s stated goal of “wiping out” homosexuality in Malaysia, and the fact that the government uses a religious justification for this persecution (keeping in mind that Islam is the official religion of Malaysia’s government), the likelihood that the police would protect an LGBT person is nonexistent.

United States immigration policy allows political asylum to be granted to an applicant based on their realistic fear of “persecution on account of membership in a particular social group.” Male and female homosexuals definitely constitute such a social group in the context of government and religious persecution in Malaysia. Even if an individual is not convicted of a specific sexual act, they can still be persecuted based upon their perceived membership in the social group of homosexuals. They do not even have the freedom of association to gather with other gay-identified persons in a social setting, without persecution. Even sitting in a car, a public park, or anywhere that police suspect two or more people of being homosexuals, leaves one open to police harassment, arrest, and/or torture. Even if they were not engaged in sexual

activity, merely being perceived as gay by itself is enough for the police to take such actions. Both males and females are persecuted on the basis of their *perceived* membership in this social group.

Even if government-sponsored persecution might abate in the future, there is still the probability that Muslim Fundamentalists will continue to try to “wipe out” homosexuals. The statement often made, that homosexuality “is worse than murder,” and “an affront to Islam,” is a real and present danger for any person who is even suspected of homosexual proclivities.

All my recent research shows that conditions for homosexuals in Malaysia are quite precarious. Things are getting worse rather than better, and there is no evidence of any turnaround potential for the foreseeable future. As Malaysian human rights activist Farish Noor sounded the alarm in 2005: “It should be painfully obvious to all by now that there are very real repressive undercurrents in Malaysian society.”³¹

The negative attitudes, discrimination and persecution being experienced by Malaysian gay people today is a direct result of the combination of religious attitudes and governmental politics. Defining homosexuality as criminal “sodomy,” imprisonment, censorship of media discussions of the issue, and police oppression, together constitute a pattern of government-sponsored persecution that is impossible to deny.

With this being the case, I call upon the initiation of a massive boycott of those nations that are actively persecuting sexual minorities. The Malaysian government is conducting a major campaign to encourage tourism in Malaysia. Gay and lesbian travel agents have to be the first to say that they will not encourage tourism to Malaysia until the government changes its homophobic policies. Don’t buy Malaysian products, and protest American corporations that do business with Malaysia. This applies to every other homophobic government in the world as well.

It is important to publicize this persecution, and not allow it to be swept under the rug because of religion. Sooner or later, homophobic governments will be forced to accommodate to the emerging global consensus that such persecution, even if religiously based, is wrong. I remain an optimist, and having seen such dramatic change in China, as well as in other countries, I feel that change is possible in the Islamic world as well. There are some Muslim nations that are not actively persecuting homosexuals, and they can be the model for change by the homophobic governments. But though I am ultimately optimistic I also know it will be a long struggle. In the meantime we owe it to the people who are being discriminated against to do everything we can to help them escape from the oppressive conditions under which they have to live. Immigration and asylum for LGBT people today, just as it was for Jews fleeing Nazi persecution in the 1930s and 1940s, is an important moral question for our time. I am proud to have made my contribution in this area, and call upon all other rational people who oppose discrimination to do likewise.

Notes

¹ I am indebted to the valuable assistance rendered by Nellsen Jong during the revisions of this manuscript.

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⁴ Williams Institute for Sexual Orientation and the Law, UCLA School of Law, <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute> last accessed February 25, 2009.

⁵ Aniza Demis “Sunday Interview: Fatwa on Pengkid to Prevent Lesbianism” *New Straits Times* November 23, 2008. http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/Sunday/Frontpage/2409163/Article/index_html last accessed February 25, 2009.

⁶ See United States Department of State, “Malaysia: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2006” dated March 6, 2007 at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78780.htm> last accessed February 25, 2009. This report, like many reports from the United States Department of State under the Bush administration, underreports the extent of persecution on sexual orientation. For example, after spending several pages on general human rights violations in Malaysia, and especially on discrimination against Christians, this report devotes only two sentences to sexual orientation and incorrectly states that there are no laws which prohibit homosexuality.

⁷ United States Department of State, “Saudi Arabia: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2007” dated March 11, 2008 at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100605.htm> online. See also International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, “Saudi Arabia: Protest the Death Penalty for Homosexual Conduct in Saudi Arabia” at <http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/globalactionalerts/639.html>. See also “Men Get 7000 Lashes for Sodomy” *London Herald Sun* October 4, 2007 at <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,22532620-23109,00.html>.

⁸ H. Tavakoli “New Dark Ages,” *Iranian* September 20, 1999 <http://www.iranian.com/Letters/1999/>

[September/gay.html](#) last accessed February 25, 2009.

⁹ Joshua Hammer, “Gay Egypt in the Dock.” *Newsweek* February 11, 2002 <http://www.glapn.org/sodomy-laws/world/egypt/egnews80.htm> last accessed February 25, 2009. See also various articles under “Egypt” at the International Lesbian and Gay Association website <http://www.ilga.org>.

¹⁰ “Nigerian man sentenced to stoning for gay sex.” *ABC NewsOnline* July 5, 2005 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200507/s1410598.htm> last accessed February 25, 2009. See also International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, “Nigeria: IGLHRC Monitoring Sodomy Prosecutions” July 15, 2005 at <http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/resourcecenter/373.html> last accessed February 25, 2009.

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¹⁴ Anon. “Mahathir’s verdict: you’re greedy, sexual deviants” *The Sydney Morning Herald* June 19, 2003 <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/06/19/1055828425389.html> last accessed February 25, 2009.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, “World Report 2002: Special Issues and Campaigns” <http://www.hrw.org> online. See also <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k2/hivaid.html> last accessed February 25, 2009.

¹⁶ Andrew Osborn “Muslim alliance derails UN’s gay rights resolution.” *The Guardian* April 25, 2003 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/apr/25/gayrights.andrewosborn> last accessed February 25, 2009.

¹⁷ Kazi Mahmood “Malaysians Protest UN Resolution On Sexual Orientation,” *Islam Online* February 9, 2004 <http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2004-02/09/article06.shtml> last accessed February 25, 2009.

¹⁸ S. Kanaraju, “Former PM says gays should not rule mostly Muslim Malaysia,” *The Advocate* January 9, 2007 http://www.advocate.com/news_detail_ektid40937.asp last accessed February 25, 2009.

¹⁹ Michael G. Peletz, *Islamic Modern: Religious Courts and Cultural Politics in Malaysia* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002). 268.

²⁰ *ibid.* See also anon. “Malaysian group launches antigay movement.” *Asian Political News*. October 26, 1998 http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0WDQ/is_1998_Oct_26/ai_53425615?tag=content;coll last accessed February 25, 2009.

²¹ Zaltun Mohamad Kasim, “Sexuality Under Attack: The Political Discourse of Sexuality in Malaysia,” a paper presented at the Sexuality and Human Rights in Muslim Societies in South/Southeast Asia Conference, held in Jakarta September 23-26, 2004; reprinted in Manila’s women’s rights publication *Isis International*, October 16, 2007, p.1. http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=270&Itemid=163 last accessed February 25, 2009.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *ibid.*, see paragraph 2 of subsection “The controls, regulations and attacks on expressions of sexuality.”

²⁴ *ibid.*, see paragraph 5 of subsection “Defying socially defined masculinity and femininity.”

²⁵ Anon. “Malaysia,” *Utopia-Asia*, February 22, 2006 http://www.utopia-asia.com/unews/article_2006_02_22_223148.htm last accessed February 25, 2009.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ News Editor “Updated: Penang Police Arrests 70 at 4 Raids,” *Fridae News Features: Empowering Gay Asia*, November 3-4, 2008 <http://www.fridae.com/newsfeatures/article.php?articleid=2328&viewarticle=1> last accessed February 25, 2009.

²⁸ Interview with Nellsen Jong, by Walter L. Williams, in Los Angeles, November 5, 2007.

²⁹ Statement of Dr. Munawar Anees, quoted in paragraphs 6 and 7 of “Malaysia: Freedom—the Human Imperative,” in the International in Asia & the Pacific webpage of *Amnesty International* website http://asiapacific.amnesty.org/apro/aproweb.nsf/pages/share_DrMunawar last accessed February 25, 2009.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Paragraph 7. See also “Malaysiakini’s Steven Gan interviews Dr Munawar Anees” posted by *Din Merican: The Malaysian DJ Blogger* <http://dinmerican.wordpress.com/2008/10/30/malaysiakinis-steven-gan-interviews-dr-munawar-anees-part-1-november-21-2006/> last accessed February 25, 2009. Also see Debra Chong, “Malaysia Don’t Deny Justice to My Intellectual Friend, Dr Munawar Anees” posted by *Din Merican: The Malaysian DJ Blogger* sourced from the *Malaysian Insider* <http://dinmerican.wordpress.com/2008/10/28/malaysia-dont-deny-justice-for-my-intellectual-friend-dr-munawar-anees/> last accessed February 25, 2009.

³¹ Farish Noor, “A Wake Up Call: On the Rise of Fascism in Malaysia” *International Lesbian and Gay Association* January 31, 2005, http://www.ilga.org/news_results.asp?LanguageID=1&FileCategory=1&-FileID=478 last accessed February 25, 2009.

What is a Question?

By Kane X. Faucher

I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the day of judgment. You start a question, and it's like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others.

--Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

*I like rivers
Better than oceans for we see both sides.
An ocean is forever asking questions
And writing them aloud along the shore.*

--Edwin Arlington Robinson, *Roman Bartholow Part III*

To pose the question of the question is also to plot its course, its processional development throughout the history of thought. It is here that we trace the history of the question taken in itself as a term through figures such as Freud, Heidegger, Lacan, and Derrida, in order to build a critical lens capable of refining the notion of the question and bringing it into some clearer semblance of focus. It is my contention that the question taken in itself has been given short shrift in critical discourse, perhaps owing to its resistance to being examined. Though questions are the common currency of theorists, the question of the question has yet to truly emerge into common view. Moreover, we cannot ignore the important metaphoricity of the question itself, how it functions in language, and the etymological nuances it possesses. The linguistic standpoint will not become the definitive aperture of this question of the question, but will function as another point of contiguity that the question shares with both language and theory.

1. What is a question?

This subtitle presupposes the validity of the notion of question itself, somewhat unavoidably. Questioning as process does not necessarily have a secure origin from which to trace this rather recalcitrant word, so we begin almost arbitrarily, yet still within the bounds of an hermeneutic exercise, with the etymology of the word itself. Etymologically, “question” derives from the Latin *quaerere*, taking on the meaning of to seek,

ask, acquire, inquire. But for all its semantic usage, it is inextricably bound up in the notion of acquisition, a taking, or a planned taking. Even questions that have no predetermined solution invoke the idea of taking. The riddle and the paradox are forms of question that take non-solution as their solution. Questioning in this manner leads us to the abrogation of the expected solution in favour of an ironic response: a restating of the question for the purposes of illustration. Questions with non-solution as solution still cordon off and frame discourse, directing us to this non-solution response. The fundamental aspect of the question, as it functions in language, appears to be a fidelity to solution out of an incommensurable debt to tradition and Reason itself. In sum, there is no *grace* in the question as it is utilized. This is what we “get out of” the act of questioning, almost literally *ex-quit*ing as opposed to *ex-quisit*ing. The question presupposes a means of getting out of itself, or for us, the inquisitors, to get out of this questioning state by way of the alleviation that a solution brings. It is indeed difficult for philosophy to ask a question of the question, for it cannot avoid using the tools that are traditional (read as requisite) to understanding the tool itself. In hermeneutics, the “right” questions are suspended over the alleged answer (the deeper meaning of the subject inquired about), whereas in deconstruction the question is merely suspended. But it is possible that the deconstructive question is suspended over its double: the restatement of the question, and that iteration, in turn, being suspended over another, ad infinitum. But how to escape the strange economy of the question, to pose that which has no answer or double? For too long, the idea of the question has been taken for granted, perhaps solely due to its reliable propinquity.

What remains is to think of the question apart from the other semantic affiliates of acquisition (*acquirere*) and conquering (*con-quaerere*), which in themselves entail the connotations of property. In considering the distinction between an inside and outside, the question appears to fulfill two promises: to seek into (*disquisitio*) and to seek out (*exquirere*). Is this merely an Ancient Greek binary between active and passive, where the one who questions takes from the passive one who answers? However stated, the word question is in question, if not precisely for replaying a very old distinction between inside and outside. To seek *out* is to seek *for*. To seek into is to examine (*exigere*: to “drive out,” perhaps recalling a search for essences in the object). To answer is to send away the question (*rogare*) in an act of abrogation (the Latin prefix *ab* modifying the verb as “away” or “to send off”). Inferred here are many of the metaphysical assumptions on the nature of subject-object relations that are too broad and diffuse to cover here, but how to proceed to question the question without utilizing both *disquisitio* and *exquirere*?

We may be able to at the very least retrace the steps of the corruption of the question, this essay being a most recent example, unavoidably, for we cannot dismiss the operation of questioning and providing some semblance of solution without fear of not achieving the aims commensurate to the demands of this particular milieu of discourse. Consider the question as question; this question to be considered not only entails an attention to the question posed, but to the notion of question itself. We might say that it merely portrays something fundamental to the human condition and the operation of language, but this in itself is common to many other features that do not bring us to a closer proximity with the question qua question. Perhaps the old adage of not needing to know what the hammer is to know how to use it applies here, but we will suspend even that as another question. Perhaps even more profoundly problematic is the operation in which we attempt to disclose the notion of question as itself being indicative of what deconstruction

warns us against: that of privileging the notion of question as another object of presence. There is ample evidence already for this essay to sustain such a charge: the use of etymology for the purpose of assisting us in this inquiry, for example. The temptation to spiral into these pre-deconstructive situations is yet another of the many risks we undertake in attempting to understand the question.

The question is often regarded by common sense as simply an unfinished process of knowledge, where the solution is considered the finitude of knowledge. When we engage the solution with what we feel to be unanswered questions, we re-ignite the claim that it is unfinished knowledge that we seek to bring into contact with solutions of our own. In writing, we represent the question with the use of the orthographic mark “?”. This representation appears to function as a repetition of the question, as one folded within the question initially posed. We will return to the mark of the question itself, but first we owe something to the tradition from which this question of the question derives.

Questions operate as a desire to see, the prevalent metaphor of “seeing” or “grasping” ideas. For Heidegger, it is this curiosity, this care (*Sorge*) for seeing, that is essentially bound up in Being.¹ Does this unite care (*Sorge*) with acquisition (*acquisitio*)? Does this reveal or disclose the hidden sun that is the eye, unveiling it at the moment of disclosure and acquisition? Is the question the blind eye that strains to see again, to overcome blindness precisely by focusing its blindness upon the object it wants to see fully in the form of a question (perhaps even its essence, as phenomenologically real or by the hermeneutic standard of “deeper meaning”)? This “seeing” is for Heidegger making the fundamental question “transparent.”² Seeing is seeking, especially for that which the *Suchen* is already modified by that which is being sought, and that this see(k)ing is an intrinsic characteristic behaviour of the being of the questioner.³ But this seeking is only possible because the meaning is available, put forth somehow by the thing being sought.⁴

Curiously enough, “curiosity is everywhere and nowhere” constantly uprooting Dasein.⁵ So if the questioning impulse resides in Being (prompted in a strange way by the sought thing that has meaning available to the seeker), constantly being subverted by the question, compelling an overcoming of blindness through a movement toward the *lumen fidae* or even a *lumen naturale*, where is the question? When is the question? Is it merely an effect of this primordial impulse? The impulse causes us to perform this deviation. In the orthographic mark, Being that “does not know,” yet desires to see (*savoir*), traces along an arcing trail, slicing or perhaps sliding down to the point of the full stop: the period-object of knowing, as if the seeker is magnetized to the sought. This is the static moment at the threshold where the solution supervenes as revelation and negates the question – or places it under conditional erasure – to abrogate the act of questioning (*rogare*).⁶ The question, in its being posed, decenters itself and subverts the questioner (*percontator*). But it is at the very strange moment when the question ceases to exist: at the moment of the solution. The solution is depicted as light, questions (or ignorance) as darkness. Just as evil is defined in the metaphysical tradition as a *privatio bonum*, the question is seen as a *privatio enodatum*: the absence of the solution that suggests that the questioning state itself is something to be “cured.” Defined in terms of privation or absence, the question has no substantive existence of its own in this formulation. Granting existence to the question to the same degree as it is granted to the solution would threaten the existence of the solution itself, precisely through rendering some degree of completeness to the question. It would

appear that this would be untenable on at least two grounds: 1) a fully existent question would undermine the positive character of the solution, and 2) it would give positivity to absence, for questions operate in such a way as to have absence as their constituent mechanism in relation to the presence that represents the object/solution. In these two ways, *question* is fundamentally a problem in language.

Deleuze, after Lautman, examines the being of the question, placing it without much reservation under the notion of an imperative. Rather than stressing the question's negativity as absence, Deleuze asserts that questioning "is a part of knowledge allowing its positivity and its specificity to be grasped in the act of *learning*."⁷ There is a much larger epistemic and conceptual apparatus involved in this operation, all of which can only be summarily treated here. What Deleuze indicates for us is the ?-Being, or the (non)being of the question as positive. Questions emerge due to recourse to the very habitual nature or imperative force within being itself, thereby setting up an entirely new ontology of the question.⁸ This ontology opens the question up to positivity, thereby freeing the question up from a tradition of western epistemology that has imbricated the notion of the question as a linear movement towards an answer. In Descartes, this is the move from doubt to certainty; in Kant it is from the hypothetical to the apodictic. But ostensibly, questions in the Deleuzian manner do not need to automatically surrender to their opposite, and in fact questions can remain open precisely by their intrinsic transcendental character: "It may be that there is necessarily something mad in every question and every problem, as there is in their transcendence in relation to answers, in their insistence through solutions and the manner in which they maintain their openness."⁹ But what of this positivity? The question is still non-being, but it is not non-being in the negative, but rather that questions are the eternal displacement of possible solutions, a displacement of their own negation.¹⁰ Questions, in this sense, *resist* solutions that will make questions the scene of a negation.¹¹ Moreover, Deleuze wants to make very clear that questions are creatures of the unthought, and that the unthought possesses a positive perception.¹² But, in remaining somewhat critical of this stance, Deleuze must also maintain the existence of the fractured I. He points to the natural incompleteness of thinking that perpetually endeavours to complete itself, much in the way Derrida speaks of the unfecund operation of the hermeneut in attempting to uncover the essential meaning of things. But Deleuze perhaps wants to make this fractured I the product of the questioning impulse itself, that questions themselves are the reason for this fractured I.¹³ Questions exist as the displacement of a virtual object it cannot "see" in the Heideggerian sense, and whatever questions are qua questions, they are not part of a speculative genus that has ignorance of some empirical subject as its provisional stage in thought, but rather are "the living acts of the unconscious, investing special objectivities and destined to survive in the provisional and partial state characteristic of answers and solutions."¹⁴ It should be noted that there is a very strong alliance here with Spinoza's *conatus*, or striving; this parallel ought help flesh out the second part of a Deleuzian reading of the question.

If the question resides as an unconscious act as an imperative, Deleuze has seemingly flipped the tradition on its head, making solutions a mere fiat response to the (non)being of the question itself. This operation of resistance is much more complex than first imagined, for we must now consider questions and answers in terms of an economy of exchange; that is, Necessity (which drives toward completion, Truth, the Good) demands the cancellation of the question in order to further its own economy of the acquisition of property.

Through the violence of cancellation, the question acquiesces its sovereign aspect of positivity and lapses into negation. But this is only a fiat exchange, for the actual question has only surrendered one of its masks while retaining its positivity in the unconscious, and will always remain so as long as Necessity fails to achieve its teleological ideals. And, in fact, Necessity cannot achieve these ideals because the question will always be present to subvert whatever solutions are derived from itself, and will in fact subvert its own presence. The questions persist in their (non)being in the answers.¹⁵ Questions will always retain their element of chance, and chance (the aleatory point) is affirmation.¹⁶ In a simple typology, the operator of the idea is the gambler, the singularities of a problem are points on the die, the cast of the die is the act of questioning, and the fallen die with its chance result is the non-solution of possibility. The implication of Chance and Necessity is played out upon the sky and earth, from casting to falling to fallen. This motif is extremely apparent in many of Deleuze's works. Chance creates the chaosmos, is a part of it.¹⁷ Imperatives exist in the Cogito whereas questions resonate elsewhere, outside of the Cogito, deep within the unconscious act, distributing a 'that which is' among problems.¹⁸

If questions are not an intrinsic property belonging to the Cogito, are the scene of a fissure, and reside as unconscious acts, then there is a strong case for equating questioning with the impossibility of thought. Questioning presents to the questioner the powerlessness that "is transmuted into power, that point which develops in the work in the form of a problem. Far from referring back to the Cogito as a proposition of consciousness, imperatives are addressed to the fractured I as though to the unconscious of thought."¹⁹ This powerlessness, itself a power raised to the *n*th degree, is present in the act of not locating meaning in an object that is perpetually displaced, the very anxiety of non-solution, or what Bataille calls "non-savoir." In fact, there is a very powerful connection between Bataille's notion of the impossible and non-savoir with the idea of the question, a provocative connection that we will leave suspended here.

But we must treat the Deleuzian question with more care than this. The question does not emerge because of some lack, as it does for Freud and Lacan: it is an intrinsic property of being-as-striving. That is, the infinite series of questions are only broken up by the surface tensions of a tendency toward solutions, the cutting-connecting-flowing aspect of desiring machines. Rather than rely on the classic *homo duplex* of the unconscious and the Cogito, Deleuze and Guattari posit three criteria of the being of the questioner that are unified: being is one, being is process, being is will to power.²⁰ The divisions that psychoanalysis is so accustomed to make, according to this formulation, are artificial. Yet another ramification of this view that opens up the question in terms of its (non)being is the Spinozist inflection that makes questioning a part of the will, and if the will is infinite then it has infinite causes (in the same way that desiring-machines are in an infinite series of their own production).²¹ Mutually supporting this idea that the question can owe no allegiance to solutions can be derived if we twist Ockham's intuitive cognition of non-existent things insofar as we may state: if the question is a non-relative quality distinct from the solution, questioning can occur without leading to solution.²²

Whereas Deleuze posits an ontology of the question that is transcendentally inherent within the desiring-machine that is being (giving fuel to his theory of transcendental empiricism) which opens up the question itself, Derrida wants to open the question precisely against the established grounds of ontology.

Deleuze is more lenient on the issue of ontology—despite his violent resistance of negation, which still is perhaps reflexively an admission of the ontological rules in tradition, illustrating some very belated and unacknowledged Hegelianism in Deleuze—whereas Derrida is more ready to critique ontology as ontotheology.²³ For Derrida, the object is “haunted” by the logos, determined by presencing. The trick is to witness the question in itself without weaving webs of interpretation, without attempting to reach an essence that is most likely not there. But just as memorization is the death of living memory, the question that is posed for the reception of an immediate solution is the death of the faculty of questioning itself, and in this way Derrida and Deleuze both appear to agree on the idea that answers are an attempt to negate questions. They also both know that the questions cannot be suppressed by answers, even if they come to this conclusion through different means.

However affirmative this operation is, the question qua question is still bound up in the notion of acquisition. How can Derrida succeed in “de-haunting” the question, freeing it up absolutely so that it remains open and with no relation to some deferred moment when property is acquired? The posing of the question itself is inextricably bound up in an operation of seeking in and for *something*. For Derrida to maintain that we should merely regard the question itself may only render the question an object, a representation, another mark. Does he ever ask a question of the question? Can we ask this without the fear that a solution will quickly follow? Deleuze, too, may not be able to escape this paradox: the question as the regulative “object” of the unconscious—or “desiring-machine” in keeping with his parlance. Questioning is desiring, and a question without desire does not seem possible, but according to the very impossible “powerlessness” of the questioning faculty itself it should exist as yet another possibility in chance. If the non-solution, non-acquisition question is possible, this possibility is a possible solution, thereby contradicting the very process of deriving this possibility, for *no question can have a solution that does not presuppose desiring and acquisition*. Suppose, out of all the possibilities I create in the question of the question, that one of them states, “it is possible that there is a question that entails no desire and acquisition on some level.” Now, if that is a possible solution, then I have illustrated my desire to locate this possibility, and I have acquired a provisional response, thereby contradicting the possible solution itself.

As we mentioned above, paradoxes have as their solution the repetition of the question. It is when the question is repeated that we are given the (non) solution. But already the question is a representation, for to invoke the Deleuzian model, to speak or write the question is a representation of the striving act of questioning. Even if we only think the question, it is still a representation for it must be represented from the unconscious to the Cogito in order to be articulated, organized. It is for this reason that we can state that every question is a folded question within another question. The paradox or riddle is a particular case where the question is repeated one more time as its solution. Moreover, even the solution to a question is the repetition of the question by a reflection of that question in the answer. This is the triple-fold of the question: the unconscious act folded into the Cogito, the Cogito question folded into the articulated question, and the articulated question folded into the response which may take the form of a solution or a restating of the question.

There is no solution to the question. To ask the question of the question only inflames the paradox we

have here illustrated. Noble and sensible attempts have been made to define the question qua question, but they prove their own limitation at the very moment they pose the question. To reach resolution on this matter violates the openness of the question we seek to maintain, and even this seeking is in itself a corrupt operation of our own desires. But it may demonstrate on another level why rationality cannot confidently claim its separation from desire itself, for desire operates as the substratum to every question, and reflexively in every solution.

2. The Pharmakon(ics) of the Question

Question: *quaestionem, quarere, quasere*.

The word *qua* will function, at least temporarily for our purposes, as “where/what” whereas the suffix *sere* will be placed in conjunction with the Latin term *serenus*, meaning “bright, clear,” close to the German *lichten*, meaning to brighten, lighten, alleviate. This timely conjunction brings us to *qua-serenus*, or, “where to clear or brighten up,” calling to mind the reliable notions of elucidation and illumination. And in fact, this is generally why we ask questions: to disclose, illuminate, or discover its answer. But the term *serenus* has weather as part of its metaphorical makeup, a metaphor we cannot simply ignore, but must brandish. Meteophilosophy opens up for us here, the pharmakon of weather itself. Like Derrida’s examination of the pharmakon that illustrates the quality of it being both poison and cure, the *meteo* in *serenus* also confers this dual aspect of benefit and disadvantage. The weather is produced, in the classical Greek conception, as a reflection of the moods of the gods. Rainfall is essential to crops, but too much can be disastrous, just as droughts can also decimate crop yields. We will later return to the metaphor of weather.

The “paternity” of the answer is the question, even if it is absent or under erasure. But do we reconstruct the original question or construct a new one from the answer? In answer to what? To question why God created the world instead of leaving everything as nothing in void is to pose a question beyond the bounds of questioning, a question that is inadmissible to the very nature of the question that seeks to acquire or seek into some matter. Hume’s “how do you know?” also appears to violate the established answers, for these questions would have preferably been left buried in the rationalist enterprise. But how are some questions acts of heresy? What are the criteria for categorizing questions as valid or heretical? In the game of questions that we observe in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, for example, the purpose is not to produce answers or statements (for that would lead to a loss), but to absurdly add more questions that do not have answers as their purpose.

How can we have a question that does not have its open hand hovering over that which it seeks to acquire or positioned for an expedition (inquisition) within that which it desires to subdue? Would a question without acquisition as its *raison d’être* have any purpose or value? But perhaps it is the case that purpose and value are corrupt, subverting the notion of the question itself. There is a traditionally acceptable method for asking questions, and this is repeatedly addressed in classical rhetoric. For example, in the Platonic

dialogue, *Laches*, the art (techne) of “fighting” (which we will here assume as a convenient metaphorical stand-in for argumentation, an interesting relation between question-asking and combative gestures) pales in comparison to its *science*, which entails knowledge of its surrounding structures, and must have virtue as its fount. Socrates concludes that without virtue, (which determines both purpose and value) fighting has no place. In substituting questioning for fighting, we discover yet another poorly veiled critique of art and sophism.²⁴ As *Laches* teaches, it is never considered appropriate to ask questions without recourse to the virtue upon which they ought to be grounded. To seize upon an answer is a question’s purpose. The telos is acquisition, entailing a property relation: something gains and something loses (this gain is also supported by *acquirere* which means not only to take out of, but to receive something extra). In this formulation, the question is that which loses, for its existence is negated. Returning to the Deleuzian model above, the question can only lose its mask while retaining its (non) being, thereby doing away with the classical conception that makes actualization of the answer the necessary death of the question.

For Heidegger, to question is building, and building is dwelling.²⁵ But building is still a form of acquisition, for one needs materials with which to build, and these materials do not emerge *ex nihilo*. What are these materials? A general desire for answers, purposive intention, and the anticipation of answers provide the material that informs this process of questioning-as-building. One must struggle to build, adding another shade to the “questioning-as-fighting” metaphor we find in *Laches*, the ever-present commitment questioning has with combat and challenge.

With recourse to the psychoanalytic tradition, which we cannot under these circumstances ignore, questions may be seen as an instance of *apraxia*: the recognition of something by its use alone, or psychic blindness.²⁶ We question without questioning the question itself, without freeing the question of the content of words and marks. This adding of words, the articulation of the question, is a representation of the questioning imperative to the Cogito. But on a theory of *apraxia*, what we are given is the first loosening of the question from the bounds of language, rendering it a habitual subconscious action. Psychoanalysis can then make its own movements to trace the reasons for such behaviour, what exactly makes the question appear in the mind. The question, in this manner, arises when there is a rift between knowing and not-knowing, or when knowing reaches its terminus at the foot of something it does not yet know. The reaction response is to throw a question at the unknown thing, much akin to the game of *fort/da*, hoping to reel in the “solution.” When the idea does not correspond with reality, or in the case of absence, the resolution (as untying, or unwinding the spool) is to throw a question at the transgression. In fact, questions in the psychoanalytic formulation indicate a fundamental absence, even if it is merely a change of place of the object. We cannot ignore the deep relationship questioning has with time, time that makes possible the eruption of the question in regards to the purloined object. The *da* response to the question presents us with the erotic fulfillment as a “cure” of our self-alienation... yet the *fort/da* game does not end, precisely because the erotic fulfillment is illusory and the desiring impulse or the questioning imperative is not satisfied with either the articulation of the question or the resulting response. It is the role of the Cogito to convince itself that it is somewhat satisfied, despite deep-seated feelings of anxiety and continued alienation. The pharmakon of the question is, for the Cogito, a double meaning: the question (prolonged questioning, indicating insatiable desire) is a possible poison, but if used sparingly to lead us toward an

answer it becomes a kind of “cure.” And so the trauma of separation is conveniently deferred (rather than truly cured) by the all-too quick response to the ill-formed question, a question that is ill-formed precisely because it was formulated at all with the use of a language that is already limited and confined by rules that the questioning imperative does not place stock in.

This is the recalcitrance of the question, precisely called if it resists being coerced toward its own negation in the solution. The question is here treated as the illness with the solution as the cure, and the questioner as the afflicted patient who—by recourse to solution—will convalesce back to health (and presupposing in the Heideggerian sense that there is something intrinsic in the sought thing that emits health-giving properties at the moment it is sought; we may call this medicinal property the production of meaning). But it must be said here that the question is indissociable with the questioner, for if the division is made, the questioner ceases to be culpable unless there is a resistance to the solution-cure. It is useful to evoke Derrida’s reading of the Freudian-Lacanian *omphalos*, where the solution (as untying) cannot take place because the connection has been cut.²⁷ So it is for every solution to a question: the solution does not return to the scene of the question, to readdress or restate that which put the process of solution into motion (hereby invoking themes of the son who refuses to pay homage to the dead father—or in this case, the son who denies that the father is alive). Rather, in a rebellious fashion, solutions cut themselves off from the body of the question, the solution has built itself a new body. The solution cannot return to the scene of the question, the “origin” or “genesis” of its existence (while the question itself has no such origin point; it is the solution that insists on having origin). The solution performs an abrogation, but it cannot perform an *anabrogation* (if this compound neologism may be permitted). The solution becomes completely severed from the *mater viventium* and has only this reflective knot as proof of there ever having been a connection.

However, beyond the yo-yoing of the question/answer paradigm, the open question expects no return, accepting separation as a risk, and also accepts anxiety as part of this questioning state. This is a communication-as-risk even if this plateau of communication is with the self and the alienated self (the unconscious and the Cogito in communicative exchange).

When we peel back the layers, to question is a manifestation of desire, and a desire without an object (pure desire) emerges from the unconscious. It is the Cogito (acting as *potentia ordinata*) that attempts to solicit some external object in order to suppress the immense force of desire. But the unfulfillment of desire—true desire unmediated by the Cogito—is what inevitably results of the Cogito’s interference; its investment is already doomed to failure.

The question materializes in the Cogito by an act of condensation (*verdichtung*). The Cogito transmutes the question into a metaphor between subject and object; hence the subsidiary and regulative metaphors of possession and seizure of the object. On the level of the rational subject, the Cogito serves two functions. Firstly, it creates meaning by condensing and arranging the unconscious emanation of desire that is received in the Cogito, giving this emanation language and thereby creating a representation of this emanation that is in accord with rational principles. This is the stage when the Cogito assembles the bits of “unthought” and translates these into language, refining this to be capable of posing a proper question

that can be directed at some object—be that object present or absent. Secondly, the Cogito must fix the articulate question to that which it will stick, thereby, in the same moment, creating a translatable representation of some external object to which the question can be appropriately applied. Then begins *fort* with the expectation that *da* will follow. Žižek’s reading of Lacan is perhaps appropriate to this scenario, for the metaphor function cannot assign meaning—only its lack.²⁸ In Derridian parlance, the Cogito is “haunted” by the absence of meaning that it is forced to assign by way of metaphoricity and the articulate question. For Deleuze and Guattari, this lack is a fiction perpetrated by a psychoanalytic misunderstanding of desire itself.

It is here that we can re-address the weather metaphor in relation to the question. The weather as unpredictable force, itself an assemblage of meteorological interferences and instability, without purposive intentions. There is no design, only flows and interruptions. Clouds form and knit together into a moving tapestry, break apart into clusters, all according to the forces of the wind that either unite or disperse them. Just as by condensation the clouds accumulate information by way of the senses, in flows that are not interrupted by the attention of the Cogito (which is attentive to other things for the moment, unable to be more than a porous wall or a sieve; calling to mind the idea of the “suburbs of Hell” where the walls are insufficient to hold back the hordes). The clouds manifest their moisture by the release of precipitation just as the unconscious emanates its desiring without an object. The sky-chance opens, unleashing its non-purposive constituents, and it is the Cogito (the necessity of production) that attempts to make this gift into something useful, productive, catching the rain with irrigation channels (striated territory), absorbing the excess solar energy by way of panelling, using the wind to power machines. It is also in the same way that the unconscious questioning impulse becomes the articulate question, rendered into language and directed at some object. The questioning impulse is translated into a raw natural resource in the means-ends relationship of the production of meaning. It is when this impulse touches the earth that it is burdened with the externally ascribed function of seeking/possessing an answer. If this sounds remarkably Deleuzian, it is because he—through different yet related concepts and figures—fundamentally illustrates the same position, except that in his formulation everything is production. To make this relation more tenable to the Deleuzian program, we will here institute a division between two types of production: one vulgar and the other as the natural process of the will to power that is engendered by the *meteo*.

To re-activate the question is to resist the question as a means to an answer (answers that effectively deactivate questions through a premature retirement), to adhere to anti-production. It is a doubling back, an unfolding, and the smoothing of space. It is to follow an invisible trace to an absent origin—and above all to forget the question in the way we have hitherto apprenticed to it or else our act of seeing the question is already marked with an articulated desire to compare and contrast. The movement toward solution is the tragic seduction with which the Cogito is afflicted.

The question without an answer, without hope or expectation of an answer, leads us to an abyss. It lends us to think of absence—or literally “ab-sense” as “away” from sense and meaning: the real question that does not belong to the logic of production that playfully disrupts and displaces meaning. We are thrust into dissolution rather than the Cogito’s illusory (dys)solution that is always thwarting the genuine openness of

the question through a violent subjection of the question to the rules of the vulgar production of meaning. There is a good reason to appeal to the works of Bataille here; the notions of non-savoir, dissolution of the subject, the beyond the limits of the rational, communication-as-risk, all apply to the contours in this epistemic shift away from the solution and (back) toward the question, for the question expresses the limit, the impossible of thought. But perhaps it is there (where? but more a question of when) that we should (re)turn...if the very impossibility of such an operation does not prevent our in- or egress, if such a vulgar notion of inside/outside may be said to apply.

It is very troublesome indeed, and yet fitting, that we pose the answer to the problem of the question as being *no answer at all*. The true question cannot be rendered into its opposite with “solution” as the answer. The question in itself cannot be known, less even practiced, without conscious mediation that strips the question of its ordinary status as having no answer...as not belonging to the realm of production. We can have a *sense* of the question as it acts through us, but it still retains itself and remains transcendental. However distracting our initial etymological and historical exercises may appear in concluding with this perhaps all too obvious conclusion, it serves us still to apprentice to the traditions that have inscribed themselves on the idea of the question, for there may still be something more to *not* know, and that this precipitating metaphilosophy may open up another way *away*.

Notes

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1962), p.215

² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.24

³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.24

⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.25

⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p.217

⁶ This use of *supervene* is not to be taken lightly: we mean almost literally “over time,” rather than, say, convenience which is a “with time.” It is perhaps far too jarring for those of the more analytic persuasion to consider a convenience of the question and answer, for it logically appears more viable to consider the question in the past tense precisely at the moment that the answer emerges.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.64.

⁸ Deleuze, p.78

⁹ Deleuze, p.107

¹⁰ Deleuze, p.107

¹¹ Deleuze, p.195: “the question silences all empirical responses which purport to suppress it.” This silence is the scene of resistance itself, and the suppression it guards against is its own threatened negation. We will return to this notion of resistance when we speak of Derrida.

¹² Deleuze, p.108

¹³ Deleuze, p.195

¹⁴ Deleuze, p.106

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p.56

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.198

¹⁷ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.199

¹⁹ Deleuze, p.199

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 2-8.

²¹ Cp. Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Cambridge: Hackett, 1992), p.53, Prop. 32 proof 1.

²² William of Ockham, *Philosophical Writings*. Trans. Philotheus Boehner (Cambridge: Hackett, 1990), p.25. The passage I modified was originally this: “*Visio est qualitas absoluta distincta ab obiecto; ergo potest sine contradictione fieri sine obiecto.*” This modification would, no doubt, violate Ockham’s entire epistemology, and so I do not impute this new meaning upon it but rather adopt its phrasing.

²³ But out of all fairness, Deleuze’s critique of ontology—remarkably Nietzschean—goes against the vulgar separation of subject and object, as is well illustrated as a leitmotif throughout *Anti-Oedipus*.

²⁴ Plato, “Laches” in *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), pp. 26-34, sections 178-194. This dialogue is worthy of our attention for more than just the reason of indicating the position of the question in classical rhetoric. Lysimachus makes much ado about the value of the name: “I am delighted to hear, Socrates, that you maintain the name of your father.” This is suspicious indeed, carried over into the Christian paradigm that places the son as the representative of the (absent) father’s name. In our reading of the dialogue of questioning as fighting, the discussion addresses the use value of questioning and if the youth should be taught such an art. Nicias points out its benefits, that it improves health, is useful in the event of war (which we will translate as an argument), and will lead to a broader knowledge on how such structures work. Nicias also points out that the questioner will know exactly when to question based on when it can produce the maximum amount of terror. There is a timeliness factor present in this formulation, outlining a general rule of questioning as it pertains to when it is appropriate to pose a question. Socrates will not dispute this last claim, but will focus on the “content rules” that ensure the validity of the question, i.e., determined by virtue. Laches’ response to Nicias warrants some unpacking as well. Laches provides us with the second general rule of the question, that it should not be an act performed merely for its own sake, but toward some end; hence, his comment that these exhibition fighters would rather please audiences with their craft than to do real battle against the foes of Athens. Laches then appeals to his own experience to illustrate two proofs of his claim: the first is that none of these exhibition fighters ever distinguished themselves in true combat, and the second concerning the issue of novelty where a fighter invented a fanciful weapon (better designed to please crowds) that resulted in his being ridiculed in battle. It is Laches who opens this discourse up for Socrates by stating that technical skill does not presuppose or substitute for true valour. It is Socrates who transmutes this valour into the foundational rule of virtue, a virtue that will regulate all forms of questioning.

²⁵ Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Questioning Builds a Way” and “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), p.311 and 348.

²⁶ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M. Paul and W.S. Palmer (New York: Zone, 1991), p.93.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (California : Stanford University press, 1996), p.13.

²⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (London: Verso, 1989), p.154.

Popular Culture and the Ecological Gothic: Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*

By Pramod Nayar

The traditional Gothic was fascinated by empty moors, steeples and labyrinths, all peopled by dangerous creatures. Twentieth century versions of the Gothic have relocated many of these atmospheric conditions of emptiness, threatening settings and dangerous creatures to the city, as exemplified in numerous filmic and literary urban Gothic works (from thrillers like Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* to the cyberpunk fiction of William Gibson and films such as *Blade Runner* or *Terminator*).

This paper examines popular Gothic literature for its conscious or unconscious ecological themes. I take as a case study what is arguably one of the most famous (definitely one of the most successful) graphic novels of all time: Frank Miller's cult work, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (1986, hereafter *TDKR*), which consists of 'The Dark Knight Returns', 'The Dark Knight Triumphant', 'Hunt the Dark Knight' and 'The Dark Knight Falls'.¹ *TDKR*, this essay argues, presents a particular version of the Gothic: what I call the ecological Gothic.²

'Ecological Gothic' is the horror, the nightmare and the suffering that arise from misalliances and imbalances among the various elements of life in a particular ecosystem. It is the horror that results from the presence, permeation and persistence of waste (wasted humans as well as other waste) in a system. Ecological Gothic in contemporary popular culture, I suggest, is often seen in the thematization of urban outcasts, the constant emphasis on a city's repressed, on the city's (filthy, disease-and-poverty ridden) underside, a repressed parallel world that intrudes into and is in conflict with the 'true' one. Thus, if Gothic is the name and figure of the tension between performance (and one can easily locate the costumed hero as instituting this 'performance') and depth, as Catherine Spooner has argued, then the ecological Gothic is the tension between the surface, 'civilized' developments of a city and the intrusion of the persistent, undesirable, 'primitive' darker depths.³ Like the traditional Gothic, which explored the dark side of human nature, the ecological Gothic locates the dark side deep inside the city itself, a dark side that seems to rot the city's internal systems.

Dark (K)Night Atmospheres: The Climate of Fear

TDKR is climatically given to horror and fear. It is not accidental that the four part series is at both ends concerned with the weather and environment: a scorching summer ('The Dark Knight Returns') and a (limited) nuclear winter ('The Dark Knight Falls'), the first leading to excessive violence and crime, the last leading to excessive magnetic pulses that ruins electrical activity all over the US and converts an entire desert into 'blackened glass'.⁴ Throughout Miller's harrowing recreation of Batman, he delves into the ecological and psychogeographical effects of vigilante culture and metropolitan civilizations. *TDKR* opens with three crucial environment-related images in its first pages. The first is the representation of Gotham city baking in the heat. The visual medium of the graphic novel is able to deliver this with a punch: it shows white heat waves circling, weaving and coiling over the city.⁵ Adjacent to this Miller introduces his second key theme: white noise as pollution. Of the 11 panels on this page, 10 are devoted to the TV screen.⁶ The TV set announces in its weather report: 'it's ninety-seven [degrees Fahrenheit] with no relief in sight'.⁷ The third is again a TV report, this time combining atmospheric conditions with terror – and marks the inaugural moment of the 'ecological Gothic'. The newscaster reads, "This heat wave has sparked many acts of civil violence here in Gotham city ... the most hideous of which has to be the brutal slaying of three nuns last week by the gang known as the mutants."⁸ Soon after, a different news report announces that the mutant gang has 'butchered' 'every member of the family'. The news reporter then turns to a medical consultant with the following question: 'but surely this heat wave is a factor, right, doc?' and the doctor agrees.⁹ Beneath this is a second panoptical view of Gotham, this time showing the rising sun and heat waves *over* the city rooftops.¹⁰ Reports of the rising heat repeat in the 46-page opening tale.¹¹ The weather is, announces the weatherman on TV, about to 'break'. The immediate next visual set shows Bruce Wayne switching off the TV and the deciding in his head: 'the time has come'.¹² Miller works the metaphor of Wayne's change via weather and TV. Miller shows the weather forecast being watched on TV announcing a change, and soon after *Wayne* decides to make the change to/in himself. The verbal text is also analogically linked. The weatherman, Dave, says 'right, Lola [Lola is the news reporter on TV], right as *rain*' (emphasis added). On the facing page Bruce Wayne *showers* and cools off.¹³ The impending break in Gotham weather is linked to the impending change in Gotham's crime scene: the return of the Dark Knight after a decade of retirement. But there is a touch of irony here, of course (and this is what makes the book such a powerful text). When the visual shows storm clouds over Gotham and the (graphic) roar of thunder, the TV news says: 'power lines are down all over the suburbs ... like the wrath of God, its headed for Gotham'.¹⁴ A bolt of lightning fills a panel with the city's skyscrapers in silhouette, even as two violent crimes are in progress.¹⁵ When the kids are being threatened by the mutants in the arcade we see first a panel with a cloaked figure followed by a panel with just a gloved hand in a jet of water (recall here that we last saw Bruce Wayne in a *shower*, just before the storm clouds over Gotham). In the next panel we see a mutant thug with Batman blades stuck in his arm screaming.¹⁶ Then back to TV, with the newscaster announcing in its regular news (the announcement follows an earlier one reporting new hair replacement techniques) the momentous occasion: 'a large bat-like creature has been sighted on Gotham's south side'.¹⁷ Something – or someone – has come to Gotham. Once again the dramatic tension is built up

through electronic noise: the TV news now flashes the Batman signal in the background.¹⁸

Miller makes it clear that what heads for the crime-ridden city is not just an atmospheric storm. The coming storm is the return of the city's famous vigilante, and the storm is both a portent and a metaphor. Four pages later that we see the Dark Knight, now in full costume.¹⁹ What Miller does here is to clearly link weather and atmosphere to the crime rate, the deteriorating city and the return of the Dark Knight. The Dark Knight represents a change of weather. Miller brilliantly builds up the tension in the atmosphere (both literal and metaphoric) – the blazing weather, the high crime rate, the imminent change in the weather, the cooling, the calm and then the storm. When the Dark Knight returns to Gotham, everything in the climate changes and a new climate of fear is launched, but this time for the criminals of the city.

Miller's tale comes full circle also via weather. When the Dark Knight is to be hunted down by order of the police, Superman is ordered to bring him in. And Superman, looking back at their two careers believes 'now the storm is growing again'.²⁰ The new Robin also perceives a similar atmospheric change when the Batman rides out to finally cleanse Gotham: 'only feels like there's a storm coming'.²¹ This time the storm is also of community-building: Batman manages to unite Gotham behind him, and even the new police commissioner (who has issued a warrant for Batman's arrest) stands quietly. After the nuclear explosion and its aftermath, 'it's still dark at high noon in Gotham city. It's still winter in August' – a nuclear winter has set in.²²

Dark Knight Spaces: The City and the Sewer

Rod Giblett in his study of postmodern cultures of wetlands argues that cities have their own repressed spaces – the sewers and swamps that the city covers up.²³ The repressed, in Giblett's reading, has a spatio-ecological dimension. The contemporary ecological Gothic of *TDKR* challenges urban stability with the repeated return of the repressed spaces from deep below the metropolis in the form of the underground.

If, as Nigel Morris suggests, the 'Gothic cracks the surface to reveal the forces it contains', *TDKR* is premised on a city's *internal* forces as necessary to battle what is above the ground.²⁴ *TDKR* in its opening pages explains Batman's return through an interesting juxtaposition of causes. Wayne admits that he is unable to sleep in the Wayne mansion: 'it's the night – when the city's smells call out to him, though I lie between the silk sheets'.²⁵ Then, when Bruce Wayne walks down Crime Alley where his parents had been killed all those years ago he is attacked by the mutant gang – and it reinforces his view that the city needs the return of the vigilante.²⁶ Miller's brilliance is to make the narrator double-voiced: 'the city's smells call out to *him*, though *I* lie between the silk sheets' (emphasis added, 'him' being Batman and 'I' being Wayne). Miller here signals the dualism of both the Batman and the city: the Batman is the restless unconscious inside Wayne, the city's smells are the city's unconscious that 'call out', that do not sleep. The city's smells call out, and they call out as the repressed of the city to the repressed within Wayne. The juxtaposition of the unconsciously repressed aspects of the city/person and the real spaces of the exterior

– where Wayne is attacked – initiates the theme of the repressed in *TDKR*.

In order to emphasize the repressed within civilization, Miller returns to the origins of the ‘bat’ – the accident in the rabbit hole and the nightmarish encounter of the boy Bruce Wayne with the bats inside the cave.²⁷ The bats are described as ‘ancient’, almost an equivalent of the ‘collective unconscious’.²⁸ But Miller also emphasizes the sewers and the labyrinths of Bruce Wayne’s mind. Will Brooker has pointed out that Miller’s extensive use of the interior monologue helps us look into the Batman’s mind.²⁹ When Batman comes on TV to say ‘our personal demons can be defeated’ he is speaking of himself.³⁰ Miller draws a clear analogy between the caverns of the city, the caverns of Wayne/Batman’s mind and the caverns of the collective repressed.

The mutants occupy the non-spaces of the city, the metaphorical sewers, here identified as the town ‘dump’: ‘The dump stretches out of sight from the far bank of the West river ... it smells of rot and rust – it’s a breeding ground for insects and rodents’.³¹ The dump is where the city really ends, and it is where the city’s current crop of trouble is harvested: the mutant gangs. Miller’s tale works in ingenious ways here. He uses the older image of the Batcave as the classical underside of the city, but an underside where the city’s most famous law-keeper lives and works. Here the Batcave is a repressed space, but one which gives rise to a powerful force. On the other hand, the dump is the true underground, the ‘breeding ground for insects and rodents’. Considering that the vigilante is a ‘bat’ – traditionally, not a favoured animal either – one can argue that Miller brings the rodent image out of the sewer. But terrifyingly, the repressed is more or less in control and the mutants who terrorize the Gotham do not reside inside the city’s belly – they live on the outside, albeit on the margins. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have shown how the sewer and the dump became metaphors of moral as well as physical depravity in 19th century England.³² The town dump in Gotham becomes such a space where ecological waste and human excesses (and also, therefore, waste) co-exist, and which call for radical cleansing/sanitizing operations.³³ It comes as no surprise that in the battle between Batman and Dick, the mutant leader, the Batman transforms the nature of the dump and the battle itself. Batman tells Dick “You don’t get it, boy... this isn’t a mudhole ... it’s an operating table. And I am the surgeon”.³⁴ Filth – moral and physical – demanded medical attention, and Miller’s Batman unerringly turns to the same analogy when he is about to kill the mutant leader in a cleansing ‘operation’. With this Batman transforms the nature of the dump itself. From a place where filth and waste accumulates, it becomes the source of hope. The wastes of Gotham – the mutants – declare “[T]he mutants are dead. The mutants are history. This is the mark of the future. Gotham city belongs to the Batman... Let Gotham’s criminals beware. They are about to enter hell”.³⁵ When the clash of the titans – Superman and Batman – ends, Batman’s heart stops. In the middle of this fight Robin has already made her escape – through (what else?) a water main – once again gaining access to the city’s inner depths.³⁶ When Batman, who has faked his death, is ‘dug up’ by Robin he returns to the caverns beneath the old Wayne manor.³⁷

Dark Knight Wastes: Urban Disasters

Zygmunt Bauman has persuasively argued that waste is a product of modernization. No-man's lands – territories designated as unfit for human habitation – are now 'open to (clamoring for!) colonization and settlement'.³⁸ Then, particular classes of people were deemed excessive or redundant and therefore kept out, and often consigned to specific regions of the globe (what Bauman terms 'dumping sites for the human waste of modernization').³⁹ Now those who were deemed excessive or redundant – human beings 'bereaved of their heretofore adequate ways and means of survival' – have begun to exert pressure on the city resulting in 'security fears'.⁴⁰

What Miller maps is the wasting process. *TDKR* deals almost entirely with wastes – electronic rubbish, human wastes, wasted earth and land. Batman's parents are wasted, the mutants are the city's wastes and the dump itself is a wasteland. But there are other images of waste that come to surface with a close reading.

When *TDKR* opens we have nuns slain and families butchered. As the tale hurtles to its climax in 'Hunt the Dark Knight', wasting quickens and deepens in intensity. A drug pusher and an addict are 'hacked to pieces'.⁴¹ The Joker – Batman's greatest enemy – is brought on a TV show to prove that he is not insane, and he escapes by killing all 200 people in the studio, including the psychiatrist who is trying to prove he (The Joker) is sane.⁴² This wasting of people is also linked to an earlier theme I have raised: the return of the repressed. Ecological Gothic depends on the repeated (endless?) return of the dark side. When the Joker slays the TV audience he marks the return of the very things that 'civilized' Gotham sought to put away. That he does so by way of a constant pollutant of modern lives – TV and its white noise – adds to the surreal effect: when the repressed returns it does so as a spectacle that is telecast live.

It is in the waste dumps that Batman first confronts the mutant leader, Dick. The writing here is significant: 'I make him eat some garbage ... Then I help him swallow it'.⁴³ The battle between Gotham's latest scourge and its famous vigilante is symbolically located in the town dump. Injured, Batman is rescued by the new Robin and the mutant leader is imprisoned. Later, determined to finish the fight and defeat Dick in the presence of his comrades, Batman engineers Dick's escape from prison. Escaping, Dick realizes he is in a duct and that ducts contain rats. He thinks to himself: 'remember – rats carry diseases, don't eat any'.⁴⁴ When he emerges from the pipe, straight into mutant headquarters – the dump – Batman is waiting for him. The battle for supremacy is conducted in a mud-pool, with both Dick and Batman unrecognizable as muddied bodies, a kind of dust-to-dust metaphor. After the defeat of the leader, the mutants metamorphose into 'Sons of Batman' and become vigilantes. In 'The Dark Knight Falls' Batman turns to these very violent soldiers from the dump in order to cleanse Gotham of the Joker's men.⁴⁵

If the city is about the 'urbanization of nature',⁴⁶ *TDKR* shows how the repressed and the wastes – the non-urban, so to speak – always return, intrude to alter the ecosystem of Gotham. When urbanization produces waste – as Bauman has argued – the accumulated waste seems to produce life forms of its own: the disaffected, the unhappy, the dissident, the poor. Batman represents the revenge of Gotham's ecosystem

by seeking to retrieve the city from the clutches of evil, even as he fights the criminal waste of the mutant gang.

But the question of waste acquires a dimension far greater than the mutants or Gotham individuals any more. In the ‘Dark Knight Falls’, the Russians have unleashed a nuclear weapon on Corto Maltese island. We are given specifics of the bomb’s power.⁴⁷ A pilot on a space shuttle estimates the extent of damage: ‘the fires might spread to mainland South America’ and there is an anxiety over the electromagnetic pulses and waves the explosion might release.⁴⁸ The pilot signs off with a final note: ‘my last thoughts will be a prayer for you, for humanity, and for planet earth’.⁴⁹ The bomb is codenamed ‘Coldbringer’: ‘it’s designed to cause maximum damage to the environment’.⁵⁰ Superman turns the bomb away from its course and experiences the explosion himself. Superman then runs a series of ecological thoughts for us – Miller’s contribution to the anti- nuclear movement – as he is hit by the explosion:

You cannot touch my planet without destroying something precious...Even her deserts are abundant ... There were birds, here, who she blessed with chest feathers absorbent enough to carry water for miles to their children ... bullfrogs ... Now, there is only blackened glass.⁵¹

The power of the explosion is such that Superman himself wilts, and needs the sun to revive – though the sun itself will be blotted out by the dust thrown up by a nuclear explosion.⁵² The electromagnetic pulse of the explosion ruins the electrical and radio equipment. And the weather changes, of course.

Conclusion: The Dark Knight’s (True) Nature Returns

The ecological Gothic in Frank Miller’s *The Dark Knight Returns* is never simply about the environment. While urban environments and ecological damage are, as I have shown, constantly in the foreground in the work, Miller also analogically and metaphorically gestures at other spatial and psychological environments such as the collective repressed of Gotham. The horror in Miller emerges in the awkward and often tragic changes that occur in the ecosystem of Gotham city – the mutants who become the law, one vigilante superhero (Superman) who is tasked with killing another (Batman) and the Batman himself as an extra-legal force who is supported by James Gordon, the Police Commissioner. The ecological Gothic depends upon these kinds of misalliances, which upset the balance.

The ecological Gothic is also the unending horror of what Gotham is and is likely to be, but with a crucial difference. This difference might very well be a resolution of the ecological Gothic, and is figured in two crucial moments in ‘The Dark Knight Falls’. First, when Batman sets out to cleanse Gotham of the Joker’s men and dangerous devices, he does so in the aftermath of a massive electrical breakdown produced by the nuclear explosion. Urban technology has broken down, even though the Joker’s tools of poison gas work. Batman has to abandon his state-of-the-art technology – his gadgets and his beloved Batmobile. Instead Batman returns to Gotham city heroically on horseback. The panel wherein Batman arrives at the

dump (once again the description is given to us – ‘the breeding ground for insects and rodents’) is large as life, with Batman on his rearing horse, which is grey and muscled, filling the page.⁵³ He is now cast as the Knight of legends. He refuses guns and then declares: ‘our weapons are quiet, precise ... Tonight we are the law, tonight I am the law... Let’s ride’.⁵⁴ Subsequent pages show him riding, with the horse’s legs towering over the mutant gang (now transformed into Sons of Batman).⁵⁵ And once more, a page filled with a grimacing, snarling Batman like a Western cowboy, lasso in hand, riding hard at the head of his army, racing towards Gotham city – a cinematic full- screen shot which Douglas Wolk accurately describes as ‘corny and over-the-top, but... as huge a moment as he [Miller] wants it to be anyway’.⁵⁶ My point is this: faced with the horrors of a technological break-down and horror (nuclear war), *TDKR* turns to an ancient order of battle, with horses and Knights. This rejection of the urban-technological is a shift within the ecological Gothic itself where Batman has to (re)turn to nature and an older system of warfare to clean up Gotham. Like the bat, described as ‘ancient’, Batman is shown returning to his ‘true’ nature – an historic warrior, a Knight.

The final panel shows Wayne sitting surrounded by his new army of vigilantes, as he explains an old map and plan of the new headquarters he will build. If the map is a way of recolonization and the very opposite of the repressed and the dark side, as Rod Giblett has argued, Frank Miller’s *Dark Knight* shows how the repressed underside can itself become the source of sustenance.⁵⁷

[H]ere in the endless cave, far past the burnt remains of a crimefighter whose time has passed ... it begins here ... an army ... to bring sense to a world plagued by worse than thieves and murderers.⁵⁸

If in traditional romances the cave and the underground are where the hero descends to before his ascent, the caverns in *TDKR* represent the spirit of the true hero, who stays underground so that the surface can be cleaned up. It is important to understand that when *TDKR* ends, Wayne is pointing to *natural* sources of water inside the caverns. Wayne and his acolytes have returned to the earth. We have been told that the trappings of civilization that Wayne had – his mansion, his wealth – are all gone. Thus crime will now be fought from a *de-urbanized* state. The *Dark Knight* returns to the state of nature.

Miller resolves his ecological Gothic by pointing to what Bauman has called the ‘culture of waste’: the ‘horrifying spectre of disposability’ that drives people to seek human comfort, even though we are distracted from this by consumer cultures and commodities.⁵⁹ When *TDKR* ends the solitary Batman has now developed a community. He has withdrawn from the urbanized splendour of the Wayne mansion to the primitive underground and state of nature with this community. In the face of continued rejection, abandonment and ‘disposability’ – wastage – the Batman and the mutants construct a new operative community in the state of nature. The rejection of Gotham is a rejection – however temporary – of the urban condition and its materials of exclusion. The ecological Gothic offers its own natural treatment for the degradation and waste that is Gotham.

Notes

¹ Frank Miller, with Klaus Janson and Lynn Varley. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* (New York: DC Comics, 2002 [1986]). Includes Parts 1-4. All in-text citations are to this edition.

² That the Batman films are persistently Gothic is such an obvious point that it need not be emphasized. Catherine Spooner provides a quick catalogue of the films' Gothic features: secret organizations, madness, the return of the repressed, underground spaces and trauma. Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 159-162.

³ Spooner, 27-8.

⁴ Miller, *Batman*. 177.

⁵ Miller, *Batman*. 11.

⁶ Richard Reynolds points to the excessive use of TV screen as panels in *TDKR* as Miller's satire on the 'medium's inanity'. Reynolds, *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology* (London: BT Batsford, 1992), 97-8.

⁷ Miller, *Batman*. 11.

⁸ Miller, *Batman*. 11.

⁹ Miller, *Batman*. 14.

¹⁰ Miller, *Batman*. 14.

¹¹ Miller, *Batman*. 21, 24.

¹² Miller, *Batman*. 25.

¹³ Miller, *Batman*. 25.

¹⁴ Miller, *Batman*. 27.

¹⁵ Miller, *Batman*. 28-30.

¹⁶ Miller, *Batman*. 31.

¹⁷ Miller, *Batman*.32.

¹⁸ Miller, *Batman*. 33.

¹⁹ Miller, *Batman*. 34.

²⁰ Miller, *Batman*. 139.

²¹ Miller, *Batman*. 173.

²² Miller, *Batman*. 184.

²³ Rodney James Giblett, *Postmodern Wetlands: Culture, History, Ecology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 55-100.

²⁴ Nigel Morris, 'Metropolis and the Modernist Gothic', In Andrew Smith and Jeff Wallace (eds) *Gothic Modernisms* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 188-206, cited from 191. Interestingly Morris is writing about Fritz Lang's urban Gothic film, *Metropolis*

²⁵ Miller, *Batman*. 13.

²⁶ Miller, *Batman*. 14.

²⁷ Miller, *Batman*. 17-19.

²⁸ Miller, *Batman*. 19.

²⁹ Will Brooker, *Batman Unmasked: Analyzing a Cultural Icon* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 267.

³⁰ Miller, *Batman*. 17.

³¹ Miller, *Batman*. 73.

³² Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 125-148.

³³ This framing of urban waste is borrowed from Zygmunt Bauman's arguments about modernity's wastes and outcasts and their dumping grounds outside the city in *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (London: Polity, 2004).

³⁴ Miller, *Batman*. 101

³⁵ Miller, *Batman*. 102

³⁶ Miller, *Batman*. 194

³⁷ Miller, *Batman*. 198

³⁸ Bauman, 5.

³⁹ Bauman 5-6

⁴⁰ Miller, *Batman*. 7

⁴¹ Miller, *Batman*. 113.

⁴² Miller, *Batman*. 128.

⁴³ Miller, *Batman*. 79.

⁴⁴ Miller, *Batman*. 98.

⁴⁵ Miller, *Batman*. 172-4.

⁴⁶ Erik Swyngedouw and Maria Kaïka, 'The Environment of the City ... or The Urbanization of Nature', in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (eds) *A Companion to the City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 567-580.

⁴⁷ Miller, *Batman*. 165. There is considerable intertextuality in Frank Miller's work. Harlan Ellison appears in a few panels (165-6). The island of Corto Maltese recalls both hardcore noir novel *The Maltese Falcon* and the then-new cyberpunk novel, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) whose chief villain is a cyborg-man named Corto.

⁴⁸ Miller, *Batman*. 165, 166.

⁴⁹ Miller, *Batman*. 168.

⁵⁰ Miller, *Batman*. 168.

⁵¹ Miller, *Batman*. 176-7.

⁵² Miller, *Batman*. 177

⁵³ Miller, *Batman*. 177.

⁵⁴ Miller, *Batman*. 173

⁵⁵ Miller, *Batman*. 174,176.

⁵⁶ Douglas Wolk, *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What they Mean* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007), 176.

⁵⁷ Giblett, 65-71.

⁵⁸ Miller, *Batman*. 199

⁵⁹ Bauman, 131.

The Conscientious Objectors in Iraq: Placing them in an Historical Context.

By Shaun Randol

The conscientious objector “has never been eulogized by well-meaning persons, who understand neither the conscientious objector himself nor the national interest in a time of war, and he has, on the other hand, been roundly abused and reviled by a large part of our citizenry as a coward and a slacker. Apparently, there is no compromise ground: he is diabolically black to his critics while to his defenders his raiment is as the snows” (Kellog 1919: 1).

Ruminating over war is as ancient as the bloody craft itself. Philosophers through the ages, from Plato (1992) and Kant (1903) to James (1906) and Walzer (2004) have wrestled with the subject. Wondering how supposedly rational beings could partake in such madness, Erasmus queried, “how can I believe them to be otherwise than stark mad; who, with such a waste of treasure, with so ardent a zeal, with so great an effort, with so many arts, so much anxiety, and so much danger, ... purchase endless misery and mischief at a price so high?” (1521). Hindus examine the same moral quandary. In the opening chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the protagonist Arjun faces on the battlefield:

In both the armies relatives,
Fathers-in-law, and companions...

Teachers, fathers, sons, grandfathers,
Maternal uncles, and grandsons,
Fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law,
And many other kinsmen, too.

Thus, in the middle of the battlefield, “Arjun cast away / His bow and arrows and sank down / His mind overcome with sorrow” (*Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 1).

Soldiers of today face the same dilemmas when deciding whether or not to engage in war. The United

States military calls those who opt out of war making “conscientious objectors.” The Department of Defense defines conscientious objection simply as, “a firm, fixed, and sincere objection to participation in war in any form or the bearing of arms, by reason of religious training and/or belief” (2007). This paper briefly reviews current conscientious objector (CO) rationality as related to the Iraq war, and seeks to give some historical context to the recent spate of CO applications. Many Iraq war COs are blazing a new path in this pacifist tradition by staking out juridical claims as justification for their positions as conscientious objectors.

Ideally, for state policy, war is a last resort. Yet neither states nor great scholars can determine the conscience of the individual when it comes to deciding to participate in the same enterprise. Committing oneself to a violent action is a very personal matter; it is a decision that rests ultimately in the conscience. “In conscientious objection,” opines author Norman Thomas, “...(is) a challenge to the basic ideas of men and their instinctive obediences on which the philosophy of the modern state and the practice of modern war are built” (1927: 3). Indeed, in some cases, participating in war ceases to be, or never is, an option. “Pacifism” and “conscientious objection” to violence are two distinct anti-war positions founded on very similar ideas. On the one hand, pacifism is “moral opposition to war” and encapsulates a broad range of positions, from absolute pacifism to selective or pragmatic grounds against a particular conflict (Borchert 2006). Pacifists often work towards achieving peace. Conscientious objection, as mentioned before, is simply an objection to participation in war. The manifold rationalities for choosing pacifism are often the same as those given for conscientious objection. Thus, a few themes emerge in pacifist and CO literature for the legitimization of these positions, including:

- religious (faith denounces use of violence as a policy tool)
- anti-war (against war in general)
- political (against the ruling party’s politics)
- socialist (international brotherhood mentality)
- humanitarian (killing people is morally wrong)
- individualist (for those who do not fit cleanly into another category)
- absolute pacifism (Kantian, Gandhian, MLK - moral basis)
- epistemological pacifism (impossible to know sufficiently to warrant killing humans)
- pragmatic pacifism (traces empirical failure of war to accomplish anything)
- nuclear pacifism (social and ecological considerations of modern warfare)

In recent American conscientious objection movements, the justifications for objection often fit neatly into one of the above categories. Yet, in studying numerous CO cases in relation to the current conflict in Iraq, I have discerned a further category. Many of today's Iraq war COs cite the illegality of the American invasion as their justification for seeking this status. Thus, a classification of "juridical" or "legal" must be amended to the above list.

WWI and WWII – Some Perspective (in Brief)

Conscientious objectors were present in all of the U.S.'s 20th century major conflicts. For example, of the 2,810,296 enlisted soldiers in the United States military, 3,989 personnel filed as COs during World War I (Thomas 1927). A strain of international brotherhood, or the socialist category listed above, underpinned the philosophy of a large portion of these COs, more so than in any other American conflict. While the overwhelming majority of these COs were Christian pacifists (10-11), they often questioned the moral limits of state control over the individual; after all, for them, god as an authority takes precedence over the state. With the Christian faith raising the question of the limits of state authority, in the end, many COs decided that the state should exercise control over the common good, not the consciences of men (8-9). It was up to the individual to decide if he should fight or not.

To be sure, many WWI COs based their decisions on precepts of their faith. Maurice Hess, for example, professed his willingness to endure imprisonment, torture and death "rather than to participate in war and military service." Hess, like many of his fellow COs, was willing to endure persecution as a true soldier of Christ, and not of the American government (Thomas 1927: 26). Yet perhaps just as often Christianity was invoked, so too was solidarity with the global, working class.

Carl Haessler exemplified much of the WWI CO population, invoking the language of international camaraderie when choosing not to fight. At his court martial, Haessler, a former Rhodes Scholar and philosophy professor, stated, "...America's participation in the World War was unnecessary, of doubtful benefit (if any) to the country and to humanity, and accomplished largely, though not exclusively, through the pressure of the Allied and American commercial imperialists" (Thomas 1927: 24-5). Combining his religious and political convictions to justify his resistance to fighting, Roger Baldwin eloquently proclaimed, "I do not believe in the use of physical force as a method of achieving any end, however good." He felt himself representative of a larger struggle "against the political state itself, against exploitation, militarism, imperialism, authority in all forms..." (27-8). At a time when socialist principles enjoyed a broad audience in the United States, those asked to fight for their country decried imperialist exercises in the name of solidarity with their working class, Christian comrades afield.

World War II saw the galvanization of the American spirit, mobilizing the entire country to fight a two-front war. Volunteerism amongst the "Greatest Generation" to fight the "Great War" was high, pressuring the decisions of conscientious objectors who may have otherwise opted out of fighting in any other

conflict. While WWII saw its fair share of COs, the way many of them approached the issue differed than their brethren from the previous war. Rather than adopt a wholly, non-participatory stance, many opted for the title of “conscientious cooperator.” At the time, “it was an honor to serve god and country,” said WWII CO Desmond Doss (Benedict 2007). WWII COs were not “political objectors” because they felt the war was justified; yet, largely due to religious convictions, these soldiers could not bring themselves to personally kill another human.

Harry Truman presented the Congressional Medal of Honor to Desmond Doss, the only conscientious objector ever to receive the nation’s highest military honor. Invoking the Christian tenet of “thou shall not kill,” Doss, like many of his fellow COs, filed for conscientious “cooperator” status, deciding to serve as a medic rather than a soldier. “I was saving life... because I couldn’t imagine Jesus out there with a gun,” Doss recalled. Like many of his contemporaries, Doss told his superiors that in battle he would be right beside them helping the effort, and that he was “willing to go to the front line to save life, not take life” (Benedict 2007). In short, because the U.S.’ engagement WWII was seen as just, COs dropped the mantle of international solidarity and justified their stance on Christian faith.

Vietnam

More often than any other American (or foreign) invasion/occupation, the debacle in Iraq is compared to the Vietnam War. The mainstream press has certainly jumped on this “Iraq as Vietnam” bandwagon. *USA Today* highlighted the comparison before the invasion (Moniz 2003). “Bush Accepts Iraq-Vietnam War Comparison,” ran one headline in *The Guardian* (Tran 2006), and writing for the *Washington Post*, Thomas Ricks drew similar comparisons (2006). Intellectuals got on board too: Ronald Bruce St. John, a widely published expert on Mid-East affairs, penned an article titled, “Sorry, Mr. President, but Iraq Looks a Lot like Vietnam,” for a think tank publication (2004). Whether there is a parallel to be drawn, in terms of military strategy, tactics, the anti-war movement, press coverage and propaganda, or any number of fronts, is a topic for another paper. What is of interest here is whether there are similarities to be teased out of the conscientious objector movement. For instance, are the rationales behind the filings for CO status similar between the Vietnam and Iraq conflicts?

The American military did its best to dehumanize the Vietnamese people. In the eyes of American soldiers, the “inhuman” Vietnamese were “gooks” or “slopes,” and everyone, even the children, innocent or not, were VC (Viet Cong) or VC-sympathizers. The military “concocted such phrases as ‘kill-ratios,’ ‘search and destroy,’ ‘free-fire zones,’ and ‘secure areas,’” in order to “mask the reality of their combat policy in Vietnam,” recalled Army CO Edward Sowders (Davis 2002). More than just a policy, this denigrating mindset underscored the very psychology of those running the war. “The Oriental does not put the same high price on life as does the Westerner,” pontificated General William Westmoreland. For the Oriental, “life is plentiful, life is cheap in the Orient...,” and in Oriental philosophy, “life is not important” (Davis 2002).

Issues of race and class dominated the discourse of resistance amongst conscientious objectors. Largely, those who fought in Vietnam were people of color and the white, working class poor. “Why do poor people have to go into the military for a college education, or for a job?” asked CO Michael Simmons (2008). Ironically, while the opposition to a supposed, imperialist endeavor in Vietnam sought to unite the working class in the U.S. with those around the world, there were divisions within the peace contingent at home. No “white” peace groups would help Simmons, for example, because, it was thought, his being black would “dilute” the “white, upper-middle class” driven CO action in the U.S. (2008). With race and class divisions apparent at home it was difficult to link the war-resister campaign to a larger, international movement.

A number of individuals, because of their celebrity stature, stood above the rest when they took the torch of war resistance. Martin Luther King, Jr. perhaps the most eloquent of this group, fought against the popular current of Vietnamese-dehumanization to reveal the war for what he saw it as: a war against the poor. Seeking “worldwide fellowship” Dr. King sought to close real and perceived racial and class divisions in his opposition to the war. In order to get on the “right side of the world revolution,” King corrected his own habit of not speaking against violence at home without speaking against violence abroad (April 30, 1967). Class conscious and a “preacher by calling,” Dr. King listed seven reasons he was against the war in Vietnam:

- 1) Poverty connection – the war took away from programs for the poor at home;
- 2) Only the poor are sent to fight;
- 3) Violence cannot be used to solve problems, at home and abroad;
- 4) America can be better;
- 5) Felt the burden of the Nobel Peace Prize;
- 6) Believed deeply in the peaceful ministry of Jesus Christ and his teachings;
- 7) International solidarity and brotherhood (April 4, 1967)

Disappointed in the militaristic and racist policies of his home country, King decried American policies that spend more on military than social programs. A country, he said, that behaves as such approaches nothing less than “spiritual death” (April 20, 1967).

A truer conscientious objector, in that he outright refused military service, was Muhammad Ali. Considering his chosen profession as a boxer, Ali was not exactly a pacifist. Much like Dr. King though, Ali viewed the war in Vietnam through the prisms of class and race. As fierce as he was in the boxing ring, Ali pulled no punches in voicing his opposition to participating in a war on the other side of the globe. “I couldn’t see myself taking part in nothing where I would help and aid in any way, shooting and killing these Asiatic,

dark, black people, who haven't called me 'nigger,' haven't lynched me. They haven't deprived me of freedom and equality. They haven't assassinated my leaders," he cried out (Jacobs 2002). How, he wondered, was he expected to free the people of South Vietnam while his own people were being abused at home in Kentucky? Indeed, Ali harbored resentment against "white power," segregation, and inequality. "No nation, no people can be free when they have no land. And we are a whole nation of twenty-two million without a toothpick factory" he once professed (2002).

Ali, a converted Muslim, also cited religious principles for declining to join the United States military. Acknowledging his faith allowed Ali to obey the law of the land as long as it did not conflict with Muslim precepts; he once boldly affirmed the "draft is another thing that's against my beliefs" (Jacobs 2002). Declining to join the army (after being drafted) Ali declared he would rather face death than denounce Islam or violate the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, a powerful leader in the Nation of Islam.

Despite their extraordinary positions as leaders in American life and culture, King and Ali represented the views of a large swath, if not the majority, of Vietnam War resisters, including conscientious objectors. Their objections were illustrated by combining religious doctrine and concerns over American, neo-imperialist ambitions in South East Asia. If these COs had to be compared to previous, American COs, their ideas would find intellectual and spiritual comfort with those opposed to fighting in WWI—not with those fighting in the Middle East today. Vietnam era conscientious objector Bill Evers illuminates the generational and intellectual gap between his compatriots and today's war resisters: "I have had to learn that my experiences are ancient history to the students I see in the college classroom today," he laments (Evers 2006: 6). By contrast, Iraq War COs, many of whom continue the tradition of citing religious beliefs as a condition for their position, have also carved out a new approach in this pacifist tradition.

Iraq

Since March 2003, tens of thousands of American soldiers have gone AWOL (absent without leave), but not all have done so because they are anti-Iraq war. 25,000 soldiers have deserted their posts so far, and the number rises each year. To put this in perspective: "At the height of the Vietnam War in 1971, 33,000 military personnel ...had deserted" (Ehrenreich 2008; Wright and Dixon 2008: 139). The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports between 2002 and 2006, 425 conscientious objector applications had been processed (2007). Further, "of the 425 applications... 224 (53 percent) were approved; 188 (44 percent) were denied; and 13 (3 percent) were pending, withdrawn, closed, or no information was provided."

Religious sensibilities often motivate the conscientious objectors of Iraq. Christian soldiers, like Mark Wilkerson, quote passages from the Bible in which Jesus intones the promise of peace or praises peacemakers, and they take to heart the dictum, "love thy neighbor" (2008: 175; Tonn 2004). And despite being denied his conscientious objector status, army medic Agustin Aguayo refused to deploy to Iraq. To do so, he argued, "would be taking part in organized killing and condoning war missions and operations, even

though I object, on the basis of my religious training and belief, to participating in any war” (2008: 169). These are just two examples of how the Christian faith still plays a significant role in steering soldiers toward conscientious objection.

Conscientious objectors opposed to the Iraq invasion on religious grounds were not only Christian. Abdullah Webster, for one, affirmed, “My faith forbids me to participate in an unjust war.” A convert to Islam, Webster maintained his religion “prohibited him from participating in any aggressive war, or in any oppression or injustice to Muslims or non-Muslims” (2008: 153). Yet, Aidan Delgado’s religious objection to the war presents the most fascinating religious, CO case study. A student of Buddhism, Delgado sought to leave the army and the Iraq war based on Buddhist teachings. A man who, previous to his deployment would not consider killing animals or insects, let alone people (2007: 33), Delgado could not stand the constant “dehumanization of the enemy.” The regular bombardment of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment from the American military, including slurs such as “towelheads,” “ragheads,” “terrorists,” and “hajji” are reminiscent of the ugly bigotry of the Vietnam era’s epithets “Charlie” and “gook.” Delgado and other religiously-minded COs could not handle such negative disposition.

Delgado’s position was strengthened by his assignment to Abu Ghraib prison. For instance, on hearing that unarmed prisoners were shot and killed at Abu Ghraib (4 dead, 12 injured), he recorded in his diary: “I feel the last ounce of my attachment to [his unit] wither and disappear. I’m not one of these people. I’m not one of *them* anymore. What happened today was wrong: shortsighted and trigger happy at best, and downright vicious, at worst. From here on out, I don’t want any part of what we’re doing at Abu Ghraib” (Delgado 2007: 152-3). Like his fellow, religiously-focused COs, Delgado could not abandon his religious principles, despite strong feelings to stay with his brothers-in- arms. In a written report surely characteristic of the hundreds of others religious CO applications, Captain George T. Ferguson IV, wrote of Delgado:

He stated that it is not a preference but rather an imperative that he leaves because military service places him in a moral quandary. [Specialist] Delgado also believes it is rigorously important for him to make a public statement. He believes a religious sentiment is not something you can put off, he works everyday to support our organization that is not congruent with his beliefs (Delgado 2007: 130).

To be sure, a goodly number of Iraq war COs (Debartolo 2003; Jashinski 2008) also espouse humanitarian and pacifist reasons for voicing their opposition to America’s war efforts overseas. “I have come to the conclusion that there are no valid arguments for the destructive forces of war” stated army CO Kevin Benderman. Moreover, humanity “should evolve to a higher mindset” of conflict resolution because “war is the ultimate destruction and waste of humanity” (Benderman 2008: 150, 152). In the same vein, Marine CO Stephen Funk proclaims, “I refuse to kill. I object to war because I believe that it is impossible to achieve peace through violence.” Indeed, Funk confesses, “I would rather face the military’s punishment than act against my beliefs” (2008: 153). Still others, disturbed and appalled by the atrocities they witnessed or committed, turned away from war-making to embrace humanitarian ideals (Wright 2008: 181-2, 185-7). “I left the war in Iraq because the American Army made no distinction between [combatants and

civilians]” remarked one (Key 2008: 180). Having seen the military from the inside, first hand, Sunny Raleigh of the Navy found war to be disheartening and morally objectionable” and determined that “... peace is the only method for solving any conflict” (2006: 4). Thus, for many, seeing the horrors of war up close is enough to provoke a change in sentiment.

Beyond the usual, religiously-slanted or humanitarian-based justifications for becoming a conscientious objector, the number of COs in the Iraq conflict legitimating their position on the basis of international law is surprising. For its uniqueness and the evolution in thought it represents, the juridical claim in contemporary American CO discourse is worthy of attention.

In just a cursory review of Iraq war conscientious objectors, an exceptional number appeal to international law to justify their stance: in my rudimentary research, I could not find a single case from previous conflicts in which a CO made the same claim. Beyond lacking “any high ground in the topography of morality,” Pablo Paredes sings a typical refrain: “I am convinced that the current war in Iraq is illegal” (Paredes 2008: 146). “If you were given an order to participate in an unlawful occupation that is resulting in the deaths of thousands of innocent people with no justifiable cause, would you be able to live with yourself if you carried out that order?” asked Army CO Brandon Hughey (Wright and Dixon 2008: 179-80). Ghanim Khalil, a believer in Sufism, expressed his dismay at American policy toward Iraq: “Just because you sign a contract doesn’t mean that you’ll go along with everything you’re told, especially if the orders are illegal under international law” (Khalil 2003). “Refusing and resisting this war was my moral duty, a moral duty that called me to take a principled action. I failed to fulfill my moral duty as a human being, and instead, I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier,” stated CO Camilo Mejia. Afforded “moral clarity” while on leave from Iraq, Mejia realized “I was part of a war that I believed was immoral and criminal, a war of aggression, a war of imperial domination” (Mejia 2008: 142).

As of late March, 2008, there were a known 225 American military COs seeking refuge in Canada. Jeffrey House, a lawyer representing many of them, explained why so many had fled to America’s northern neighbor: “They tend to say they aren’t opposed to all wars in principle—just to the one they were ordered to fight. ...a war of aggression” (Ehrenreich 2008). In defending these COs in Canadian courts, House’s argument:

...relied largely on his reading of international law. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees lays out a slender possibility for relief. Mere disagreement with the ‘political justification for a particular military action’ is not sufficient. The action must be ‘condemned by the international community as contrary to basic rules of conduct.’ Only in that case can punishment for desertion or draft evasion ‘be regarded as persecution.’ (Ehrenreich 2008).

House appears to be acting in accordance with a general trend. “Many international attorneys and military personnel see the war in Iraq as an illegal act of aggression, which is a war crime. This belief is at the heart of the actions of most of the resisters,” claim Wright and Dixon (2008: 139). While the Afghanistan engagement met criteria of just war under international law, Iraq, understood in the light of the Nuremberg

Principles of the Geneva Conventions, “would be a war of aggression, a war crime” (xii). Thus, while those who join the military know they may be ordered to war by the country’s leadership, “when given an order to perform an illegal action, servicemen and women are duty bound to refuse” (138). Many are doing just this.

Other COs in Iraq focus on the legal issues surrounding more specific elements of, or tactics used in the broader war. Rick Clousing, an army interrogator, for example, was concerned about brutality of tactics, and the ambiguous legality of particular, interrogation actions (Wright and Dixon 2008: 170-3). “The mentality is to shoot anyone who gets close to you, and especially those who look like insurgents. I know that killing people just because they are of a different race is wrong no matter what the rules of engagement are. That is why I left” declares Marine Chris Magaoay (182). Indeed, the ambiguous nature surrounding official orders of who should or should not be shot was a factor contributing to the decision of many to opt for CO status (184-5). “I believed that if I returned to Iraq and followed military procedures and orders, that I would eventually kill innocent people. I believed it was my human right to choose not to do so, and my military duty to resist this war,” professes Army CO Darrell Anders (183).

Beyond the perceived unjustness of the Iraq invasion on the macro (a state making war on another without provocation) and micro (deciding between civilians and combatants) levels, soldiers are vitriolic in their indictment of American leadership. A lieutenant in the U.S. Army, Ehren Watada, for example, denounces “...elected officials [who] intentionally manipulated the evidence presented to Congress, the public, and the world to make the case for war” (2008: 164). Officers swear an oath to the Constitution, not to an individual, Watada reminded military veterans present at his 2006 lecture. Officers swear to fight “against all enemies, foreign and domestic, [but] what if elected leaders became the enemy? Whose orders do we follow? The answer is the conscience that lies in each soldier, each American, and each human being. Our duty to the Constitution is an obligation, not a choice” he argues (Wright and Dixon 2008: 165). In sum, the citations of illegality for the Iraq war, be it in the broader realm or at the individual level of engagement, represent an interesting, emergent trend in the conscientious objector movement in the United States military.

Conclusion

Decidedly absent from the discourse amongst Iraq War COs, are sentiments of international brotherhood. The dearth of solidarity is one characteristic distinguishing today’s generation of COs from their Vietnam era predecessors. The other, the insistence of citing domestic or international law, is another, more illuminating contrast. The tendency to reference juridical reasons for the anti-war stance is not only unique amongst modern CO discourse; it marks an interesting evolution in the mindset of generations coming of age in a highly networked, globalized world.

One reason for the increase in juridical reasoning for conscientious objectors in the Iraq war may be that

Generation X, Y, “Millennial” (or whatever the latest generation of youth is termed), is more open to and aware of the rest of the world than previous generations have been. In an era where news and images of other people is instantly accessible via television and the internet, awareness to the interconnectivity of the world paired with access to more knowledge from more sources may be contributing to a hesitancy to rush into war without international, legal (i.e. United Nations) support. While further inquiry is warranted, the COs of the Iraq war could very well be setting a precedent for future generations of American conscientious objectors.

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Virtuous Victims of an Enlightenment Paradox.

By Philip Santa-Maria

Benjamin Franklin takes time to address two different audiences in his famous autobiography. Part One is dedicated to his son William. But the rest of the *Autobiography* reads much like a pocket guide for the youth of the 19th century. Franklin wrote his guide to, “benefit the young reader by showing him from my example” (FPR 46). Part Two focuses more on Franklin’s “bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection” (148). Franklin’s passion for passing on his neo-classical virtues was so strong that he actually wanted to write a book exclusively on the subject titled *The Art of Virtue* (79). He states clearly that he wished to conquer his own natural inclinations (71). It is in chapter five of *The Autobiography* that Franklin devises the moral skeleton of the rest of his book, that which was to benefit the young reader.

By creating virtuous standards in *The Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin developed a sound and palpable benchmark for the enlightened modern man. Consequently, Franklin bifurcated the spirit of man into malfunctioning myopic halves. The enlightened man favored reason, virtue, and liberty. However, it is in the proliferation of enlightenment ideals, and the insistence that reason and virtue were the only means to liberation, that the structure of modernity crumbles upon an unstable and paradoxical foundation. It is modernity’s ignorance of the necessity to balance man’s logical and empirical sides with one’s passionate and desiring aspects.

Franklin constructs a streamlined list of virtues that are founded upon the teachings of Socrates, neglecting the need to embrace one’s own natural inclinations toward pleasure. By his efforts to liberate the youth, he creates a morality that requires a system of discipline actually hindering the natural liberty of man. It is this self-cancellation that modernity replicates—displacing an authority in the name of liberty and reason, which in turn creates a new authority where reason is the exclusive authority, thereby never truly attaining liberty, only a new disciplinary system. Franklin’s list of virtues is also a system that posits moral behavior as the means to attain heavenly reward as well as honor and status.

Similar to Socratic Greek culture, Franklin emphasized reason and repressed pleasure, favored intellect over passion. While attempting to implement a disciplinary system of virtue as a means of liberty, he simultaneously creates a paradoxical authoritative system suppressing individuality, which is comparable to other modern systems of economic behavior and morality

This was essentially a proposal for the revival of Socratic morality—the end result of the clash between two types of cultures. The first would be the objective knowledge culture where scientific and technological development, utilization of progress to overpower nature for man’s benefit, and the ideals of logic and reason were revered. The culture that would lose footing was the subjective, personal, emotional culture (Kellner 5). It was a bout between Apollonian and Dionysian ways of life. The new culture did not advocate introspection or an interrogation of feeling, rather it endorsed the concept that no matter how we feel there is a model behavior expounded through the “reasonable man”.

Franklin’s thirteen virtues mirror Socratic ideals, which propose reason as the basis for virtue, and virtue as the path to happiness. The Socratic behavioral standards, which Franklin preferred and tried to promote, favored virtue over vice: temperance and sincerity over ambition; silence, moderation, and tranquility, over passion; frugality, industry, and chastity, over pleasure; and humility over pride (Franklin 72).

The last virtue on his list of thirteen is humility—be like Jesus and Socrates, Franklin suggests. Franklin acknowledges that pride is the most difficult natural passion a man can stifle, and also states that it was his greatest vice. Coincidentally, or possibly due to a manifestation of his true beliefs, it was not originally on the list. Clarence Darrow once remarked that it is easier to fight for your beliefs than to live up to them. It is not that Franklin didn’t live up to his beliefs in virtue, but he admittedly stated that even if he did live a life of humility, it would be to no avail because he would be too proud of the achievement (Franklin 79). In essence, his virtues were less commandments than benchmarks for which men should always strive. They are the elements of human rationality. Embodied, they are the reasonable man in his perfect form, that of which Socrates spoke.

Prior to Socrates’ contributions to Greek social and civic behavior, Greek culture embraced ambition, passion, pleasure and pride. In fact, these human characteristics produced distinctive contributions to all fields of Greek life (Kellner 2). The means by which these natural human characteristics created rich culture was through the *agon*. The *agon*, which means contest, fostered competition among the Greek citizenry. Nietzsche explains that it was through competition that excellence, or *arête*, was attained (Kellner 7).

It was the practice of these attributes, later considered immoral, and not solely modern virtues, that nourished the fertile soil of civilization. It was the excellent man who embodied dual character. It was the balance of reason and passion, the capability to think logically without repressing desire for pleasures (Nietzsche 10). Nietzsche spoke of Socrates as the “first fencing master of the noble circles of Athens” (Kellner 12). He said this because Socrates discovered a new type of *agon*, one of reason, philosophy, and thought. Socrates did this by appealing to the Greek impulse that was drawn to competition. However, the desires to which Socrates appealed were the same desires he labeled vices.

Ambition, passion, pleasure, and pride were vices to Franklin as well. He separated the good from the evil. And in the face of his belief in liberty, he made suggestions on how to live a proper life by creating a new public virtue—a behavior system with the interest of civic duty and individuality. Benjamin Franklin gives credit to the virtues of frugality and industry for relieving him from his, “remaining debt, and producing

affluence and independence” (73). These virtues did not originate with Franklin.

These virtues actually developed as characteristics resulting from Protestantism—specifically Calvinism, and notions of predestination and unconditional election. These concepts essentially dictate that virtue, merit, and faith have no effect on one’s path to heaven. From the beginning of time, these tenets affirm, God has chosen particular people whose spirits are inherently deserving. This idea establishes religious castes: those who are going to heaven, and those who are not, no matter what. However, the only evidence of whether someone has been elected is his or her action here on Earth. The argument is that the elected will behave virtuously due to their inherent selection (Swingewood 25).

Sociologist Max Weber wrote the quintessential text on Protestantism and its effects on economic behavior. In the text, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber theorizes that Protestantism embodied the spirit of modern capitalism by providing ideas and motivation through which social change occurred. Protestantism rejected luxury and instant gratification on this world. By performing good works, they convinced themselves that they were destined for salvation, which in turn was the means for self-belief (Swingewood 26). This required self-discipline and self-supervision. The emphasis was on the individual. It was necessary for the individual to internalize the values of the Protestant ethic and translate them into social and economic principles (Weber 280). It was understood that, “Frugal populations are necessary maintain freedom only,” (Weber 282).

The Protestant Ethic in Western Europe caused capitalism to emerge in the most complex and successful manner on Earth. Only in Western Europe did the system of capitalism include systematic organization and methodology, rational specialization and expertise, and a social structure in which all aspects of society were modified by frugality and industrious behavior. Weber theorizes that modernity began with the “progressive rationalization of institutions and culture,” where autonomous, “value spheres emerge creating industrial specialization” (328). From Protestantism and Calvinism, the virtues of a divinely elected Christian transformed into a rationality that was insinuated into state, cultural, and personal behavior. Weber concludes that Protestant virtues disenchanting and repressed a Protestant population that not only emphasized individuality and liberation but also laid the foundation for modern capitalism (330). This is another example of the paradox of modernity. Populations who seek freedom through the discourse of liberation are repressed through the discourse of discipline.

By including the virtues of frugality and industry in his list of thirteen, Franklin hoped that a reader who desired success, freedom, and affluence would undergo the strict self-discipline that is required to behave in a socially acceptable manner. Unfortunately, he was at the same time extending the paradoxical shroud of modernity to the 19th century youth he wished to guide.

In *The Way to Wealth*, Franklin elaborates the necessity of not only industry, but also frugality—not only working hard, but also conserving the fruits of one’s labor (Skousen 37). He accentuates the loss of liberty for those who are not frugal by their enslavement to debt. Therefore, he argues that self-discipline and sacrifice may be self-repressive. However, through his repression—that is, the willful abandonment of

one's natural liberty to pleasure—the citizen maintains liberty from banks and creditors.

If, after undergoing self-discipline, the only authority is the self, then the reader assuages his desire for pleasure by spontaneous good will; he is truly liberated because discipline comes from within. This reader would be a prime example of Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, a person whose behavior stems from a sense of duty removed from any consequences and rewards (Kant 30). However, the argument against this position is simple. Virtues exist to guide humanity to a specified outcome. They are separate from the idea of good will. Virtues are behavioral guidelines for the person who wishes to gain material or metaphysical reward. Subscribers to Franklin's virtues are told that by living up to the thirteen standards, they will gain affluence, comfort, education, respect, and liberty. This system is not spontaneous but merely a means to an end.

By subscribing to Franklin's virtues, the reader disciplines his or her self because of external advisement. The external force is the authority. These liberties are earned through behavioral modification. They are not Lockean natural rights. Rather, they are positivist entitlements garnered through sacrifice of natural rights. Thus, the reader becomes a slave to the external discipline, sacrificing liberation for the sake of future liberation through affluence, respect, and education.

Even though Franklin rarely took part in partisan controversy, his hands were not clean of creating it, even unknowingly. In his article "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pain and Pleasure", a young Franklin argued that God was completely benevolent and thus would and could not include vice in his creation, essentially saying that God took a hands off approach to his creation where "good and evil" were man-made. He later burned many copies of the dissertation in fear of misuse and corruption of his ideas (Skousen 12). He was therefore aware of the dangers of published arguments concerning morals, religion, and civics. This is important in the context of Franklin's awareness of the potential paradoxical elements embedded in his list of virtues. He wrote much outside *The Autobiography* about virtue including letters to his friends, enemies, and family members.

Benjamin Franklin wrote a letter to his grandson Benny on September 25, 1780. In the letter, he offers advice to his grandson by comparing what he names as, "two sorts of people" (Skousen 218). He uses these examples to instill a passion for education in his grandson. The first type of person took advantage of schooling opportunities to increase their knowledge. The second type of person either had no opportunity to learn, or was given the opportunity but turned it down. The first type of person now lives comfortably and is virtuous. The second type of person is vicious, indigent, and must work hard to obtain the basics, or will face starvation (Skousen 218). In this letter, Franklin exemplifies the duality of modernity. One can liberate oneself through education, become successful, and be free of the suffering of everyday life. However, to take this road requires much discipline in a moral system developed by the individual's master, be it a teacher, the church, or the state. Critics of modernity and the enlightenment postulate that the discourse of liberation and the discourse of discipline are binary opposites existing inside the concept of modernity (Wagner 74).

Obedience to a disciplinary system as a means to success inhibits one's individuality. Therefore, critics may ask if there is any liberation at all under such a system. The second type of person in Franklin's parable grew up questioning authority and rejecting any form of discipline. Thinking for himself, the second type of person liberated himself from his master and chose not to be educated through the accepted method of society. And through this rejection of discipline, the second type of person now exists in a society that carries burdens of discomfort, dirtiness, overwork and underpay. Critics such as Nietzsche and Weber would say the second type of person is a slave to society.

Max Weber and Friedrich Nietzsche both understood that the purpose of modernity was increasing individuality. They understood the argument that freedom was a natural right. They also witnessed the effects of the discourse of liberation in science – autonomy in scientific research; economics – the liberation of the market from authoritative state control; and politics – the French and American revolutions. Yet, they were observant enough to spot and dissect the aspects of self-cancellation in modernity (Dallmayr 4). These aspects create the paradox in Franklin's letter to his grandson.

Weber criticized bureaucracy. He said that achievements of the bureaucracies of church and state transform the destiny of human beings by defining success and limiting the ways to reach success (cited in Wagner 64). The more generalized and uniformed modern practices became, the more they formed an "iron cage" which undermined the project. This in effect undermined the ability to even realize modernity as a concept. Weber stated, "It is if we actually ought to become men who require order and nothing but order, men who grow nervous and cowardly if order falters momentarily, and helpless if uprooted from their adaptation to the order" (cited in Wagner 66).

Nietzsche takes a swing at Christianity's form of individualism, stating that it undermines itself by cancelling morality from one's social life (Kellner 11). This criticism applies to any moral system where virtues and individuality are together cherished. And it especially applies to Franklin's advice to his grandson and his thirteen virtues.

The nature of modernity as it is presented in *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* can be critiqued through Weberian rationalism, deconstructed through Nietzsche's proto-Derridian quest for self-destructing paradoxical binaries, and it can be validated by similarities to Socrates' pursuit of happiness through reason and virtue. However, Bernard Mandeville's views of the virtue systems created by society's elite foreground the evolutionary nature of such systems.

A naturalist, Mandeville pegs modernity, reason, and the enlightenment virtues of Western Europe as nothing more than the same authoritarian rule merely masquerading as a solution to corruption. His evolutionary criticism of modernity in *The Fable of Bees* unveils disturbing motivations in creating systems of virtue tied to physical survival of humanity. Mandeville then justifies the system of virtue and vice as a grand illusion necessary for social stability.

Mandeville, a contemporary of Franklin, lived in a time of rampant neo-Socratic reason. Franklin, for

example, was an admirer of Socrates. Franklin's thirteenth virtue states simply to be like Socrates who disregarded self-serving pleasures as vices. As a naturalist, acknowledging that man's behavior is governed by both his reason and his passion, Mandeville sought to revalidate the classical tradition of passion and pleasure authored in Greece by Epicurus and in Rome by Lucretius and his sole text *De rerum natura*, not as an exclusive Hedonist lifestyle, but to understand the duality of man's behavior.

Essentially, Mandeville said that to understand actual human motives we must supplement ethics with human impulse. If society continued to view impulse as a vice, Mandeville argued, society would automatically promote self-deception (Hundert 17). Benjamin Franklin's system of virtues viewed impulsive behavior towards short-term pleasures as the epitome of vice. Mandeville viewed lists of virtues as unnatural. Judging a person based on a list of thirteen social preferences, which strive to limit man's natural desire for vice, misrepresents the reality of human nature, and adulterates of the scientific study of man's actions.

The Fable of Bees used physiological rather than moral examples to illustrate man's passionate system of behavioral governance. Man is composed of many tiny organs that could compromise the whole body's health. Similarly, man is composed of various passions that will take over man's behavior if triggered. Man shares cognitive capacities of other animals. The ability to create a social hierarchy is not an exclusive human trait. Bees, for example, operate through a hierarchical order of power. They are born into their role in the hive (Hundert 19).

What is unique about man is his intellect, his ability to reroute and redirect others for his own personal gain. Humans naturally act and react by desire seeking what is in their best interest. Intellect suppresses humanity. By implementing a system that suppresses selfishness and desire, we create a civilized society for the benefit of all (Hundert 20). The elite minority who uses intellect to herd and domesticate the majority of the population neutralizes antisocial behavior. Mandeville sees this process as an evolutionary characteristic. It creates nations and states and potentially insures liberty and security.

Furthermore, in the face of the greatest enlightenment philosophers, Mandeville courageously offers an alternative explanation for the proliferation and accumulation of wealth and power. Benjamin Franklin proposes that if readers follow the virtues of sincerity, frugality, and industry, they will reap the benefits of freedom, prosperity, comfort, and influence. Mandeville determines that the benefits desired by the reader will never be attained through acts of virtue. Alternatively, he asserts human ego, hubris, exploitation, and deceit are the true means of public welfare (Hundert 17).

French Enlightenment philosophers Voltaire and Montesquieu echo Mandeville's naturalist theory. Their succinct aphorisms clarify the sociological behavior described in Mandeville's theory of man's inherent tendency to corrupt and repress. In *The Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire writes, "Egoism is the instrument of our preservation," (74). In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu concurs with Voltaire, "Greedy citizens contribute more to society than virtuous" (51).

As Weber established, virtuous behavior in Protestant life shaped the behavior in various social spheres

in Western Europe. Continuing with his argument that human virtues were incomplete and invalid, Mandeville claims that Christianity contaminated the dynamics of social life. The church would claim virtue to hide its own selfishness and gain the respect of its subordinates. This is an example of humanity's keenness for deceit. However, this hypocrisy stabilized society and brought peace and order rather than anarchical chaos.

Just as humans tame other animals, the elite minority tames the passions of the savage majority. Mandeville criticizes as absurd the Lockean view that the state was established through rational discussion to protect liberty. Once the state was established amongst Western European modern capitalism, the vice of scrambling for wealth and power began to change. All of the sudden, the accumulation of wealth was a tenant of national prosperity. Rather than curb corruption, the already corrupted state just changed the definition of "corruption".

It was no longer a virtue to reject wealth and wait for reward in the next life. Virtue, which Mandeville sees as subjective anyhow, cloaks the wise politicians who, when hidden from public view, indulge in vices which allow them to retain power and authority. Mandeville thus argued that morality and virtue are subjective systems used by elites to govern the behavior of the majority for the benefit of all. Benjamin Franklin called Mandeville's work "entertaining, yet facetious" (Hundert 15). Mandeville would have seen Benjamin Franklin's list of virtues as a system of control formed by a member of the elite minority to suppress the natural desires, passions, and pleasures of the majority for personal gain and the welfare of the public sphere.

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin is a short, broad account of a few stories in Franklin's life that helped him form his ethical system of virtue. He encounters various characters, judges them, and describes their virtues and vices, offering examples of moral behavior. His thirteen virtues are given, repeatedly and in italics, throughout the autobiography, framing the text that he says he would practice daily. But he never really examines how his own life story would differ if he lived his life in the pursuit of the satisfaction of desire rather than social expectations.

His manner in disclosing more information in *The Completed Autobiography* is very different. Where *The Completed Autobiography* is written as a memoir to a general audience, the shorter *Autobiography* is written to the youth. While *Completed* focuses heavily on Franklin's political interactions as a diplomat during the American Revolution, *Autobiography* illustrates his virtues in economics, friendships and social behavior, and public welfare.

Franklin first authored his thirteen virtues and then built an autobiography around them. He sought to replace the many dogmatic rules with a secular list. There was a strong emphasis on neo-Socratic enlightenment virtues: reason, temperance, justice, industry, and sincerity. He thought these civil and moral ideals were the best to secure liberty and advancement in science. If men followed these virtues, they would become vessels of rationality, seeds of modern civilized society, and bricks for the masonry of a new West.

Indeed, Benjamin Franklin wrote his story around the thirteen virtues in order for the reader to understand the benefits of self-sacrifice and discipline. In no way do I think there is any malicious intent to control the youthful audience. The audience can at any moment shut the book. And I'm sure the only people Benjamin Franklin could have possibly cared about were the ones he knew, especially his family. It's a life well experienced to be passed down, wisdom to save others from becoming victims of bad circumstances.

It cannot be said that Benjamin Franklin followed the footsteps of those like his contemporary Thomas Paine, a figurehead for the American enlightenment, who used pulsating rhetoric to demonstrate that liberty from oppressive governments should be at the forefront of the movement of reason. Franklin was not a radical enlightenment thinker who fought for liberty as the means and the end. His virtues alone demonstrate that the person he strived to be was a man of moderation.

In a way, though Franklin mentions Socrates in his virtues, he does not come off as being as devoted to the ideal of reason as was Socrates. His quest for comfort and self-sufficiency, his mind of scientific observation and advancement, and his belief in the ethics of reciprocity all bring to mind Epicurus. Franklin and Epicurus were also similar in their attitudes towards religion, keeping a distance from the god fearing types of their times. Epicurus is often labeled close to a hedonist, one who lived for maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, but he also warned of the arduous pursuit of love and pleasure, just like Franklin.

However, if we examine not Franklin, but the act of writing *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* and his list of virtues, it becomes evident that Franklin developed the book to guide and steer the young. This is in all honesty an effort to have posthumous influence over the public youth. This attitude, that Franklin has much to offer youth from all over world, the attitude which shows how proud he is of being as virtuous as he could be, leaves his whole effort open to criticism. His effort to discipline children in the hope that they would liberate themselves, while simultaneously acknowledging that children who liberate themselves end up losing their liberty, is the essence of the highly criticized paradox of enlightenment rationalization.

In the name of liberty and individuality, Franklin's interpretation of classical virtue it is a failure from the start. His resurrection of Socratic Greece, which the Age of Reason considered the origin and pinnacle of Western virtue and human perfection, only stifled his attempts to bring about a new liberation of Western Europe and America. Liberating through discipline is an impossible task, a self-refuting ideal. Franklin's quest of arriving at moral perfection is an impossible quest. It cannot be performed without automatic compromise of its integrity. Moreover, Franklin's quest for moral perfection only inhibits and suppresses natural inclinations, that which makes us human. Only in a state of natural liberty can natural inclinations manifest without the judgment of an authority. Franklin's solution is to use virtue to gain and retain honor, education, affluence, comfort, and the trust and respect of society. This is a position gained by intellect. Once attained, one may hide one's pursuit of pleasurable vice from the public eye using the trust and respect gained from virtuous behavior. Therefore, the only true liberation Franklin's virtues provide is liberation from the judgment of the majority using virtue as a tool of social deception.

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Droogs, Electro-Voodoo and Kyborgs: Pastiche, Postmodernism and Kylie Minogue Live.

By Lee Barron

“Do you like what you see?” (Kylie Minogue, ‘Spinning Around,’ 2000).

Given that her career has involved multiple incarnations and personas since its beginning in the late 1980s, it is little surprise that the Australian pop performer Kylie Minogue’s concert performances have a distinctly postmodernist character. In a previous article, ‘The Seven Ages of Kylie Minogue’, I presented a chronologically-structured overview of Minogue’s musical and visual performances, from her beginnings as a ‘cute’ pure pop performer, through her ‘Sex’ and ‘Dance’ phases, through to ‘Gothic,’ Camp,’ ‘Cyber’ and ‘Bardot’ manifestations. In that article, I linked Minogue with postmodernist practices and cultural theory. This article picks up the Minogue cultural ‘story,’ and further explores Minogue’s connections with postmodernism. However, the difference is that within this article I will focus exclusively upon her live performances, and particularly one case study, the *KylieFever2002* tour that was undertaken to promote her 2001 *Fever* Album. Within this article, I will explore the ways in which that concert displayed a distinctive form of postmodernity in terms of its persistent cultural borrowings, and Minogue’s active toying with her performative identity. Hence, I will link postmodernist theorizations of identity with Minogue’s performative approach throughout the concert.

With regard to postmodernism and popular music, Connor (1989) argues that rock music has a claim to be the most representative of postmodern cultural forms, while other commentators identify rap and hip-hop as a key postmodernist musical expression via its habitual use of cultural pastiche and sampling (Strinati, Lemert). However, I will argue that Kylie Minogue’s performance within *KylieFever2002* is a perfect (and deliberate) illustration of the postmodern form within pop music, as evinced by the stylistic strategies employed in the staging, direction, thematic structure and content. The source of this manifest presence of postmodernism stems directly from Minogue’s association with her creative director, William Baker, who, in the design of the concert and costumes actively plundered cinematic and televisual western culture for inspiration and effect, and who also reflexively toys with the Minogue persona, or rather, personas, throughout the course of the performance. Therefore, through a critical analysis of *KylieFever2002*, I will

argue that Kylie Minogue is a quintessential and reflexive postmodern cultural figure.

KylieFever2002: Pop Culture Plundering and the Multi-Mediated Self-Referential Kylie

With regard to Minogue's performing history, the *KylieFever2002* tour would represent, in terms of scale and spectacle, a decisive development in Kylie Minogue's career. As Whiteley states, in the 1990s, Minogue's popularity had appeared to waver, certainly commercially, but 2002 represented a triumphant cultural return, symbolized by her five Brit Awards at the annual UK Music Industry Awards (for which she acted as host in 2009). The abandonment of the more introspective 'Indie' incarnation was driven by a self-reflexive acknowledgement that 'her status within pop music necessitated a return to her earlier fun-image – sexy but clean' (Whiteley 338). Subsequently, 'Indie' and 'Gothic' gave way to the rise of 'Camp Kylie,' the pop persona which would see her ride to the top of the UK charts once more, and which laid the foundations for the commercially-triumphant 'Cyber-Kylie' and her global mega-hit, 'Can't Get You Out Of My Head' in 2001 (Barron).

In this sense, Kylie Minogue's transformative ability to shed performative personas illustrates a social and cultural conception of identity that stresses the primacy of fluidity over fixity in the contemporary consumer world. As Kellner argues, within 'traditional' societies, identity was habitually perceived to be fixed, solid, and stable, a function of predefined social roles. Then, within the 'age of modernity,' identity became more 'mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation. Yet the forms of identity in modernity were also relatively substantial and fixed and identity still comes from a circumscribed set of roles and norms (Hall 141). However, 'from the postmodern perspective, as the pace, extension, and complexity of modern societies accelerate, identity becomes more and more unstable, more and more fragile' a process whereby identity is not reducible to a set of roles (mother, father, brother, sister, occupation) but rather a 'game' 'that one plays, so that one can easily shift from one identity to another' (Hall 153). For Hall, encapsulating the quintessence of this emergent postmodern form of identity and subjectivity:

The Postmodern subject is conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self.' Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about... The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy (277).

Whether valid or not on the wider social and cultural stage, this kind of postmodernist conception of a fantasy-related fluidity of identity does resonate with Kylie Minogue. It would become the essence of her recording image, with each album presenting an alternative 'Kylie,' but, under William Baker's direction,

the postmodernist conception of identity is the very essence of *KylieFever2002*, a concert that represents the Minogue persona as a subject of continual play.

William Baker first met Kylie Minogue in 1994 when working at Vivienne Westwood's clothing boutique, *Flagship*, in London and she visited the boutique. Baker persuaded her to have coffee with him and then 'bombarded her with ideas' (Baker and Minogue 1). He subsequently became her creative director and effectively 'postmodernised' her, a process identifiable from the 'Indie Kylie' period onwards. Certainly, his discussions of Kylie Minogue as a cultural icon are littered with philosophical references, from Plato to Feuerbach (Baker is a theology graduate). As Baker states:

My dabblings in religious theory are not really at odds with my current occupation as Kylie's creative director. For me, there was a latent mystery and power in the language and imagery of religion. To a pop fan and child of the MTV generation, the connections between pop, celebrity and religion seemed obvious. Like religion, pop is an opiate of the masses. Reproductions of pop icons and celebrity idols have replaced religious imagery as the dominant form of iconography in the late twentieth century (Minogue, Baker, Farrow, and Heath 3).

Baker injected philosophical ideas into the creative direction of Minogue's career, as became manifestly apparent within *KylieFever2002*. While the previous, and far more low-key, tour for *Light Years* was dominated by a suitably over-arching camp attitude (befitting the 'Camp Kylie' period), the *KylieFever2002* arena tour, staged on a grander and more spectacular scale, exhibited a deliberately postmodern ethic. Rather than any overarching theme, *KylieFever2002* was a purposefully designed theatrical event, split into seven distinctive 'Acts':

- Act 1: Silvanemesis
- Act 2: Droogie Nights
- Act 3: The Crying Game
- Act 4: Streetstyle
- Act 5: Sex in Venice
- Act 6: Cybertronica
- Act 7: Voodoo Inferno

The concert commences with the faintly camp strains of 'The Hills are Alive' from *The Sound of Music* then *Act 1: Silvanemesis* beings. As the concert starts, dancers begin to thread across the stage wearing metallic helmets which completely obscure their faces. Then, a metallic, silver-armour-clad Kylie

Minogue appears; slowly rising from beneath the stage upon a platform in the guise of the 'Kyborg Queen' (her introduction alludes to Madonna's 'Dita,' which involves a similar entrance from beneath the stage at the beginning of her 1993 *Girlie Show* concert). For the image of the 'Kyborg,' Baker drew his inspiration directly from Fritz Lang's silent classic film, *Metropolis* (1926) and its central female robot, Maria. Similar to Lang's female-machine, Minogue is dressed in a metallic exo-skeleton and breastplate which slowly unfolds and is then shed. Dressed in silver shorts, bra, and metallic-looking thigh-length boots, 'Cyber-Kylie' first walks across the stage, and then begins to dance in a slow, mechanical manner, as she begins to perform the first song of the concert, 'Come Into My World,' drawn from the *Fever* album. Having left behind her Kyborg-guise, she now invokes a series of other science-fiction images. As she sings, she interacts with her robotic dancers in a manner evocative of the Borg Queen from *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996). Additional cultural references within this sequence also include the female Borg character Seven of Nine from *Star Trek: Voyager* and the supporting dancers, with their skintight bodysuits and opaque reflective visors, are styled in accordance with a 1970s Jon Pertwee-era *Doctor Who* episode (MacDonald and Baker). Therefore, if, as Wood argues, postmodernist culture includes 'multiple styles, which are juxtaposed with one another, creating a polyphony of styles', the Silvanemesis sequence of the concert ably demonstrates this process and sets the scene for further polyphony as the performance unfolds (Woods 216).

The Second Act of the concert, *Droogie Nights* extends and develops this postmodern play. Whilst Silvanemesis is landscaped on backscreens showing images of computer grids to convey the cybernetic/sci-fi tone of the Act, *Droogie Nights* is introduced via a rapid succession of images of Beethoven, the relevance of which is revealed as the female dancers emerge from the side of the stage dressed in 'futuristic' 1970s fashions revealing that this sequence of the performance represents a homage to Anthony Burgess' 1962 dystopic novel *A Clockwork Orange* concerning violence, gangs, and the 'curing' of violent tendencies, and especially Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film adaptation. Hence, Kylie returns to the stage to perform 'Spinning Around' dressed as the head-Droog, Alex and is flanked by male dancers who represent her fellow Droog gang, all dressed in the now iconic uniform of white boiler suits and black bowler hats, complete with stick, batons, coshes and even an inflatable 'K,' that alludes (albeit less visually and sexually provocatively) to the sculpture used within the film's infamous rape scene. This sequence demonstrates the performance's boldest postmodernist moment, in which the concert explicitly draws upon textual and visual cues derived from a film which was the focus of an early 1970s media-driven 'moral panic,' a film that was called a 'celluloid cesspool which would destroy the impressionable and the immature' (Petley 92). Arguably, this visibly reinforces the distance Minogue has travelled from *Neighbors* and her Aitken and Waterman 'Cute' musical beginnings, and strives to exemplify her cool, postmodernist status and cultural savvy.

Thus far, the concert demonstrably accords with the cultural magpie quality critically attributed to postmodernism, with its active process of re-working and the emphasis upon a surface borrowing of striking imagery from a text, and the rejection of any ideology or encoded meaning (Humm 146-147). For example, as Von Gunden (1991) points out in relation to the science fiction classic, *Star Wars* (1977), commentators have pointed out the similarities between the end sequence of *Star Wars*, in which Luke Skywalker, Han

Solo and Chewbacca walk between ranks of cheering Rebel troops, with Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* (1935), wherein the images of the film have been appropriated but the ideological meanings and themes have been discarded. And *KylieFever2002* operates in exactly the same postmodernist manner as any associations with violence are over-written in the quest for style, image and 'look.' Ultimately, Kylie looks great in a Droog costume, and that is, in accordance with the creative ethos of the concert, the underlining objective.

Act 3: The Crying Game continues with this intertextual theme; however it takes a very different form, both visually and in terms of the tempo. Within this segment, the Droog-inspired costume is replaced by a demure evening dress to mark a 'ballads section' of the concert. This section of the concert takes its name from the song 'The Crying Game,' originally performed by Boy George, and used prominently in Neil Jordan's 1992 film *The Crying Game*. The issues of artifice and mimicry are central to the film, and it is an inspired choice for the concert, which is also predicated on these concepts. Moreover, it reinforces the maturity of post-Millennial Minogue as this segment of the concert draws upon a film concerning redemption from a life of violence and sexual difference, a film whose narrative concerns 'the love affair of an IRA terrorist and a gay transvestite' (Giles 9). With special relevance to Minogue, her career and the concert, it is a film that is centrally about 'the fluidities and complexities of sex and gender identities' (Bruzzi 186). This segment constitutes a medley, with the 'Crying Game' representing the central song, but giving way to the older Minogue songs, 'Put Yourself In My Place' and 'Finer Feelings,' before returning to the 'Crying Game' for a rousing Gospel-tinged finale. The cultural reference to the *Crying Game* therefore serves to highlight Baker's creative mission concerning Minogue's image, as it is a cinematic text that is predicated upon mimicry and masquerade, the central stylistic qualities of Minogue's oeuvre.

From 'The Crying Game,' the concert then segues into Act 4: *Streetstyle*, which again plunders controversial 1970s cinema for its primary visual inspiration. The mise-en-scène is ostensibly 'New York/The Bronx' in the early 1980s, characterized by brightly-coloured graffiti and the motifs of early hip-hop/breakdance culture (Bennett, 2001). As a 'scratch/rap' version of 'Confide In Me,' drawn from the 'Dance Kylie' era begins, a lone male dancer performs on the stage in the guise of a graffiti artist. Kylie then enters the stage to join the dancer and to initiate the 'narrative' of this sequence: a story which gives this segment its explicit postmodern performative aspect. Within this section, Kylie is dressed in a police uniform; however, it is *not* a conventional uniform, it is a de-contextualised parody which makes a stylistic reference to the film *The Night Porter* (Liliana Cavani, 1974), a film centred upon a sadomasochistic erotic relationship between former SS officer, Maximilian Aldorfer (Dirk Bogarde) and former concentration camp prisoner, Lucia Atherton (Charlotte Rampling). And the reference is precise as William Baker has stated, the look for Minogue within this Act, although ostensibly portraying a 'New York Cop,' features braces which cover her breasts and a peaked cap, elements directly inspired by the classic poster image of Lucia/Rampling used to advertise the film (MacDonald and Baker). Furthermore, the choreography of the early part of *Streetstyle* also mirrors aspects of the film's narrative. As Keesey and Duncan state regarding the relationship between Max and Lucia:

In the changing power dynamic of their sadomasochistic relationship, it is not clear who is

really the slave and who the master. This erotic tension is epitomized in the scene where a bare-breasted Lucia vamps Max by performing a cabaret number in long black gloves and a Nazi cap (147).

Within *Streetstyle*, the dance routine, designed as a form of choreographed struggle, similarly reflects a hierarchical relationship of dominance between Kylie's 'authority figure' and the dancer's defiant 'criminal.' Like *Droogie Nights*, *Streetstyle* instantiates a postmodern deconstruction of cultural texts and imagery. They eject the controversial aspects of the sources and displace and dismantle authorial intent (Derrida, 1997) in the pursuit of performative spectacle and pastiche, a pastiche which functions as 'a neutral practice of mimicry' (Jameson, in Butler: 138). The practice is neutral because the primacy is upon the power of the images, and the context of the performance and the audience, which includes children, effectively demands that any signification is on the part of knowing audience members. To those who have no knowledge of *A Clockwork Orange*, *The Crying Game*, or *The Night Porter*, the spectacle is just that, a dazzling display of costume and movement, with Kylie as the focal point.

The next sequence of the show is Act 5: *Sex in Venice* and this too retains the significantly postmodernist tone, albeit in a modified manner. This is because *Sex in Venice* eschews any of the overt pastiche of the previous segments, but instead provides a pastiche of Kylie Minogue herself as *Sex in Venice* resurrects 'Sex Kylie' and most explicitly, 'Camp Kylie,' and combines them. The setting is a 'boudoir,' flanked with projected chandeliers and Kylie sings 'On a Night Like This' from atop a bed, dressed in lingerie in the guise of a 'courtesan.' However, this aesthetic of sexuality and mock decadence transforms into pure Camp as Kylie leaves the bed and joins her female and male dancers for a re-worked version of 'The Locomotion,' her first hit single, to perform a languid version of the accompanying locomotion dance which proceeds to progress along a platform into the audience area. In addition to the obvious nostalgia of the number, the imagery is also pure Camp. The male dancers wear visible make-up and are themselves dressed in a similar fashion to Minogue in lingerie, thus reflecting the oldest conception of Camp as a practice 'addicted to actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis [which are] pleasantly ostentatious' (Robertson 3). Consequently, Minogue's use of Camp does not engage in that aspect of Camp Meyer defines as 'an oppositional critique, embodied in the signifying practices that constitute queer identities' (5). Rather, Minogue's employment of Camp, as it is expressed throughout the *Light Years* recording, accords with Sontag's conception that 'Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical' (277).

This is conspicuously evident the performance of the song 'In Your Eyes,' which seamlessly shifts into a segment of the 1980s DeBarge track 'Rhythm of the Night.' This section is purposefully designed as a carnival, with its excess and garish quality, and is suitably 'carnavalesque.' The connections between the carnival and pop have been explicitly stated by Stallybrass and White, who argue that 'the carnivalesque might erupt from the literary text, as in so much surrealist art, or from the advertisement hoarding, or from a pop festival or a jazz concert' (292, my emphasis). Hence, *Sex in Venice* consciously evokes the carnival, and arguably the concert unfolds as a constant procession of images, costumes, dance and exuberant 'escape' for the audience for the duration of the show. And, with a coincidental but rather apt

carnavalesque touch, one instance of the concert sees Kylie perform an impromptu wiggle of her bottom (now a star in its own right due to Minogue's 'Spinning Around' video) in response to a placard held up by one spectator which reads: 'Kylie Wiggle It 4 Daniel and Nick,' and the 'showing off of bottoms' was an archetypal characteristic of the medieval carnival (Humphrey 32). Thus, Camp and carnival collide in a performer who also recognizes that her body has its own performative autonomy, and whose delight in her audience is evident.

Sex in Venice is followed by Act 6: *Cybertronica* which is predicated firmly upon the celebration and reiteration of the differing eras of Minogue's career. *Cybertronica* begins with 'Limbo' and 'Cowboy Style,' drawn from her 'Indie Kylie' era, then Minogue performs the 'Camp Kylie' anthem, 'Light Years,' a version that is interspersed with snatches of the Giorgio Moroder-produced Donna Summer proto-electronica/disco classic, 'I Feel Love' to accentuate the dance orientation and inspirational origins of the song and the album from which the song is drawn. This section also features an updated, synth-laden 'cyber' version of 'I Should Be So Lucky.' The performance of this song elicits a delighted response from the audience and the sleek, sophisticated and contemporary version pays homage to her musical origins. The songs also serves to compellingly emphasize the distance that she has traveled throughout her recording career, and it illustrates the ease with which she can combine her 'difficult' *Kylie Minogue/Impossible Princess* album with the critical and commercial return of *Light Years*, reflexively channeling the 'Singing Budgie' through the postmodern, chic 2000s Kylie. As the concert moves into the final act, *Voodoo Inferno*, the differing periods of Minogue's career and her thematic identities are further brought together. Songs such as 'Better The Devil You Know' continue the nostalgic return to her SAW period, while the concert ends with an encore of the Cyber-Kylie anthem 'Can't Get You Out Of My Head' bringing the concert to Minogue's present musical incarnation.

Throughout *KylieFever2002* the various personifications of Kylie Minogue come and go, sometimes visually realized, sometimes in the form of musical selections. Although ostensibly promoting the *Fever* album, the concert draws upon the entire spectrum of her recording career. Throughout the performance she symbolically enacts the shifting, unstable conception of the postmodern self, a conception of self that is constituted theatrically through role-playing and image construction, by which it is possible to switch identities with the changing 'winds of fashion' (Kellner). Kylie's identity is grounded in play, in gamesmanship. Yet, while one might doubt the extent and validity that such play is, as Callincos argues, possible in real life, in which access to the props and costumes of theatricality are economically and materially limited, *KylieFever2002* represents a visual and cultural exercise in such postmodern 'play' as is limited to the fantasy microcosm of the arena and the spectacular space of the concert stage. Perhaps we cannot change our selves with the turbulent winds of fashion, but within her performative guises, Kylie Minogue can, and has.

Cyber-Charlene and Popular Postmodernism

KylieFever2002 represented a significant development within Kylie Minogue's performative status. It was, arguably, Minogue's transition to concerts on the scale of Madonna's conceptually-based *Girlie Show*. Like Madonna's performances (though without their overt sexuality), *KylieFever2002* was a multi-faceted and media-driven extravaganza that was radically different in scope and scale to her previous tour, and which has established the template for her subsequent tours. And, with its deliberate and consistent use of pastiche, *KylieFever2002* accords with one of Caillois' key components of play: mimicry. For Caillois, in his categorization of the principal forms of gaming (agon, alea, mimicry and ilinx) 'all play presupposes the temporary acceptance, if not of an illusion...of a closed...imaginary universe' (19). Play, in this sense, which Caillois terms 'mimicry,' involves 'make-believe,' the shedding of identity, and masquerade (ibid). For Caillois, at the heart of mimicry is a process of incessant invention, but invention which is governed by a unique rule that concerns:

...the actor's fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell. The spectator must lend [him/herself] to the illusion without first challenging the décor, mask, or artifice which for a given time he is asked to believe in as more real than reality itself (23).

Masquerade is, for many commentators, the epitome of a constructed identity and masquerade is at the essence of Minogue's recording career, it is the defining aspect of *KylieFever2002*, William Baker and Minogue's particular 'closed imaginary universe'; a postmodern space that is located on stage and temporally fixed (with regard to the concert's duration). Unlike Minogue's previous tour for the *Light Years* album which, while still exuberant, garish and vivid was far more modest in scope, *KylieFever2002* reflected a commercially and culturally resurgent performer. Throughout the performance, Minogue (guided by Baker) artfully and knowingly engages in a demonstrative and flamboyant display of 'artifice and transformation', the epitome of Kylie Minogue's musical career (Marshall 194). Therefore, the trajectory of Kylie Minogue's career is one of a progressive, reflexive awareness of the efficacy of transformation, a process decisively captured and expressed and celebrated within *KylieFever2002*. As Rojek states:

Postmodernism associates modernity with the heaviness of being, that is, a psychology dominated by responsibility, morality and guilt... postmodernism claims that postmodernity is associated with the lightness of being. It recognises play, change and anomaly as the province of humankind. It urges us to live without guilt (in Rogers, 1999: 146)

KylieFever2002 reflects and engenders such a guilt-free state and foregrounds similar celebratory values and 'lightness,' and may therefore be said to illustrate the *progressive* aspects of postmodernism, principally the potential freedom to play with identity (Kellner). And, although limited to the stage and a world of performative make-believe, *KylieFever2002* plays out this postmodern ideal. However, in doing so, it also highlights the pitfalls of postmodernism, because postmodern society

Takes into itself whatever is produced from a counter-culture, such as punk rock and sexually explicit material. Far from this material being condemned by the establishment, it is rather made into a successful commercial commodity (Kaplan 146-147).

But this is exactly the point of Baker's vision. It is performance as celebration, an inter-textual roller-coaster of divergent cultural sources and Minogue's performative history. Thus, in a critical era in which discussions of postmodern culture are potentially passé – the high watermark for such analysis was the 1980s and early 1990s (Denzin, 1988; Degli-Esposti, 1998) – and the very concept of the postmodern is a cliché, Kylie Minogue revitalizes its rhetorical strategies. This is because *KylieFever2000*, from Act 1 to Act 7, is a purposely designed postmodern spectacle that toys with the differing incarnations of Kylie Minogue since 1988's SAW period to 2001's 'Can't Get You Out Of My Head,' and interweaves it with de-contextualised references to a range of media texts, from the nostalgic science fiction of *Metropolis*, *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*, to the more controversial referencing of *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Night Porter*.

Ultimately, throughout the performance, Kylie Minogue's various incarnations, her differing 'ages,' are constantly invoked and re-presented in a phantasmagoric musical/visual medley. Because, from beginning to end, *KylieFever2002* is explicitly predicated on the visual impact such textual sources generate. Any ideology or meaning-fixing 'meta-narrative' is simply discarded and creatively neutralized in the pursuit of style. Thus, with William Baker's design, direction and understanding of the concept of postmodernism, *KylieFever2002* is an exercise in postmodernist stylistic pastiche, with Kylie Minogue as the switching centre. And, with a nod to more critical theory-minded appraisals, it is also a very successful commercial commodity.

Consequently, the lavish 'pomo' spectacle of *KylieFever2002* marked a significant progression of Minogue as an artist and as a live performer. Although she has consistently toured throughout her recording career, this tour represented a definitive advance in scale and creative vision. Moreover, such spectacle has continued in Minogue's subsequent tours. Kylie took to the stage in 2005 in the lavish guise of the 'Showgirl,' a performance that divided Minogue into various and distinctive incarnations of the Showgirl identity (Las Vegas Showgirl, Follies Showgirl, Disco Diva, Space Age Showgirl, Torch Singer), and which also featured, as with *KylieFever2002*, cultural references to *Doctor Who* with dancers flanking Kylie in Cyberman regalia. Similarly, the tour for Minogue's 2007 *X* album, *KylieX2008*, is stylistically divided into eight Acts and sees Kylie display a series of images, from a distinctly Erotica-era Madonna-like outfit (complete with 'cyber-gauntlets'), a Toni Basil-inspired cheerleader routine, the return of the Showgirl (against the backdrop of a Barry Manilow cover, 'Copacabana'), a Japanese-inspired Geisha sequence (that also illustrates Baker's cultural edginess by having dancers slowly lowered to the stage bound in masochistic Japanese bondage techniques), and Minogue in Napoleonic-style French period costume for a ball gown segment. Furthermore, Kylie performs 'Spinning Around' on a stage transformed into a 1970s-style disco, complete with her dancers dressed in gold lamé hotpants, again emphasizing her ability to draw upon wider popular culture for inspiration, but also to cite her own, now extensive performative history and cultural iconography to furnish her performances.

Postmodernism is alive and well in post-Millennial popular culture, and can be identified and experienced within the live extravaganzas of Kylie Minogue. And, thanks to the artful, pop culturally-literate, philosophically aware and design-orientated direction of William Baker, she *knows* that she is postmodern. How very postmodern.

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Reading the Postcolonial Allegory in Beth Yahp's *The Crocodile Fury*: Censored Subjects, Ambivalent Spaces, and Transformative Bodies.

By Grace V. S. Chin

I

Ambivalence. Difference.

The postcolonial Other has always been located under the sign of difference, in contrast to the colonizer/self reflected in the master narratives of imperial discourse. Under this sign, the postcolonial Other “reads” and “writes back” to the Empire, mobilising new modes of resistance against imperial discourse through its alterity. Yet the sign of “difference” is at the same time invested with ambivalence, since it is also a permanent reminder of marginality, its Other-ness. In “Reading for Resistance in Post-Colonial Literature” (1989), Stephen Slemon observes that the English literatures produced by the Commonwealth are defined by the contradictions inherent in the terms “New” and “Other.” Even as we assert our difference under the label of “New” literatures, he argues, we are “already constituted within institutional and generic constraints whose work it is to package and displace the counter-discursive force of both our literary and our critical texts under a sign of secondariness, derivation, simulacrum, or mimicry” (p. 100). New. Other. Both terms play on what Slemon calls the sign of “paradoxical doubleness or ambivalence” since they reflect the conflicting position occupied by the subject, “whose institutional subjectivity is interpellated by a double sign of contiguity (our filial ‘newness’) and rupture (our disjunctive alterity)” (p. 112, 100).

What has drawn me to Slemon’s argument is his suggestion of “paradoxical doubleness or ambivalence,” for I have observed this sign dominating the textual representations of self-censorship in the novel *The Crocodile Fury* (CF), by Malaysian writer Beth Yahp, wherein recurring patterns and doubling motifs indicate an allegorical structure at work in the text. Operating through subterranean ellipses and embodied

silences, this ambivalence can be seen in the double-edged images of gain and loss that underpin the narratives of censorship, trauma, marginality and loss experienced by gendered subjects. As Slemon says, “this ambivalence can itself serve as an enabling mechanism, for it names a space in which another kind of methodological ‘history’ might be written” (p. 107). This enablement is also “one whose figural possibilities always hang upon the already socialised investments of the historical apparatuses of textual power” (p. 113).¹

This essay considers the implications of Slemon’s “paradoxical doubleness” in the reading of censorship as a power discourse, and how its ambivalence can enable the naming of a space where allegorical revisions of the censored subject, as well as its transformation, can take place. As markers of the temporal and spatial discontinuities experienced in the performative space, the recurring censored spaces in the allegorical structure represent the sites where fragmented and ambivalent subjectivities — in the form of unvoiced or suppressed thoughts, painful silences, secret feelings, and unspeakable memories — linger and dwell. However, these nebulous, undetermined spaces also point to ongoing processes within the subjectivity, which assimilate and construct meaning; the subtle internal changes are an indication of the subject’s potential for transformation. In other words, censorship as a power discourse is neither absolute nor stable²; there are underlying fissures and cracks in the discourse through which women’s will and agency escape. These are the fragmented and ambivalent spaces where hegemonic power lines have been fractured by the many possible “self-representations of individual women and men as engendered subjects” (Moore p. 56).

The term “censored subject” signifies the conditions of powerlessness and exclusion experienced by the gendered subject — the nameless and featureless protagonist, whom the readers only know as “I” in CF — as she inhabits the periphery of her world order. Although we hear her voice, we have no definitive picture of her. The protagonist’s featurelessness acts as a metaphorical blank page that is inscribed with the stories told by her grandmother, mother, the bully, and other characters. Each story involves the formation of “I,” her being, and her perception of life. The protagonist’s voice thus functions only to narrate the stories of other characters, while her own story goes unspoken. Demarcated by significations that are not even hers, the protagonist is thus “emptied” of meaning; she is effectively censored. Not only is “I” censored within the discourse, but the stories told by “I” also revolve around the repeated experiences with marginality, exclusion and loss — which are represented by textual ellipses and silences — in her multi-layered narratives. However, it is my contention that these repetitive structures are deconstructed by the very same “empty” forms in which they appear. I believe that these voids point to hidden and ambivalent subjective states that can escape cognition, and as such, the censored subject may still have the potential to undermine circumscription. Although the censored subject is already inscribed under the ruling sign, I argue that the effects of the discourse should not be taken as conclusive, as the voids and silences inhabited by the subject should also be considered as “blank” sites that await the redeployment of different, “other” meanings. There is then, the element of alterity, or “doubleness,” operating in the recurring gaps of the narrative structure, where absence paradoxically entails presence at the same time, and where loss is intertwined with gain. It is thus pertinent that I explore the double-edged nuances of these textual silences and voids, for it is the very ambivalence of their vacancy that serves as an enabling space of transformation

for the censored subject.³

In CF, the allegorical framework of the narrative provides the key to understanding the relationship between the recurring processes of self-censorship and the transformation of the gendered subject. The repetition of signs, or the doubling structure, operates at the heart of what Slemon calls the “post-colonial allegory.”⁴ According to Slemon (1988), the postcolonial allegory departs from our conventional understanding of the allegory as a “constrained and mechanical mode” of representing history, as it is involved in “displacing [history] as a concept and opening up the past to imaginative revision” (p. 157, 165). Since “the allegorical sign refers always to a previous or anterior sign”, the postcolonial allegory, while allowing the reader to recognize the “known” master codes in use, is at the same time ushering in “new” signs according to the “transformative power of imaginative revision” (p. 158, 159). I believe that CF fits this postcolonial allegory schema as it raises questions about the authority of the past through the imaginative revisions of the censored subject. By providing alternative visions and versions of the past, and by highlighting the elusiveness of signs through their double-sided meanings, CF undermines the established patterns of subjection by suggesting the transformative potential inherent within the “emptied” body of the censored subject. As the space where the dichotomous signifying differences between self and other, traditional Asia and modernizing West, are dramatized, the postcolonial allegory also sets the scene for the censored subject’s negotiation of agency and freedom from two intersecting yet culturally disparate structures of authority, and the proliferation of meanings that emerge from the encounter. Hence the postcolonial allegory is not only advantageous for querying the changing identities and power dynamics in the mutable spaces of developing Asia, but it also opens up different imaginative “hybrid” spaces where we can reconsider the transformation of the subject.

The allegorical framework is seen in the text’s representation of power through the binary system of authoritative history, and the replicating sub-structures of power within the system. For example, the hierarchical relations between the colonizer, the rich man (whose origin is detected from the colour of his head, a “blaze of gold”), and the colonized natives is a recognizable postcolonial theme, while the invocation of traditional cultural tropes is seen in the character of the Chinese Grandmother and her multiple roles as the family matriarch, storyteller, and “keeper of an ancient knowledge” (p. 69, 55). Through Grandmother, the text highlights the older forms of authority that preceded colonial rule, whose power is derived from prescribed rituals of prohibition and taboo, the enduring power of memory, and the oral tradition, which relies on the power of the mouth to ensure the continuity and legitimacy of the dominant. Similarly, the story of three generations of female storytellers in a family — Grandmother, mother and the protagonist — is also a well-known feminist trope.

Despite these familiar allegorical figures, the text also highlights recurring absences, mainly in the removal of specific labels and names. The setting is recognizably a postmodern one, inhabited as it is by changeable bodies and identities like the Lizard Boy and the lover, or universal figures like Grandmother and mother. Not only do Yahp’s characters “avoid being bound to a particular nationality or country”, there are also no remarkable traits or landmarks to declare the specificity of the novel’s location save for the occasional use of “Mat Salleh” and “pontianak” (Chin, 1999). The first is found in colloquial vocabulary of Malaysia

and Singapore and refers to a Caucasian (mainly male) while the second refers to a female vampire in Malay folklore. The striking absence of names and labels is also seen in Yahp's treatment of race. In keeping with her authorial style, Yahp shies away from the specificities of race and settles for general terms such as "people" (p. 21), "locals" (p. 109), or "natives" (p. 111) to denote the residents of the hill, while racial components are hinted at through the "different shades" (p. 2) of colour; the foreign "pale men and dark men" (p. 22) who were shipwrecked and washed ashore, the "brown and yellow" (p. 69) servants of the rich man, and the "different-coloured people" (p. 70) with "different-coloured voices" (p. 70) who flocked to the city. There is then, a textual interplay between absence and presence in the text; the latter is denoted by the presence of allegorical figures and discourses that are familiar to the postcolonial and feminist imagination.

The textual interplay of absence and presence in the allegorical structure can also be seen in the juxtaposition between the familiar signs and their shifting and multiple significations. By drawing on the similarities and differences between Western imperialism and non-Western cultural discourses, CF effectively engages two culturally distinct structures of perception and interpretation to bring about revised and "new" meanings and inscriptions.⁵ At the same time, the allegorical signs involved in both authoritative histories are also rendered ambivalent and ambiguous according to the flux of time and space. These changes — mirrored in the different voices, shifting subjectivities, and transforming bodies contained within the multi-layered worlds of the text — act as spatial and temporal discontinuities that disrupt the linear flow and continuity of colonial power and establishment. Due to the novel's changing viewpoints and interpretations, the reader finds that the allegorical signs are in the process of being revised even as they are repeated throughout the text.

The location of the novel for instance, is concentrated on a single focal point: the "hill with the convent and the jungle" is where the protagonist begins her story, and to which she keeps returning as "the place to begin" (p. 1, 21). Known by locals as Mat Salleh Hill, and named as Mad Sailor Hill by "rival schools", the hill, despite the different shapes it takes, is established as the seat of power, be it the rich man's mansion full of colonized servants, or a convent school full of nuns disciplining young girls (p. 21). The changes in the shape of administration do not signify an end to the reproduction of power narratives or the subjugation of women; if anything, these changes only serve to emphasize the repetitive cycles of power and the struggle it entails through different times. Whether denoted by the rich man's mansion or the convent school, the hill is still symbolic of the site where gendered subjects are produced. Nevertheless, the reader has to take a step back from this one-sided interpretation as the hill is also described as "curiously twisted [. . .] in the shape of a woman turned away from the harbour, in the act of turning back" (p. 7). This alternate vision of the hill as a woman caught in the act of turning back echoes the lover's resistance against the rich man: "She stared through him, she turned her face to the wall" (p. 252). Even though the hill signifies the authority of the white man, it is also the place where female resistance and agency, however fragmented and dispersed, are engendered. The double-edged meanings derived from woman's ambivalent status and place — marginal and yet rebellious — are thus captured by the ambiguous signification of the hill. As the site of 'herstory' then, the hill is also somewhere that marginalized female figures dominate.

By employing multiple temporalities and spaces within the fixed location of the hill, where numerous stories are played out, the text manages to invoke the old and the new, something familiar yet altered. The postcolonial allegory therefore names a space where established significations are undermined, where they are made ambivalent by the simultaneous, conflicting expressions of the sign. In this way, CF stresses the paradoxical doubleness of absence and presence by bringing in the element of alterity from the start. The alterity is especially pronounced in the performative bodies of the gendered subjects who inhabit the hill, for their movements and agency take are similarly double-edged. The text's subversive effects are felt when we find the bully "torturing and tickling" the protagonist, or "greeting everyone with an amicable slap", or when we see the conflicting image of "giggling cackling convent girls with fists raised and legs poised to run" (p. 61, 105, 58). Even more unsettling is the way Grandmother "train[s]" the protagonist in a strange "game": "Then she would smack. Then call again. Then push. Then smack. In between smacks she hugged me" (p. 100, 99).

There are many times when CF depicts the alterity of subjectivities in terms of their ambivalent "double-sided" corporeality; examples include the lizard-like boy who transforms into a crocodile, and the beautiful lover who is also a sea-creature. But there are none as evocative as the portrayal of Grandmother's "split" body. As "the youngest bonded servant" in the rich man's mansion, Grandmother is also considered "the most inferior" in the domestic order (p. 11). However, Grandmother is also disliked by the other servants as she possesses two kinds of bodies — her "night-time body" and her "daytime one" (p. 10), and thus two kinds of "face[s]":

Grandmother's face at midnight was not her petulant daytime face, her stubborn headstrong face that she turned to the other servants when they were cruel, when they forced on her the chores that nobody wanted to do. Her night-time body was no relation to the daytime one she disobeyed the senior servants with, disappearing for hours on end, reappearing to slop through her work without a word of apology or explanation. At night Grandmother was otherworldly. (pp. 9- 10)

At night, Grandmother's sleeping body appears to possess an "otherworldly" agency that is separated from her conscious mind: "She walked with her sleeping breath rattling the kitchen windows, her voice a hoarse whisper coming from lips that did not move" (p. 10). Yet the very nature of her alterity, her otherness, also signals the inherent potential for transformation; the pivotal moment of change in the subject(ivity) emerges when her "extra eye" opened, and "drained [her] world of colour" (p. 12). Grandmother's transformation is conveyed in terms of loss and gain, for the leaking of her coloured vision ironically empowers her to see the black-and-white images of ghosts and spirits, a power which later helps her become the city's "most famous ghostchaser" (p. 30).

In CF, the transformation of the subject not only hinges on the paradox of loss and gain, but it also suggests that the change can resemble a traumatic experience. The textual implications of trauma, seen in the paradox of loss and gain, are rendered through the recurring metaphor of "turning" in varying characters. Grandmother's sudden experience of loss and gain is one such instance. Another example is mother's

“turning a corner” (p. 34). This turning not only marks her pivotal encounter with her future husband, but is later connected to her traumatized state as she compulsively searches for her missing husband in the torturous, roundabout paths of the city in an endless “turning” (p. 183). The traumatic sign of “turning” can also be seen in the lover during the episode of the “sea ghost turning” (p. 279), when the lover, or the sea ghost, changes into different forms in a bid to escape the rich man’s possessive grip: “In his arms the shape was turning, was a shape now suddenly long and scaly, now bloating, now ridged with spikes” (p. 135). Once again, we find that the act of “turning” is accompanied by the unsettling experience of loss and gain, for the lover’s new shape also indicates her dislocated status and enslavement when the rich man tears her from the sea and forces her to live with him on the hill. While the recurring signs of “turning” denote the processes of transformation across the textual landscape, they also underscore the traumatic structures of repetition in the novel as each gendered subject keeps revisiting the memory of her “turning.”

Indeed, the very structure of the narrative itself is traumatic; consider the compulsive manner in which the re-tellings of the stories take place. The protagonist begins with one story, stops abruptly in the middle and jumps into another story, another description, and another character, before doubling back to the stories already told; this disconcerting process is repeated throughout the novel. These multiple narratives overlap and, as a result, repetitious phrases and recurring situations populate the text; the reader experiences *deja-vu* as s/he has read fragments of the story in previous pages. Chin (1999) noted thus:

In a way, the narrative is deliberately made into a huge jigsaw puzzle whereby fragmented pieces of the stories must be fitted together. But unlike an actual puzzle, the novel will not yield a unified whole. There are still many unresolved voids left gaping in the novel; these loose ends are left open to questions, and thus frustrate [the reader’s] attempts at exegesis.

As mentioned earlier, the recurring pattern of textual gaps and voids point to the tropes of self-censorship circulating the text in the shape of unvoiced memories, hidden secrets, and painful silences. There are experiences that simply cannot be articulated other than as a compulsive repetition. The stories narrated by Grandmother for instance, never reach their end: “Grandmother never wants anything finished, she never wants to get to the end. She is always afraid of telling too much; of giving away the story before the end” (p. 317). With so many unfinished stories, grandmother’s tales have lost their track; “the story goes here and there, trailing off at every turn until she ends up silent” (p. 320). There are signs that she is reluctant to talk about certain memories: “Nowadays the gaps between my grandmother’s tellings get longer and longer” (p. 321). Like grandmother, mother too, can never finish telling her stories: “Then, midway, she will suddenly stop. She will grow pale, [. . .] and stand with lips drained and features frozen as though seeing an unbearable sight” (p. 64). The track of mother’s stories is arrested by the recurring trauma of a memory which nobody can see except herself: “When she forgets and looks into her memory. The enemy shimmers around the corner, or behind her, waiting for my mother to turn” (p. 65). Mother’s stories always stop exactly at the point where she remembers the loss of her husband.

The traumatic structure of the text — represented by the silenced or censored subjectivities — highlights the discontinuities and gaps that occur in between each re-telling of the narrative. This textual rupture is

indicated by the subject's experience of time. For example, the opening of Grandmother's extra eye comes at a time when "her life as she knew it was soon to end" (p. 156). At the symbolic age of fourteen, the "end of her second life cycle" Grandmother inhabits an ambivalent "in-between time" before "the child [is] shed" and "the young woman assumed" (p. 25, 156). The time "in-between" childhood and womanhood is a dangerous and uncertain time. Some, like Grandmother and the protagonist, end their second life cycle by beginning a new phase of a third life cycle in their transformed state. Others are not as fortunate. The story of the Bully for instance brings out the tragedy of getting stuck in this "in-between" time: "She grew until she was fourteen, [. . .], the end of her second cycle. Then the bully stopped" (p. 25). The bully's stagnated growth is reflected in her fixation with "seeing life frozen a moment at a time" through her photograph collection (p. 14). Caught in the paralyzing grip of the past, the bully "didn't know which way to grow" and she fails to develop normally: "While other girls get taller or wider, or slimmer or shapelier with each passing year, the bully always looks the same" (p. 25). The "in-between" time denotes a temporal rupture not only in the traumatic structure of the narratives, but also within the subjectivity; there are thus ongoing processes of transformation taking place in the interior spatial fabric.

In CF, these temporal spaces are opened up by the processes of repetition, "in-between" the recurring life cycles, and act as defining moments of the body's progressive development (or in the bully's case, its stasis) and the changes occurring within the subjective self. In many examples provided by the novel, these moments of temporal rupture are not necessarily restricted to the time "in-between" transcending childhood and becoming a woman. For the protagonist's mother, her "in-between" time comes at "an instant between the time she was a girl and the time it seemed to everyone she became a middle-aged woman, worn, the features of her face caved in" (p. 316). The mother's "instant" is marked by the chance meeting between her and the Lizard boy while "turning a corner"; this "instant" not only signals her release from the clutches of her "badluck", but also pinpoints her experience with loss and gain at the startling moment of her transformation (p. 34, 35). During the crucial "instant," mother's entire badluck past is rewritten by the discovery of something new within — an awakening of sexual awareness, a recognition of love — and with the discovery, the course of her future is altered at the same time:

In that instant, which seemed to my mother to last both an eyeblink and forever, she stood poised on a hinge: turning a corner. My mother stood there, perfectly balanced. She could swing either way, but she stood there, an eyeblink or forever, perfectly still. In that instant everything stopped. Gone was my mother's badluck past, disappeared her badluck future. My mother felt young, and light. When the instant passed, an eyeblink or forever later, everything, my mother, my grandmother, the ground, the air, the world, was irrevocably changed. (p. 35)

Here we find that the mother's "instant" speaks of a defining moment in her subjective life; that instant when she could have changed "either way" is also an instant that had lasted "both an eyeblink and forever."

The flexible spatial dimensions indicated by time's ambivalent and paradoxical alterity, "both an eyeblink and forever," not only punctuates the structured regularity of history, but also corresponds with the changes occurring within the subjective interior. Mother's "terror" in the ghosthouse is reflected in the

way she feels about time: “Like devilish time and dead time, the time of terror, compared to everyday human time, runs either too long or too short” (p. 262). Another example can be found in the “instant before the closing of my grandmother’s eye” (p. 301). Knocked on the head with the “butt of the bandit rifle”, Grandmother saw the closing of her eye like a “long slow fall to the ground, the moment between recognition and when the ground hit” (p. 301). In that internally attenuated fraction of time Grandmother recognizes “with perfect clarity” the indirect and intricate manner in which her enemy, the lover, and her “ghostly message” had pursued her (p. 301). The instant in which the lover revealed herself and her purpose to Grandmother, is also both an “eyeblick and forever”:

In that instant Grandmother realised everything. [. . .] All the intervening years of her ghost-chasing fame and fortune led only to this moment of perfect clarity. Grandmother watched the dips and rises of her life’s pattern with great admiration, all the steps she had taken, the goodluck curves, the treacherous folds. [. . .] The pleasure before falling was very great. In that instant time and space stretched endlessly, then suddenly, rudely, was cut short. By the time she hit the ground she’d forgotten the pleasure, the clarity. By then Grandmother could no longer see. (pp. 301-2)

In Grandmother’s “instant,” the void into which she falls denotes the key moment of recognition and the beginning of yet another transformation as the indistinct meanings stored within the memory bank, and encoded within the body, take on shapes, meanings, and significations never perceived before at the moment of “perfect clarity.” Once that “instant” is over, the transformation is complete. This time however, Grandmother experiences a reversal, for as her extra eye closes, her coloured vision returns. Once more, Grandmother’s experience of change carries the double-edged implications of loss and gain.

Similarly, the protagonist is also struck by a moment of “perfect clarity” while lying in wait “as ghost bait” on the jungle path. Like her grandmother and mother, the protagonist’s moment of “perfect clarity” is experienced within the ambivalent and amorphous depths of her interior space:

The minutes swelled and stretched until I lose sense of everything except their stretch and swell, and I become alternately large then small; infinite, then nothing. Time and space stretched endlessly. I try to imagine that instant before the closing of my grandmother’s eye: my life’s pattern dipping and rising before me as hers did, seen with perfect clarity. My life’s pattern curving and folding according to her plan. Unlike her I watched the pattern not with admiration but a shivering and shaking that’s barely noticeable at first. (p. 303)

As the ambiguous meanings and images take shape and fall into place, the protagonist becomes fully aware of the way in which Grandmother has manipulated her life’s pattern. This recognition marks the beginning of change, the beginning of “a shivering and shaking” deep within her subjective interiority when she also realizes that she is “unlike” grandmother in many ways: “Unlike her, the intricate hooks and sweeps of the pattern only make me shiver and shake. [. . .] Unlike the jungle of my grandmother’s stories, the one that presses against me is neither a jungle of jumps and shudders nor one to slide my sleeping eyes

open for fear” (p. 303).

Significantly enough, the moment of “perfect clarity” and the accompanying interior changes experienced by the gendered subject occur in the ambivalent space of the jungle, where resides the lover, that “cursed thing lying in wait” (p. 303). As the space where the lover is trapped, the jungle also bears the fluid characteristics of the sea; “the trunks and leaves were the colour of jungle water” while “dark shapes glid[ed] through the undergrowth” (p. 150). The jungle can thus be understood as a spatial reflection of the shifting undercurrents of ambivalence within the subjective self. The change in the protagonist’s subjective state is suggested by her reaction to both the jungle and the “cursed thing lying in wait.” Unlike Grandmother who fears both, the protagonist finds comfort and security in the “warm and silent” jungle earth, while the “cursed thing lying in wait is not a thing of terror but a huddled thing, thirsty, fitting a parched space at the back of my throat. One swallow and the thirst will be gone” (p. 303). Hence that vital “instant” of discovery — that she is different from Grandmother — is also a moment that leads to a conscious decision: “I have another plan for Grandmother’s unfinished business, other than burning it up. I have another plan for finishing” (p. 327).

II

In the darkroom the bully and I sit cross-legged, knee touching knee. [. . .] In the darkroom the bully and I touch foreheads, we sit with our eyes squeezed shut, our lips pressed together, imagining we will never part our lips or open our eyes. The bully and I sit on the cushioned mats she has sneaked into the darkroom, imagining the dark is a place we can hear, we can see. An in-between place, like babies in limbo, like spirits of the dead my grandmother says are waiting for reincarnation at the top of the hill. (pp. 59-60)

In the excerpt above, we find the bully and the protagonist engaged in a game of mimicry or mirroring. Here, the protagonist is not yet endowed with the conscious will of an individual self; instead, her self is reflected in the other. Hence the “I” is nullified, absorbed into the collective “we;” “we sit with our eyes squeezed shut.” Like “underwater [. . .] morsels curled in a shell” (p. 60), the protagonist and the bully epitomize the double paradox of absence and presence, sleeping foetuses in the “infinite dark, the nothing dark” of the womb, represented by the darkroom (p. 60). As the space where different narratives and gendered subjects are located, the darkroom, like the hill, should be seen as an ambivalent “in-between place” where both absence and presence are powerfully felt in the ghostly presences of “spirits” hovering between limbo and reincarnation. Known once as the punishment room, the darkroom has a dubious history as the site where rebellious female figures like Grandmother and the lover were incarcerated during the rich man’s reign on the hill.⁶ But by the time the protagonist arrives on the scene, the meaning of the darkroom has already shifted; the darkroom that was once Grandmother’s most hated place is now the space where the protagonist is free to experiment and explore the vast, ambiguous spaces of her inner self:

Behind my eyelids the dark grows to enormous proportions, in my ears the silence of cotton is a pounding like drums. The minutes swell and stretch until I lose sense of everything except their swell and stretch. The bully and I become alternately large then small, large then small: enormous, then the head of a pin. We become infinite. Then nothing. [. . .] In the infinite dark, the nothing dark, only our fingertips, our hands, our knees touching knees, hold me silent. Hold me still. (p. 60)

Deep within the dark interiority of the unformed self, the empty void of nothing-ness is balanced out by the possibility of something new emerging into being, a change occurring within the silence of holding “still.” Within the silence and the stillness of the ambivalent space, the ambiguous “I” comes into being and subsides into nothingness, pulsing with unknown possibilities that signal the body’s inherent potential for transformation.

Between the time when the protagonist is a malleable, unformed child (in her first life cycle) and when she arrives at her “instant” of “perfect clarity” (before the end of her second life cycle), there is a space where formative lessons and experiences take place. During this hazy in-between time and space, the protagonist does not yet possess a personality, opinion or a voice of her own. As the narrator who holds the novel’s multi-layered, fragmented narratives in place, the nameless “I” ironically forms the core of the text even though she is devoid of any individual meaning. But as the novel’s revolving performative and mimetic structures demonstrate, the unformed, “vacant” body of the censored subject is also in the process of building its own individual corpus of knowledge by negotiating different histories and memories, and by appropriating varying roles through the mimicry of different identities. Hence in every narrative that she listens to and absorbs, in every role-play game that she’s made for herself, the protagonist is also in the process of trying on different roles and identities. It is in this manner that the text also points out that the structured processes of self-censorship are simultaneously transformative in nature.

The novel’s play on mimicry and mimesis is depicted in the censored subject’s transformative body, which takes on connotations of Bakhtin’s theory of the “grotesque.” In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin posits the idea of “grotesque realism” through the exaggerated bodily image of “fertility, growth” and “abundance” (p. 19). As a representation of “people who are continually growing and renewed” (p. 19), the grotesque body is deeply positive in meaning since it expresses the continuous processes of change:

The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis. (p. 24)

There are close parallels between Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque body and my earlier arguments on the transforming subjective self, namely the body’s “relation to time,” and the embodied ambivalence that emerges from the tension of straddling the “poles of transformation.” This idea’s usefulness to this paper

lies in the fact that it describes the development or evolution of the grotesque body as it undergoes various stages of perception and experience, from its most “primitive” phase until it becomes a full articulation of the “artistic and ideological [. . .] awareness of history and of historic change” (p. 24, 25). However, Bakhtin also stresses that even in this late stage, the grotesque body is far from achieving the classical and aesthetic image of the “finished, completed man”: “They remain ambivalent and contradictory; they are ugly, monstrous, hideous” (p. 25).

The construction of the grotesque body is brought to our attention via the formation of the protagonist’s life pattern, which has been planned by Grandmother “long before I was born” (p. 312). Bent on the path of remembrance and revenge, Grandmother plots and schemes against her oldest enemy, the lover, by manipulating the protagonist’s role and function as “an instrument of revenge, a way to get back face” (p. 313). Subjected to years of indoctrination and strict rules, the protagonist’s formative body is regulated according to what Grandmother says: “I have repeated [grandmother’s plan] after her like [. . .] convent sayings learnt by rote” (p. 300). Moreover, she is trained to reproduce Grandmother’s memories in her “extra special notebook” (p. 300). Even the protagonist’s body is moulded in the shape and manner of the matriarch’s desire. For example, she wears her hair in a “knotted” (p. 15) braid as Grandmother wishes, places Grandmother’s strongest amulet under her tongue, wears Grandmother’s “special leaf and root collection bag” (p. 38) around her waist, and is also trained to imitate Grandmother’s favourite sign “Avert!”, her “glaring expression” (p. 78) and famous “tiger stance” (p. 100). The extent of the protagonist’s mimicry of Grandmother is stressed in her facial expression, as she begins to take on Grandmother’s features: “my face a copy of Grandmother’s tiger face” while “[m]y mouth shapes itself to the shape of her mouth” (p. 299-300, 309).

At the same time, the novel underscores the negative repercussions posed by the circumscribed processes of learning and development through mimicry and drill lessons. As the protagonist reveals, “I only know what I’m told, what I see. I see only what I’m told. This is what my grandmother has taught me: to narrow my eyes and look sideways, and see what she has told. To see what Grandmother sees” (p. 241). With her curtailed vision, inhibited agency, and limited knowledge, the protagonist’s position as a censored subject is reinforced by the unnatural twists and turns of her body; these abnormal changes can be seen by comparing the protagonist’s body at the start and at the end of the novel. In chapter one, we find that the protagonist possesses a physical lightness that comes from a carefree existence: “My walk to the convent is as light as air, as crooked as a crab baby’s, it’s a scuttle here and there to look in through shop windows, to crouch at a pedlar’s mat strewn with trinkets” (p. 19). The protagonist’s chin, which is “lifted for whistling”, reflects her enjoyment of life (p. 19), while her body is endowed with a natural curiosity “to peek under shop awnings” (p. 241), and with an innate desire for fun and mischief; “to crouch at a pedlar’s barrow and slip a trinket into my shoe” (p. 241). Compared to Grandmother’s “immovable” bones and whose body is “like the anchor of a ship tug-tugging against it,” the protagonist’s “walk to the convent is a walk on waves” (p. 19).

However, Grandmother’s dominance over the protagonist’s life pattern leads to certain changes in her corporeal body, physical movements and agency. As the protagonist realizes, her body is undergoing a

radical transformation. By mimicking grandmother's gestures, expressions, language and rituals, she is in the danger of *becoming* grandmother herself:

Every day I seem to get heavier. My walk to the convent is no longer as light as air, as crooked as a crab baby's; no longer a skip here and there [. . .]. Nowadays my convent walk is a pull against metal, a straight line, like tugging at the anchor of a ship. My chin is no longer lifted for whistling. My feet press further into the ground [. . .].” (p. 241).

By the end of CF, the protagonist's body has grown to abnormal, grotesque proportions, “twisting to a pattern my grandmother likes” (p. 312). Burdened with the memorized teachings and sayings of her grandmother, the body of the censored subject not only fails to physically mature in a natural way, but she also develops inhibited forms of agency and movements:

By the time I turned fourteen the sideways tip of my head will be an acute angle, I will be so heavy I'll hardly be able to lift my feet. I will be filled with everything my grandmother has tried to teach me, all the years of training and telling will stiffen my blood to sap. My arms will be lifted in whatever direction Grandmother likes, my fingers pointing, my head tilting that way too. My feet planted firmly in Grandmother's earth. Already her stories swell my chest and head, they crust my skin with swirling knobs. (p. 313)

The reader should not however assume that Grandmother's power over the censored subject is complete, for even at this late stage, we find that the grotesque body is still undergoing the continuous processes of renewal and change. As CF points out, the repetitive structures of mimicry and mimesis are subjected to flux and instability, for in-between these patterns, there are spaces of ambivalence and ambiguity that threaten to unfix the established signifying meanings. As the protagonist intuitively senses, there is something not quite right with her growing self. Indeed, there are moments when this realization seeps through the narrative: “But my back aches in spite of all the years of training. There's a catch in my voice” (p. 311). And, despite the years of training her “fingers for flexibility and strength, sometimes the pen flies out of [her] hand” (p. 311). There are thus moments when the body involuntarily reacts against its grotesque and “twisted” formation; these are the fractured spaces that do not fit into the pattern of grandmother's plan, as when “the pen lies rocking between my grandmother and me” (p. 311).

The emerging individual self and will occurs at the time when the protagonist is an “in-between girl, no longer a child, not yet a young woman” and whose “life as she knew it was coming to an end” (p. 196). The “in-between girl” suggests the transformative body as an ambivalent and insidious force, a force that lies “in-between” the structures of inscribed signs, inhabiting the ellipses and silences in the form of temporal and spatial rupture and discontinuity. Regardless of Grandmother's rule over the protagonist's life pattern, there are invisible “in-between” gaps and voids that ultimately escape the matriarch's gaze and circumscription: “I will breathe slowly, carefully, into the spaces that are left. I will make these spaces my own” (p. 311). The first signs of the protagonist's unknown will appear when she defies Grandmother's authority and rewrites the gaps and spaces in the latter's “extra special notebook” (p. 300) with fragments

of the voices and narratives that she's heard, as well as her own words: "By now I know Grandmother's words by heart. I leap over the gaps in her words, the times she stops her stories with her lips clamped tight. Into those spaces I slide my mother's words, and the bully's, and the Old Priest's [. . .]. I creak my own tentative words into the leftover spaces, look at Grandmother sideways to see if she'll notice" (p. 300). As she develops her own voice, the assertion of her self becomes more prominent: "I pick up my pen. I make my first mark, hesitant, then another, more firmly. Then another" (p. 323). Unlike the pen used to record Grandmother's narrative, the one that "flies out of my hand," the pen used to express her emerging self "fits neatly between my thumb and forefinger" (p. 323).

In the analysis above, we find that the spaces and gaps in-between Grandmother's words are filled with narrative fragments borrowed from the novel's other characters, including her mother, the bully, and the nuns; all these varying voices and subjectivities contribute to the subversion of Grandmother's hold over the protagonist's life pattern. As the last pages of the text emphasise, the protagonist's life pattern has also been influenced by the different and conflicting signifying meanings that the other characters carry within their own private world:

My life pattern was laid out by my grandmother, my mother, my disappeared father, the rich man, the lover, the nuns, the mad sailor, all the twistings and turnings of their stories, the walking and slights and yearnings and sighings and hatings and weepings that they did and did not do. All the stories they told, and did not tell. (p. 312)

As an embodiment of the fragmented histories and memories gathered over the years, the grotesque body should be considered as a patchwork composed of identities other than Grandmother's. In fact, I would argue that the different narratives serve a vital function as an alternative discursive model of identity for the protagonist, and are thus integral to her quest for an individual self. In this way, the grotesque body reaffirms the ongoing processes of change in the ambivalent "in-between" gaps and spaces of the subjectivity; these interstices mark the places that appear in-between each repetitive allegorical pattern, represented by "the stories they told, and did not tell." Once again, we find that the processes of transformation are dependent on the discursive structures that produced the censored subject in the first place. For the protagonist then, the act of narration in itself is a transformative process, for as she experiments with words and meanings belonging to others, she also learns to redeploy different significations for the self. The paradox of locating the self through the trope of censorship thus resonates with the double-edged meanings of loss and gain, as each identity that the protagonist experiments with involves both self-censorship and self-revelation.

Of the many stories that she's listened to, the protagonist realizes that there is one other person whom she truly resembles — her missing father, the crocodile. Like the protagonist, the "crocodile's back is bowed" (p. 324) by "the weight of all the jokes and jibes, the petty slights and discriminations accumulated over the years; all the back-bitings, jealousies and injustices involved in the scramble for favour, the aches of being owned body and soul" (p. 324). Subjected to the narratives of others, and reproduced as legend, a saying, or a charm to ward off bad luck, the crocodile and its "hunched shape" is ultimately a grotesque

construct, a collage of “all the hinted-at secrets and half-told stories that pattern the years” (p. 324). Similarly, the “croc doesn’t burn up the past, he sifts through it like treasure”, as does the protagonist (p. 324). The crocodile bears more than just a likeness to the protagonist, there is also a strong bond of affinity between them. While with the crocodile, the protagonist re-discovers the freedom involved in a “madcap dance and run”, the adventure of “[slashing] through jungle cobwebs”, and the joys of “laughter” (p. 323). Through the crocodile, the protagonist not only renews her acquaintance with that part of her self that has been lost in Grandmother’s scheming plans, but she also locates an identity she is comfortable with: “Face to face the croc and I run our hands over each other, our face-to face skins hold no terrors” (p. 325). Unlike the “shivering and shaking” that accompanied the moment of dis-identification with Grandmother, the identification with the crocodile is a time of “discovery, not fear” for it also marks the moment when she realizes her true self (p. 325). By this time, the protagonist comes to her own conclusion about the crocodile, one that opposes grandmother’s views: “The croc I know is not the evil creature my grandmother tells me” (p. 324). Instead, she agrees with her mother’s opinion: “As my mother says, he’s merely a creature whose luck is rather bad” (p. 324).

In every respect, the crocodile, or the Lizard Boy, is the complete antithesis to Grandmother. While the latter nurtures the memories of her past “like a special hate” (p. 313), “twisting her already twisted hands” (pp. 298-9) in her spiralling madness, Lizard Boy “practised forgetting” (p. 244). With “[n]o memory”, the Lizard Boy symbolically has “[n]o past” and “[n]o future” (p. 275); yet it is the very nature of this absence of past and future that he is also enabled to rewrite his entire life: “People like this special. Make their own luck. Their own future, their own past” (p. 279). Once again, the novel brings into play the double-edged sign of loss and gain through the paradox of forgetting and self-affirmation, and that the transformation of the censored subject depends on this paradox. Through the crocodile, or the Lizard Boy, the novel makes emphatic the freedom and the joys involved in forgetting, or letting go the past. Without a memory to burden his body or to torture his mind, and without a past to hold him back, the Lizard Boy is free to transform into King Crocodile, while his disappearance contributes to the growth of his legendary status. Lizard Boy’s transformation occurs on the day when he “stands up straight” and rebels “against the patterned fixity of the years” (p. 324): “The Lizard Boy stared [. . .] at his lengthening limbs, his shortening backbone, his face shrinking to size” (p. 249). The protagonist describes this transformation as the “crocodile fury” (p. 325), a fury that designates the end of one life cycle and the beginning of another: “When the crocodile fury hits there’s a wild urge to run. The in-between time is over, the child shed, the young woman assumed. Everything, the view out the window, the ground, the air, the world, is irrevocably changed. The patterns are rearranged” (p. 325).

The protagonist’s experience of the crocodile fury, the “shivering and shaking that’s barely noticeable at first” (p. 303) coincides with her “instant” of “perfect clarity” when all the “patterns are rearranged.” The crocodile fury experienced by the protagonist is not only a powerful moment of illumination, but it is also a reflection of the ambivalent subjective states churning within as she contemplates the meaning of Grandmother’s plan: “All my life’s walking and listening and waiting bubbles up my throat, all my years of treading the path of Grandmother’s plan. The trembles turn into giggles and small shards of laughter” (p. 304). The beginning and the end of her life cycle is thus accompanied by emotional upheaval as the

protagonist's fury changes into laughter and tears: "I am laughing. I am holding my sides with laughter, brushing the tears that spout from my eyes" (p. 326). Indeed, the celebration of the censored subject's transformation and "self-regenerative strength would be incomplete without the accompanying awareness that life encompasses pain and joy, anger and laughter" (Chin, 1999).

Like a "train on a track" (p. 305), the subtle but decisive changes taking place in the subjective interiority are irreversible, and cannot be stopped until the protagonist takes on a "new" body and a "new" identity. The "new" identity that she decides to take ironically belongs to the lover; this indication is made earlier in the text when the protagonist steps into the lover's ghostly "footprints" and makes a discovery: "The lover's footprints curl around my feet like well-worn shoes" (p. 66). The censored subject's transformation into a "beautiful woman" is complete once she dons the lover's gown (p. 328). By assuming the body of her Grandmother's "oldest enemy" the protagonist significantly lays the ghost of the past to rest by setting it free (p. 56). At the same time, she releases herself from the suffocating binds of the past where the other censored subjectivities lay trapped. By sifting through the various "herstories" — Grandmother's refusal to forget, the mother's desire to forget, and the bully's obsession with old photos — the protagonist realizes that the only way to end Grandmother's "unfinished business" is to erase the effects of power that have "travel[led] an indirect route" through three generations of memories and narratives (p. 327, 28). Like the Lizard Boy, the protagonist must forget the past to start anew. But first, she must empty the self of Grandmother's inscriptions and rules:

I'm still laughing as I tug at the ribbons fastening my too-tight braid. I ease Grandmother's leaf and root collection bag from my waist, dig into its folds for the never-fail matches and ghostburning candles she makes me wherever I go. [. . .] I crumple the matches and candles, slip their pieces into the grave. I slide Grandmother's strongest amulet pouch from under my tongue, toss it into the grave where perhaps a lily will grow. I lift my skirt to piss on it for good measure. This spot: the end of my second life cycle. The beginning of the next cycle, where the lover's footprints have left my feet and are pointing. (pp. 327-328)

As Chin (1999) points out, for "both the protagonist and the lover to be truly liberated from the chains of the past, they have to travel the path of forgetfulness, the way Lizard Boy did. Hence a lily, 'the flower that makes people forget their troubles' and which the lover is named after), must grow in the grave where the past is buried. (p. 145)" The text thus argues that freedom can only be located when all previous relationships and bonds are broken, and when the inscribed self is released from the authoritative narratives of history and memory. By turning away from Grandmother's memory, and her vengeance, and by embracing the joy of liberation that is embodied by the lover — "her joy is something I can touch" — only then can the protagonist begin a new chapter, a new life cycle (329). The shedding of old associations, even the relationships formed during childhood, delineates the paradox of loss and gain through the symbolic death of the protagonist and the subsequent rebirth of a new identity and self.

The concluding picture of the protagonist's transformation, as positive as it may be (since it carries the knowledge of female agency and liberation), should not be taken as conclusive. The trope of forgetting

merely signals the start of the “next cycle”, albeit in a new direction and in a new space: “East, towards the sea” (p. 329). And the sea, for all its promise of rich possibilities and choices, is still an unknown territory. The blanking-out of the old self thus marks the start of another passage of rites where new rules, inscriptions, and meanings have to be learnt. In this sense, the journey of the gendered subject is far from over. Moreover, by becoming the beautiful lover, the protagonist also inherits her “[s]trange” and changeable underwater forms — “dragon-shape, the reptile-shape, the fish-shape” (p. 135). As Bakhtin describes it, the grotesque body is always in the process of “outgrow[ing] itself, transgress[ing] its own limits” (p. 26); it will always retain its ambivalent and contradictory characteristics. Through the postcolonial allegory, we see an ongoing dialectical relationship operating in the doubling structures of CF, as erasure entails reinscription, while loss involves gain, and vice-versa. This ongoing dynamic highlights the “unfinished” nature of the subject’s construction in the system, as the authoritative discourses of censorship are turned into individual stories of redemption, hope, and courage.

Notes:

¹ In another article, “Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World”, Slemon notes that resistance to authority implies an earlier acknowledgment of prescribed boundaries in place; hence any theory of resistance is “always *necessarily* complicit in the apparatus it seeks to transgress” (p. 37).

² See Chin (2006) on why essentialist views of censorship and its invariable association with oppression and powerlessness are problematic. This article also looks at the ways in which women in particular are subjected to the double structures of prohibition and censorship in both cultural and public domains.

³ Transformation is conventionally associated with the liberal ideal of individual freedom and agency since it suggests the individual’s potential for growth and change. In the text however, not all the transformations bear such positive connotations. Thus my use of the word “transformation” is mainly to indicate the change in subjectivity and bodily intention and/or agency, and the connotations it carries must be read contextually.

⁴ Slemon’s concept of postcolonial allegory is influenced by Paul de Man’s “The Rhetoric of Temporality”. According to de Man, the repetition of signs in the allegory, which he calls the “rhetoric of temporality,” is necessarily maintained by certain codes of recognition established by the previous allegorical sign: “But this relationship between signs necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element; it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* [. . .] of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority” (p. 207).

⁵ The meeting between Asia and the West is hilariously recounted in the story of “Mad Sailor” in CF. Shipwrecked and marooned in a foreign land, the mad sailor ran away at his first sight of the native

inhabitants whom he assumed were “cannibals”, whereas in fact they were “[s]imple fisherfolk” (p. 22, 21). This comic moment of misidentification results in the mad sailor getting lost in the jungle. Years after this meeting, the locals who “rolled the first pale man’s name in their mouths” have since mispronounced the name as “Mat Salleh”; this enduring hybrid name is both an appropriation of the original name and the conception of a new linguistic form (p. 24).

⁶ In order to discipline Grandmother’s uncontrollable behaviour, the other servants lock her up in the place she hates most, the punishment room: “The punishment room was in the lowest part of the house, the furthest corner of the basement. Its walls were two feet thick, its door barely shuddering though her fists swelled up red” (p. 10). The lover too is imprisoned here when she rejects the rich man. Within these impenetrable walls, the rich man attempts to subjugate the lover by playing on her fear; “her terror was a thing he could touch” (p. 253).

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The Universal Basic Education as an Effective Strategy for Meeting the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria.

By Michael U. C. Ejieh

Abstract

The leaders of 189 countries of the world and their countries now face the challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals which they set for themselves during the Millennium Summit of September 2000. Although significant progress has been made by many countries towards the attainment of these goals, it has been noted that the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa are lagging behind. Nigeria, one of the countries of this region, has widened access to primary and junior secondary education with the hope of achieving some of the Millennium Development Goals. This paper addresses the roles of teacher education in the achievement of both the goals of universal basic education scheme in the country and some education related Millennium Development Goals and draws their implications for quality teacher education.

Key Words: Millennium Development Goals; teacher education; Nigeria; universal basic education; educational quality.

Introduction

In September 2000 189 world leaders met at the Millennium Summit and committed themselves and their countries to eight goals known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed at meeting the needs of the world's poorest people (UNDP, 2005). These goals resulted from deliberations on how to make significant, measurable improvements to people's lives, with the ultimate objective of reducing poverty throughout the world. The eight goals, which are to be met in partnership with the world's leading

development institutions by the target date of 2015 are to: eradicate extreme hunger and poverty; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and, develop a global partnership for development. For each of these goals, the world leaders established yardsticks for measuring results, not just for the developing countries but also for the developed countries that assist in providing the funds for development programmes, and for the multilateral institutions that help countries implement them (UNDP, 2005).

The attainment of these goals has been a challenge to the nations of the world and significant progress has been recorded worldwide (United Nations, 2005). The progress made has, however, not been uniform across the world, or with respect to specific goals. It has been observed that Sub-Saharan African countries are lagging well behind. These countries still have continuing food insecurity, rising extreme poverty, high child and maternal mortality and a large number of people are still living in slums.

The federal government of Nigeria faces the challenge of meeting the MDGs, and believes (rightly) that the attainment of the goals will be put in jeopardy as long as the human and material resources of the country remain untapped. One of the strategies adopted by the country in her multi-pronged approach towards attaining these goals and meeting the needs of people is the empowerment of people through education. Early and ambitious investment in basic education is also endorsed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its capacity to foster gender equity and sustained economic growth. Investing in any form of education, however, can only have the intended impact if there are well trained and competent teachers. This paper addresses the role of quality teacher education in meeting some of the goals of the millennium development goals in Nigeria and the implications of this for quality teacher education in the country. It begins by highlighting the major objectives of the Universal Basic Education programme in the country and its relevance to the meeting of some of the MDGs, and the attendant demand for qualified and competent teachers in the country.

Universal Basic Education and the MDGs

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was launched in the country in 1999 and passed into law in 2004 as one of the strategies aimed at implementing the educational component of the MDGs. Before the commencement of the scheme, the Nigerian educational structure comprised six years of primary education, three of junior secondary, three of senior secondary and four of tertiary education. Primary education was free but not compulsory. Although universal primary education (UPE) was launched nationwide in 1976, even before the world leaders established it as one of the MDGs, limited success was achieved as attendance was not made compulsory for pupils of school-going age. With the passage of the UBE Act, all tiers of government in the country are mandated to provide free, compulsory nine-year universal basic education of primary and junior secondary school age. Parents are required to ensure that they register for and complete the basic education cycle. There are sanctions for parents who

do not comply. In addition to free tuition, the Act provides for free services in all public primary and junior secondary schools (Obong, 2006)

In order to ensure effective implementation of the UBE, the Act established the Universal Basic Education Commission, with prescribed functions, membership terms and structure. Universal Basic Education Boards (UBEBS) were also established at the State and Local Government levels. The Commission set for itself some short- and medium- term objectives with appropriate performance indicators. Some of the objectives include the widening of access to primary and junior secondary education, periodic review and effective implementation of the curriculum, improving gender equity, reducing the spread of HIV and mitigating the impact of AIDS as well as mobilizing and developing partnerships with international agencies, private and local communities (Obong, 2006).

A cursory glance at some of these objectives shows that they are targeted at achieving the basic components of the MDGs such as universal primary education, gender equality, combating HIV/AIDS, and developing global partnerships for development. The formation of the UBE was thus one of the approaches adopted by the Nigerian government to meet some of the MDGs and also fulfill its commitment to Education For All (EFA). In fact, the Act goes beyond the requirements for meeting these MDGs as it also encompasses programmes for early childhood care, adult literacy programmes, special programmes for nomadic populations, and various non-formal programmes for children and youth who are out of school. Effective implementation of these programmes in the country will surely go a long way towards achieving the first MDG: the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty, in which capacity education is a powerful tool. This is given expression in Nigeria's plan document entitled *National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy* (NEEDS), in which education is recognised as a vital transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment (National Planning Commission, 2005). The document which was prepared by the government in its efforts to meet both the development challenges of Nigeria and the MDGs, acknowledges that the delivery of education in the country has suffered from years of neglect with some 49% of the teaching force being unqualified.

In order to ensure that those who complete the primary and secondary school programmes of the UBE scheme acquire the literacy, numeracy, and basic life skills needed to live meaningful lives and contribute to national development, therefore, the NEEDS document set some goals for education including improving the quality of education at all levels including teacher education. This is no doubt in recognition of the role of education in the empowerment of children who constitute about half of the Nigerian population (National Planning Commission, 2005) as well as adults in the drive toward the attainment of the MDGs. It is also a recognition of the importance of quality teacher education programmes in the production of teachers that will be capable of imparting knowledge of various types to pupils, increasing their acquisition of useful life skills, and imparting healthful habits to them, among other things. In order to meet the requirements for the universal basic education scheme (which will ultimately lead to the attainment of the second MDG i.e. the universal primary education), however, Nigeria needs about 40,000 teachers (Obong, 2006). For these teachers to be effective, they must be products of well designed quality teacher education programmes. Otherwise, the nine years of free and compulsory education provided for in the Universal

Basic Education Act could amount to nine years of mere attendance.

Teacher Education and MDGs

Quality teacher education programmes, apart from producing competent teachers for the education system, can also contribute to the attainment of MDGs in various ways. It is obvious that the attainment of the universal primary education component of the MDGs depends on the availability of teachers in sufficient numbers and of sufficient quality to complete the task. For the universal primary education to have the intended impact on the learners, their teachers must be capable of imparting permanent literacy and numeracy and some useful communication and life skills to them. Such teachers cannot accomplish these goals without undergoing a relevant teacher education programme of good quality. Other possible contributions of viable teacher education programmes to the achievement of MDGs include providing teacher education institutions with appropriate courses in citizenship education, and education for sustainable the environment; useful life skills such as healthful living to reduce the disease burden and risk of HIV/AIDS, decision-making and planning for the future including marriage, relevant aspects of adult education, and, among other things, enlightening mothers about childcare and family planning for improving maternal health and reducing mortality. Adequately exposing the right teachers to such courses under competent trainers will equip them with relevant knowledge and skills, which they can transmit to children and even adults with whom they interact and thereby increase the prospects of not only meeting the goal of universal primary education and other MDGs. It may appear difficult or even unreasonable to add all these courses to a teacher education programme in which students are already carrying full loads. This problem may be resolved by adding them to the list of existing electives and appropriately guiding student teachers into registering for them.

The United Nations Secretary-General has expressed optimism at the possibility of the Millennium Goals being reached worldwide but “only if we break with business as usual” (United Nations, 2005: 1). It is observed in this paper that this dictum is of particular relevance to the situation in Nigeria with regard to quality teacher education. Although the federal government of Nigeria believes that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers, quality is rarely an issue either in the recruitment of teacher candidates or in their training (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1998). It is common knowledge in Nigeria that candidates for teacher education are the generally academically weak students who do not aspire to more prestigious professions (Akinpelu, 1972; Fadipe, 1992). This is mainly because of the low status of teaching as a profession in the country. Many of the students in the nation’s faculties of education are those who could not gain admission into other faculties and departments and have chosen to enter into teacher education programme as a last resort. Most of them are, therefore, neither interested in nor committed to the programme. Although the federal government has prescribed the National Certificate in Education (NCE) as the minimum qualification for teaching, many of the students seeking admission into the colleges of education are those that could not pass the university matriculation examination for entry into the nation’s universities. A large proportion of the students in colleges are those that do not have the requisite

entry qualifications but are admitted through the colleges' preliminary studies programmes (Ejeh, 2003). Some colleges even admit some of those students who could not pass the relevant papers at the General Certificate of Education (GCE) ordinary level on the condition that the affected students pledge to pass those subjects before they can be awarded their certificates following the completion of their studies in the colleges. The *Education Sector Status Report* acknowledges that there appears to be many opportunities for anyone who is interested and minimally qualified to enter the teaching profession (Federal Ministry of Education, 2003). In fact one does not necessarily have to be interested in teaching before one enters the teacher education programme in either a university or a college of education.

The issue of quality hardly receives the desired emphasis in the training of student teachers in either colleges of education or in the universities. With the lack or decay of necessary infrastructure in the nation's tertiary institutions and poor funding, the student teachers are not exposed to enriched teacher education programmes. My own experience has shown that student teachers receive inadequate attention from either cooperating teachers in placement schools or their college or university supervisors. In most cases, regular class teachers in the placement schools abandon the classrooms for student teachers as soon as they arrive for teaching practice, thereby affording the latter no opportunities to learn some teaching skills from such teachers. The end result of the poor preparation of teacher candidates is that many of them are not able to give their pupils quality education after the completion of their courses (Anikweze, 1991). Commenting on the quality of the present day teachers, Nuhu Yaqub, the vice-chancellor of one of the Nigerian universities has said that the teacher of today is hardly a teacher because teachers are not as knowledgeable as they ought to be and that they cannot transmit knowledge as they ought to (*Daily Sun*, May 2, 2008). The *Education Sector Status Report* also notes that there are complaints that the teachers produced by the part-time and sandwich programmes mounted by both the universities and colleges of education in the country can barely write an assignment (Federal Ministry of Education, 2003).

The products of teacher education programmes of Nigerian universities and colleges of education are bound to be of low quality as the three major factors that determine quality (i.e. the process of selecting teacher education candidates, the programme of study during the training of the student teachers, and the institutional factors which include staffing, physical facilities, and funding) do not work in favour of academic excellence in most Nigerian teacher education institutions. Quality in this respect refers to the steps taken by higher education institutions responsible for producing teachers to make sure that they are able to perform their jobs or render their services effectively. In other words, the steps they take to ensure that they produce 'quality teachers' instead of the more traditional 'qualified teachers' who just meet certain certification requirements (Cooper & Alvarado, 2006). If teachers are not able to teach primary school pupils well, as is presently the case with many 'qualified' Nigerian primary and secondary school teachers or, if they are not able to impart useful skills to them, then the MDG of achieving universal primary education will be an illusion. This and other education related MDGs can hardly be achieved if there is no change in the present approach to the recruitment and training of teacher education candidates. In order to produce teachers that are capable of making a difference to their students' academic performance, thereby contributing towards achieving both the country's objectives of basic education and the MDG of universal primary education, attention should be turned from a concern about having sufficient numbers of teachers

to concern about the number of quality teachers. There is, therefore, the need for a break with business as usual, in regard to teacher education in Nigeria.

Some Implications for Quality Teacher Education

Having a break with business as usual implies that higher education institutions that are responsible for the production of the nation's teachers have to pay more attention to quality assurance. Teacher education candidates should not be the academically weak students or the rejects from other academic programmes. Producing 40,000 or more teachers of weak academic background is not what the nation requires to meet the goals of universal primary education. Such teachers may not be able to adequately impact upon the academic development of the pupils who pass through the system. In other words, doing more of the same thing or producing more teachers of the same quality as the ones referred to above, will not lead to improvement in the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and other life skills by pupils who go through the universal basic education programme in the country. Having a break with business as usual implies that only the candidates who genuinely meet the admission requirements for teacher education should be offered admission into the nation's tertiary institutions for teacher education. In the opinion of this writer, instead of lowering the standards for admitting students into teacher education programmes, as is presently the practice in some of the colleges of education, the standards should be raised. It might be argued that even with the relatively low standards for admission maintained by some higher education institutions for teacher education candidates, it is difficult to get enough candidates for the programmes. But it is possible that some bright people who might have liked to enter the teaching profession might be dissuaded from doing so because they would not like to rub shoulders with the usually weak candidates who opt for the profession. It stands to reason that only a few people, if any, will aspire to enter a profession that is seemingly meant for academically weak people. Perhaps, adhering to merit and high standards in the selection of teacher education candidates may, in the course of time, begin to attract more and brighter candidates into teacher education programmes in higher education institutions and eventually enhance the status of the teaching profession in the country.

In addition to selecting only qualified candidates, higher education institutions should design appropriate courses and programmes aimed at equipping the teacher candidates with appropriate skills that will enable them not only to effectively impart literacy, numeracy, communication and other life skills, but they should also expose them to the techniques of teaching adults. This will enable them participate effectively in adult education classes where they would have opportunities of teaching adults healthful living and raising their awareness about HIV/AIDS and other diseases and thereby contribute directly towards the achievement of other MDGs. In order to enhance the quality of teacher education programmes, higher education institutions should, in their recruitment processes, ensure that only appropriately qualified educators teach student teachers. Steps should be taken to ensure that student teachers actually benefit from teaching practice exercises. A true partnership approach to the exercises should be adopted with greater collaboration between teacher education institutions and their placement schools. The roles of both the

teachers in the placement schools and those of the student teachers' lecturers should be clearly defined to each party and the former made to play more active roles in teaching student teachers how to teach instead of virtually abandoning their classrooms for student teachers.

It is likely that adhering to quality and high standards in the education of future teachers may lead to Nigeria falling short on the number of teachers required for achieving universal basic education by the year 2015, but it may be better to have relatively few and effective teachers than to have very many ineffective ones. Ensuring quality in the education of teachers may bring about a delay in the achievement of universal primary education in the country but achieving these objectives later is better than not achieving them. In fact, it has already been observed in the Millennium Development Goal Report of 2005 that it is unlikely that the country will be able to meet most of the goals by 2015 (cited in Igbuzor, 2006). The universal basic education scheme adopted in the country is an effective strategy for achieving universal primary education of expected quality only to the extent that serious efforts are made by educational administrators and teacher education institutions to produce quality teachers. It may be better to achieve this and other education-related goals at a later date than to have poor graduates of teacher education programmes who may not have anything to bring about learning in their pupils.

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Society Cannot be Flat: Hierarchy and Power in *Gulliver's Travels*.

By **Monica F. Jacobs**

In many of his prose works, Jonathan Swift carefully establishes the persona of the narrator and fictional author, who tells whatever tale he has in mind. Swift purposefully endows these men with particular traits and backgrounds, and Lemuel Gulliver, the fictional travelogue writer of *Gulliver's Travels*, is no exception to this rule. In *The Pen is Mightier than the Whore: Imperialism and Cultural Authority in Spenser and Swift*, Lucille G. Appert uses *Gulliver's Travels* to show how Swift uses his writings to reform society; this argument, however, is fundamentally flawed because Swift satirizes Gulliver's own desire for social mobility by tormenting him with the persistence of social hierarchy. Swift controls Gulliver's voice and makes him unreliable and untrustworthy while inserting Gulliver into a variety of social situations with ever-changing conventions. Gulliver proves an excellent translator in every complicated world in which he finds himself, but he continually seeks to improve his position in the hierarchy, to be on equal footing with the characters Swift establishes as his betters. The author wins the power struggle here, denying Gulliver's attempts to change the status quo and thereby reinforcing it.

Right from the start of the text Gulliver is clearly established as a self-conscious narrator, as defined in Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*; the text is fronted by notes from the "author" on the construction and publication of these tales. Gulliver's self-conscious narrative position is shown to be somewhat limited, however – he takes seriously this section of the text that the true author, Swift, makes obviously ironic. *Gulliver's Travels* even fits with Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of the comic novel: one that incorporates a multiplicity of language and belief systems that are "utilized to refract the author's intentions, are unmasked and destroyed as something false" (311). Swift goes beyond the languages Bakhtin expects – those of class, gender, and ethnicity – by creating different languages and social systems and bringing his author character into them. Bakhtin adds to his explanation of the characteristics of the comic novel by explaining that the languages and belief systems the "the posited author or teller" encounters must be distanced from the true author's belief system and language in order to achieve the comic effect "on the one hand to show the object of representation in a new light (to reveal new sides or dimensions in it) and on the other hand to illuminate in a new way the "expected" literary horizon, that horizon against which

the particularities of the teller's tale are perceivable" (Bakhtin 312-313). Swift exceeds these criteria with the construction of *Gulliver's Travels*, as he takes great pains to establish a narrator who is starkly different from himself.

Many scholars and historians have analyzed Swift's life and writing in an effort to annunciate his beliefs and separate them from those he espoused in his satirical works. Edward Said claims in "Swift as Intellectual" that Swift wrote in support of "the polity; the Church of England, the classics, and the monarch (those three institutions Swift believed were full comprised in the right-minded sentiments of a Church of England man)" (423). Said calls him "a traditional intellectual—a cleric" and describes him as "not well-born" and "an outsider" (431). These descriptive terms help establish Swift as someone who could view the social hierarchy from a narrowly defined position, outside of power but tasked with maintaining its structures. A minister in the Church of Ireland, Swift's religion served as a basis for his support of the existing social structures, which came with the idea that God had placed each human in the proper position and to change that would be to work against the will of God. In *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, R.F. Foster names Swift among the primary figures of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy of the eighteenth century and makes clear that this movement came with an Anglican class consciousness that gave men like Swift position, in his case a Deanship (167-171). While Foster gives much emphasis to the anti-English feelings of the time, he notes that "Swift affected to believe that the English government always chose holy and godly Englishmen for Irish appointments, but they invariably happened to be murdered by bandits somewhere around Chester, who stole their letters of appointment and proceeded to Ireland in their stead" (174). The contradictory positions represented in this statement help explain Swift's desire to maintain the status quo—not changing the system despite his obvious recognition of its flaws. This idea falls in line with what Foster explains as "something characteristic of the Ascendancy caste: a certain savagery of mind, amplified by the subconscious recognition of the fundamental insecurity of their political and social position" (176). Swift, therefore, needs the existing social hierarchy with all of its flaws to create the life he has while wanting it to give him more. He cannot get more out of the hierarchy and does not, which Foster and others include in his frustrations. Out of Swift's conflicted consciousness came Lemuel Gulliver and his odd travels.

In some ways Lemuel Gulliver is like Swift but he differs greatly in his assessment of the possibilities open to him in the social hierarchy. Early on, the text makes plain to the reader that Gulliver is a man trying to better his position in England through his voyages: "My father had a small estate in Nottinghamshire; I was the third of five sons. He sent me to Emanuel College in Cambridge . . . where I resided for three years, and applied myself close to my studies; but the charge of maintaining me (although I had a scanty allowance) was too great for a narrow fortune, I was bound apprentice to Mr. James Bates, an eminent surgeon in London" (Swift 49). In his 1953 essay, *Lemuel Gulliver: Middle-Class Englishman*, Edward A. Block calls this description "the middle-class stamp" because "if [his father] had a large estate, he would have been a member of either the upper class or the upper-middle class; if he had had no estate, he would have been a member of the lower class or the lower-middle class" (474-475). Block continues with a discussion of the context offered by Nottinghamshire as the home region of Gulliver and to analyze the content of his education at Emmanuel College, but the simple fact that Gulliver was educated and could

not to continue his education is significant. Eighteenth century England was a place in which education was a key to certain positions in society, the highest positions that a man like Gulliver could achieve and the positions Swift himself both achieved and hoped for. Gulliver admits early on that he wanted a place in society that was closed off to him by lack of money. Gulliver's continued decisions to leave home for sea voyages that better his finances and his position are related directly to this; Swift needs him to be the kind of character who will venture out for socially encouraged gains. In order to poke fun at the idea of a mobile society, Swift must begin with a character who not only believes this is possible but has reason to seek it, and Gulliver is that man, beginning neither high nor low in the social structure, wanting the hierarchical currency of education, but being prevented from attaining this goal. Instead, he becomes a sailor and a surgeon, both merit-based trades, who learns that survival and recognition can come through skill and personal achievement. In short, he is ripe for Swift's narrative game against social mobility.

This is the man who arrives in Lilliput and is carried to the king of the tiny race of humans in Part I. Gulliver begins as a prisoner, but because his size is ultimately useful to the king, he is freed. The problem with his entrance into this new society is that while Gulliver claims to want nothing more than to be of use to the king, his actions say otherwise. He begins by learning the Lilliputian language, which is certainly to communicate, but he also pays special attention to their social customs and takes part in as many significant events as he can, even spending several pages denigrating the methods by which men win their titles and official offices (Swift 65-67). Gulliver himself is given a title by the king, something he is proud of mostly because it means he is better than other men. He makes special note of his being of higher rank than Flimnap the Lilliputian treasurer, the enemy who ultimately gets him sent away (Swift 90). Gulliver alters the structure of the hierarchy, however, when he is ordered by the king to destroy the enemy fleet from Blefuscu. Gulliver refuses, saying he does not believe this action to be right, and finally refuses to "be an instrument of bringing a free and brave people into slavery" (Swift 79). Gulliver frames this occurrence as a fit of conscience, but in approaching this text as one in which the self-conscious narrator is operated by an author with a satiric motive, readers can connect this with the other clues Swift has dropped, including Gulliver's desire to maintain an unstained reputation by arguing against the unrealistic rumor of his affair with a Lilliputian woman of high rank. That connection reveals Gulliver's desire not just to "fit" into this oddly sized world but his desire to climb the social ladder and gain a position that puts him above these small people in more than physical stature. Swift's clues are dropped intentionally, and in this first adventure, he reveals his narrator to be a man intent on bettering himself. Here, however, Gulliver's attempt is conflated with his own ideas of "policy as well as justice" as soon as he feels comfortable in his social position. Gulliver's attempt ultimately fails and contributes to his forced departure from Lilliput.

After a short stop over with the "enemy" people of Blefuscu, Gulliver returns to England. This first short interlude between Gulliver's wanderings is dealt with quickly at both the end of the first book and the beginning of the second. Gulliver is careful to tell that he "was not in any danger of leaving my family upon the parish" as he had left them with a substantial sum of money and a good house, which the reader is to assume was purchased after his return (Swift 101). The reader is also told that Gulliver's son is at school and his daughter "at her needlework," which gives a picture of the economic status of Gulliver's family at this time. They are people of leisure, able to afford comfortable surroundings and education.

Gulliver also claims that he only stayed two months with them because of his “insatiable desire of seeing foreign countries,” but he also allows shortly after in the same passage that he went “in hopes of improving my fortunes” (Swift 101). Gulliver does not mean to improve his educational fortunes or enrich his knowledge of other lands, but to return with more money. He believes travel to be one way of finding new opportunities for his family.

Once in Brobdingnag, Gulliver’s physical position is reversed from that of his first adventure as he becomes the small among the very large, and Swift uses this altered dynamic to show clearly that Gulliver’s actions in Lilliput were not inspired by his physical dominance but are, in fact, a part of his nature. Here, he again learns the language quickly and is able to communicate. Again he seeks to better his position, and the first step is to “belong” to the Queen rather than a common farmer who works him too hard. Gulliver gains leisure from this transaction, in which he is actually purchased, and claims this as his motive. He even seems to congratulate himself on bettering the position of the farmer’s daughter, Glumdalclitch, by bringing her to court as his caretaker. These thoughts of Gulliver’s reveal his true feelings: position is of supreme importance in a social hierarchy. Why else would he be happy about taking a child away from her family to a strange place where she is a servant? Because she is now a servant in the royal court, and if one cannot be great, one can at least be near greatness. Gulliver certainly maintains that in his time in Brobdingnag and pushes beyond it in some ways, most notably in his reactions to the royal servants who care for him. Gulliver is proud to have workmen to order around and servants to carry him in whatever style he chooses. Unlike his life in Lilliput, Gulliver is powerless in this society of giants except through what power he gains by position, and Swift makes sure the reader takes note of Gulliver’s belief in himself as endowed with power through the approval of royalty. This power allows Gulliver to survive, just as it did in Lilliput, but in a very different way. As a giant among the small, Gulliver would have starved without the support of the king who ordered huge meals created for him, but in Brobdingnag, when he is too small for the world around him, Gulliver would have been invisible and likely dead. He ignores the fact that the farmer rescued him once he has climbed to a higher social plane and does not acknowledge that his pride is in being treated as a well-loved pet, but readers are aware of this distinction.

After several years of living as a pampered pet in Brobdingnag, Gulliver returns to England more by accident than by choice. He closes the narration of his second adventure by emphasizing how small he sees all the things around him on his journey home (Swift 157-158). While Gulliver assumes that this problem is a result of his years among a much larger people, this conclusion does not explain his feeling himself larger than he actually is. Gulliver, however, has also come down in the world, back to a small home and family life. His wife has servants, one of whom opens the door for him upon his return, but a single servant is nothing compared to a carefully tended life he led among the giants (Swift 157). No one carries him or sees to his every need, and no one will build a home or two to suit his needs, as the Queen had ordered done in Brobdingnag. He feels himself larger than his position in his home world because that is what he has become accustomed to. Swift emphasizes this by including Gulliver’s observation that “I began to think my self in Lilliput,” the place where he felt a giant among men and put himself above his allotted social position as a result (157). This mindset wears off, however, and Gulliver blames it on “the great power of habit and prejudice” (Swift 158). Gulliver’s true habits are implied by Swift in these words: he has a habit

of seeking higher position and various societies seem prejudiced against such an idea. Such concepts of power are also evident in Gulliver's own family, as when his wife wants him to "never go to sea anymore," and Gulliver announces "she had not power to hinder me" (Swift 158). Despite having encountered two societies that placed him into their hierarchies and allowed little room for movement, Gulliver allows himself to be lured to sea when Captain William Robinson, with whom he has sailed before, offers him "to be surgeon of the ship; that I should have another surgeon under me besides our two mates; that my salary should be double to the usual pay; and that having experienced my knowledge in sea-affairs to be at least equal to his, he would enter into any engagement to follow my advice, as much as if I shared the command" (Swift 160). A social climbing man of Gulliver's cast could never refuse such an offer, as it gives him power, increased position, and more money.

In this third adventure, Swift sets Gulliver down among people of his own size, eliminating the physicality of the power dynamics from the first two parts. Tossed into a world of equal size and footing, Gulliver is armed with his awareness and ability to understand and translate the world around him, demonstrated clearly in his earlier adventures, and need not fear for his physical needs in quite the same ways as in Lilliput and Brobdingnag. His own values and goals have not changed, however, and he approaches each of the societies in this section with a desire to insert himself into the social hierarchy at the highest possible position and move up. However, Laputa is a place where the people place value on the kinds of knowledge he does not possess—"His Majesty discovered not the least curiosity to enquire into the laws, government, history, religion, or manners of the countries where I had been, but confined his questions to the state of mathematics, and received the account I gave him with great contempt and indifference, though often roused by his flapper on each side" (Swift 171). They do not care that Gulliver can learn other languages quickly, only their own, and they do not care that he survived a pirate attack and a long journey between many islands before coming to them. Gulliver's dissatisfaction with them continues, and he again thinks poorly of the king's ways of governing. This problem can be explained in a number of ways, but it becomes all the more interesting when coupled with the fact that Gulliver converses primarily with people of the lower orders in Laputa, as they are the only inhabitants to converse regularly. In this third adventure, Gulliver cannot climb the social hierarchy because they do not value his way of thinking, his knowledge, or his skills. As such, he leaves the court quickly but spends time in Lagado, the central metropolis of Balnibarbi, trying to understand this society so he can be valued in it. There, he meets Lord Munodi, a former governor of Lagado who has been cast out among his people for thinking differently. Lord Munodi's thinking falls much in line with the things Gulliver knows and values beyond higher-level thinking; he is a man who wants his land to yield crops and his workers to be well fed and productive. He opens the doors of Laputan society to Gulliver, allowing him to see the Grand Academy, where he himself is not welcome for his difference. Gulliver here finally assesses the values of this foreign land and determines he can find no place in it, no hierarchy that allows him any mobility at all.

Before heading home again via Japan, Gulliver visits Glubbudrib, an island here where magic and mysticism are valued. He finds great value and entertainment in the powers possessed by the governor there and has him call up great men from Western history, claiming he desires "scenes of pomp and magnificence," but also learning from the men recognized as the greatest thinkers in history (Swift 197).

Swift's purpose in including this side trip is to communicate something in Gulliver's character, and it is meaningful that Gulliver chooses Alexander the Great, Caesar, Pompey, Descartes, Agrippa, Antony, and others. Gulliver wants readers to know that he is educated and values history and government, but in context of Gulliver's own history of social climbing these scenes emphasize his desire for greatness and association with greatness. Not possessing these powers himself, however, and already bound for home, Gulliver leaves this island after a short visit to return to a social system that can accommodate him.

After a short stop at the court of Luggnagg, Gulliver does return home, and "continued at home with my wife and children about five months in a very happy condition, if I could have learned the lesson of knowing when I was well" (Swift 217). The conclusion of this last sentence seems less like Gulliver's voice and more like Swift's. Gulliver is again in the comfortable house in Redriff, his wife becomes pregnant, but he chooses to leave to "accept an advantageous offer . . . to be captain of the *Adventure*" (Swift 217). The Gulliver who has been narrating these tales would certainly make this choice and not regret it, and at no point does he become a man who would say that he should have been happy and never left home again for his fourth voyage. Frederick N. Smith would place the sneaking of this sentence onto the page among the ways Swift "does not permit his narrator to push his characteristically shifting voices off the page," but makes assessments of the world through Gulliver that he himself would never make (391). This idea is made especially clear when Gulliver's men on the *Adventure* mutiny and put him out to sea. Are readers to assume that Gulliver was an overbearing captain? Gulliver does not tell us, but he does say of another captain whose ship was lost at sea that "he was an honest man, and a good sailor, but a little too positive in his own opinions, which was the cause of his destruction, as it hath been of several others. For if he had followed my advice, he might at this time have been at home with his family, as well as myself" (Swift 217-218). In the same breath, Gulliver tells readers that overconfidence can bring great trouble and is himself overly confident. The message is clear: Gulliver's downfall is his certainty about his perceptions of the world. Hence, his men rebel, and he loses all the potential profit from this trip, left only with the uncertainty of adventure.

The fourth and final stage in Gulliver's adventures finds him in a place where humans are savage creatures with no logic, controlled and owned by rational horses called Houyhnhnms. Gulliver begins his movement in this new country just like all the others, trying to read the social conventions and understand the basics of the language to ask for food and drink. However, Houyhnhnm society is based in family units first but second in a common kindness and acceptance of all individuals, so Gulliver does not have a social structure to climb. It is worth noting that this is the only chapter without a monarchy for Gulliver to serve, but Swift does not remove such social boundaries to write against them. He is forcing Gulliver into a place where position is clearly defined by structures he cannot be a part of, even though those structures, made evident by Gulliver's ultimate banishment, are neatly veiled in equality. Gulliver is moderately rational, as his Houyhnhnm master tells him several times, and is tolerated as such for most of this piece of the narrative, even though he is a Yahoo or irrational beast. This fact is something Gulliver is shocked by and even seeks to hide from the Houyhnhnms with his clothing, certainly because it would cast him into the lowest position possible in this society. Ultimately, he confesses to being a rational Yahoo and begins explaining some of the history and politics of Europe to his Houyhnhnm master, hoping for admiration and

recognition of the great things of which humans are capable. Instead, these stories are met with shock and confusion, as the Houyhnhnm finds no logic or sense in the government structures and intrigues Gulliver describes: “he said, whoever understood the vile nature of yahoos might easily believe it possible for so vile an animal to be capable of every action I had named, if their strength and cunning equaled their malice” (Swift 239). Through exchanges like this, Gulliver begins to see human society and its structures differently, which alters his thinking about hierarchy at last. This shift in thinking coupled with Gulliver’s growing hatred of the Yahoos result in a deep dislike of humanity and the human condition. He much prefers the society of the Houyhnhnms. Unfortunately, this seemingly equal society does have a governing body and social order, and the ruling Houyhnhnms view Gulliver as a threat. He must leave his master and his re-education to return home, which he does out of feelings of duty and obedience. He accepts the social order and its effect on him. This final stroke is Swift’s victory: Gulliver admires a social system that does not allow mobility and does not let him in. Michael McKeon claims this is “the industrious virtue of the progressive protagonist pushed to its limits, so that it breaks open to reveal an ugly core” (179). Gulliver sees the ugly core of humanity, never attributing such characteristics to the Houyhnhnms, and the conclusion of this narrative finds Gulliver at home, continuing his disgust with human beings and conversing only with horses. As such, he has no more concern for the social order or bettering his position in the hierarchy. Frank Palmeri wrongly considers this a representation Gulliver’s belief that he is a “truthteller caught in a society saturated with lies,” but the simple truth is that Gulliver sees the lies and falseness in society and stops participating in the social climbing to which such a society pushes him (242).

Gulliver’s travels change him from a man who wants nothing more than to advance up the social ladder to a man who wants to talk only with horses. He is not insane, as his family assumes, but he has been driven from his long-held values, which are shared by many in his English homeland. Swift has made Gulliver see the impossibility of social change, the rational need for order, and the essential function of established hierarchy. This shift reinforces the problems of social mobility for both the self-conscious narrator, Gulliver, and the reader. The satire that underwrites this text, and the separation of author and character, make this possible. Swift moves Gulliver from place to place, language to language, and social system to social system to show the reader how his desire to gain wealth, power, and position gradually increase only to be taken apart when he looks at human nature from the outside. Lucille Appert claims that Swift “sees [his] writing as a means of reforming society,” but here the subject of reform is Gulliver himself (55).

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Gaining Imperial Paradise: Reading and Rewriting *Paradise Lost* in Colonial Bengal.

By Rajiv Menon

The establishment of British rule in India was contingent upon the reshaping of Indian society. The introduction of English literature in India became an important method for instilling British social ideals in Indian society, as literary study was an effective way of introducing imperial rhetoric in mainstream society. Though educational discourse was officially secular, the interests of British missionaries eventually coalesced with the colonial administration, leading to the insinuation of Christian ideology into British education. As a result, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* became an especially popular text in the colonial curriculum, as it presented a method for teaching tenets of Christianity through the English literary canon. Due to colonial discourse on race and education, this trend was most prominent in the Northeastern state of Bengal, which embraced *Paradise Lost* and integrated it into the colonial Bengali education system. In this paper, I will argue that imperial views on education, race, and conversion colluded with the esteem of the epic tradition in India to establish the popularity of *Paradise Lost* in colonial Bengal. In addition, I will demonstrate how the ubiquitous nature of *Paradise Lost* in Bengal influenced rewritings of Indian epic poetry, as *Paradise Lost* was regarded as a model for the rewriting of epic material. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *The Slaying of Meghanada* and Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World* demonstrate that because of Milton's popularity in colonial Bengal, *Paradise Lost*'s model for rewriting religious material was replicated in the region.

In order to establish British rule in colonial India, it became necessary to present the culture of England as inherently superior to the local culture, and literary study became an imperative method of presenting this view. Thomas Macaulay, the most well known proponent of the institution of English literature into the colonial curriculum, wrote, "[I] have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the Oriental plan of education ("Minute on Indian Education")." Macaulay's views were foundational in the movement to prioritize the use of English literature in India's colonial education system, as its rhetoric was heavily repeated throughout the colonial rule of India. The role of English literature in the perpetuation of

the goals of imperialism has been most clearly articulated by Gauri Viswanathan, who notes that knowledge of English literature soon became directly linked to examinations for the civil service and other administrative positions, as English literature was seen as representative of the ideals and qualities that should be replicated by the colonial subject (2). In addition, the discourse surrounding literary study was used to subjectify the colonized population, through the relationship between the colonial educator and the colonial subject who is to be educated. Viswanathan writes, “A vital if subtle connection exists between a discourse in which those who are to be educated are represented as morally and intellectually deficient and the attribution of moral and intellectual values to the literary works they are assigned to read” (4). English literature was thus utilized to further empower the civilizing mission of colonialism, thus enforcing the subjectification of the Indian.

The popularization of Milton in colonial Bengal was rooted the pseudo-scientific discourse surrounding race and martiality that characterized the ways that the British viewed various regional and religious communities. The colonial administration utilized subjective ethnographies to cement the British policy of “divide and rule”, which sought to fragment India on communal lines. Anthropological discourse was used to declare certain communities, like Sikhs and Rajputs, “martial”, thus targeting them for military conscription. Other communities were declared to be “feminine” and “non-martial” and placed in opposition to the other communities, and targeted as recipients of colonial education (Chowdhury-Sengupta 225). The characterization of a group of people as a “feminine” race was clearly pejorative and was most ubiquitously perpetuated in Bengal. The use of this rhetoric is clearly lacking in any grounding in reality, as it attempted to portray Bengalis, who are defined as a community by regional and linguistic categories, as somehow biologically predisposed towards cowardliness and bookishness (Bayly 201). This was likely a response to the fact that Bengal was seen as a site for potential subversive sedition, and was thus viewed as a threat to colonial rule (Pawha 285). Colonial anthropological discourse thus became a means of disempowering the Bengali population. This characterization of Bengalis made Bengal a prime target for the implementation of Macaulay’s proposed education system, as Bengalis’ supposed timidity and fondness for education made them ideal subjects of the goals of the colonial education system.

Over time, as the colonial system of education became well engrained in colonial Bengali society, the interests of colonial missionaries influenced the colonial education system, which led to the prioritization of John Milton in the colonial curriculum. In the early days of the East India Company, though chaplains were appointed to serve the needs of Europeans in India, missionary work was banned, as officials feared that it would antagonize local religious leaders. Eventually, colonial India was opened to missionaries, who soon became optimistic that their new legal status was a sign that their evangelization would soon be officially supported (Viswanathan 36-37). Though missionaries lacked official administrative capabilities, their social influence soon became visible in the colonial education system, especially as rhetoric of the colonial “civilizing mission” had decidedly evangelical undertones. Missionaries propagated the notion that English literature could not be effectively taught secularly, which eventually began to affect the colonial educational curriculum (47). As arguments against secular education grew, John Milton emerged as an important figure in the colonial education system, though he was introduced into the colonial system as secular literature. Charles Cameron, Thomas Macaulay’s successor as the head of the Council on

Education, used Milton as an example of how English literature was inherently superior to Sanskrit literature. Cameron argued that Sanskrit literature was entrenched in the principles of Hinduism, while “Milton assumes the truth of Christianity, his works do not bear the same relation to the doctrines of Christianity as does Oriental literature to the tenets of the native religious systems” (95). Thus, Milton’s placement in the secular curriculum was justified by way of a comparison to native literature, despite the fact that Milton’s writing could be easily viewed as unambiguously religious in nature. As educational administrators became more sympathetic to the demands of missionaries, Milton was popularized, as “government institutions officially committed to secularism realized they were in effect teaching Christianity through Milton, a ‘standard’ in the literary curriculum whose scriptural allusions regularly sent students scurrying to the Bible for elucidation (The Bible was in every library and was easily accessible to any student who cared to read it)” (85). Since the education system was particularly well established in Bengal, the relationship between the popularity of Milton in the colonial education system and that system’s potential to act as a catalyst for conversion could be most unequivocally noted within this state.

While colonial educators encouraged the teaching of *Paradise Lost* in Bengal, the popularity of the poem was not one-sided. Indian students popularly embraced *Paradise Lost* as the educated population was already well versed with the Indian epic tradition and readily consumed the poem. The poem’s success as a tool for conversion was attributed to its complex portrayal of Satan, which provided a less Orthodox view of Christianity, which was more desirable to individuals who were used to Hinduism’s flexibility and rejection of strict fundamentalism (Joshi 179). For converts, *Paradise Lost* became an alternative introduction to Christianity that allowed for a flexible view of faith that they might not find in straightforward readings of the Bible, as Indian readers were able to find qualities of their own epics in the poem. M.V. Rama Sarma notes that *Paradise Lost* has numerous thematic similarities with *The Mahabharata*, as they both contain “[the concept of heroism, ethical idealism, aesthetic appeal, and [...] insistence on implicit faith in God...Both epics concentrate on the conflict of good and evil and end on a lofty note of idealism and serenity” (124). These resemblances between the two poems encouraged the consumption of *Paradise Lost* in colonial India.

Furthermore, the portrayal of Adam, Eve, and Satan simultaneously presents faults and heroic qualities to both sides of the conflict between good and evil, which is reminiscent of the portrayal of the struggle between the Pandavas and Kauravas, two groups of cousins who are at war for control of the kingdom. Though the Pandavas are supposedly on the side of good, and the Kauravas on the side of evil, neither characterization can be easily contained to just one of these qualities. During the war, Bhima, a Pandava, brutally kills Dushasana and drinks his blood, while members of the Kaurava clan are portrayed as skilled and dedicated warriors, qualities that the poem’s readers are meant to praise (Tickell 46). Those on the side of good are portrayed as capable of terrible violence, while those on the side of evil are given noble qualities. Like *The Mahabharata*’s portrayal of the Pandavas and Kauravas, *Paradise Lost* allows for the attribution of positive qualities to Satan, which contrasts with more simplistic views of good and evil. In Book II of *Paradise Lost*, Satan is described as sitting upon a regal throne, thus ascribing noble qualities to Satan that complicate the way that he was commonly portrayed (Milton 142). This tolerance of a complex view of good and evil allowed for a more popular view of Christianity in colonial India, as it replicates

the existing framework of India's epic tradition.

Both *Paradise Lost* and *The Mahabharata* urge their readers to maintain strict faith in God and present dire ramifications for the failure of characters to fulfill this imperative. Adam and Eve's inability to follow the command of God to never eat from the tree of knowledge is responsible for the fall, and was meant to teach a Christian audience that they must obey divine law. Similarly, Vyasa, the writer of *The Mahabharata* seeks to demonstrate that acting in line with divine sanction is a guarantee of success, while those who act without divine support are not destined for success. When Duryodhana, the leader of the Kauravas, the losing side of the poem's epic war, asks Bishma, the oldest warrior why they are losing despite the fact that they are better prepared for war, Bishma responds, "They must win who, strong in virtue, fight for virtue's stainless laws[.] Double armed the stalwart warrior who is armed in righteous cause" (Qtd. in Sarma 125). Like *Paradise Lost*, *The Mahabharata* teaches that if you are aligned with divine law, you cannot fail, which similarly encourages obedience to the notion of god's will. This didactic commonality allowed for the reading of *Paradise Lost* alongside the local canon, which contributed to the acceptance of the poem.

The portrayal of divine imperative and the fulfillment of God's will in *Paradise Lost* allowed for Indian readers to view the poem in terms of Sanskritic concepts of morality and justice. The Hindu concept of *dharma* became essential to Indian readings of *Paradise Lost*, as it was possible for Indian readers to find their own concepts within the poem, despite its foreign origin. *Dharma* is best described as one's individual sacred duty, and is presented in the two great Indian epics, *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*. Barbara Stoler Miller argues that heroism in Indian tradition is characterized by strict adherence to one's *dharma*, and writes "The rituals of warrior life and the demands of sacred duty define the religious and moral meaning of heroism throughout the *Mahabharata*. Acts of heroism are characterized [...] by the fulfillment of *dharma*, which often involves extraordinary forms of sacrifice, penance, devotion to a divine authority, and spiritual victory over evil" (Miller 3). This is a concept that was heavily instilled into Indian concepts of the hero, as India's most revered heroes exemplified the notion of *dharma*. Rama, the hero of *The Ramayana*, embodies dedication to *dharma*, a principle that would be expected by Indian readers of *Paradise Lost*. Sarma writes of Rama, "Rama views *dharma* as the highest truth and in following *dharma* rigidly he exposes himself to suffering. Rama's steadfast resolve to respect his father's promises to Kaikeyi, his ideal of monogamous marriage his unhesitating acceptance of responsibility to protect the Rishis from the Rakshasas, all these make Rama an exemplar of *dharma*" (Sarma 33). In *Paradise Lost*, the failure of Adam and Eve to obey God's command can be viewed as a failure to fulfill their *dharma*, a lesson with which Indian readers were already familiar and which they were willing to accept. In Book V of *Paradise Lost*, Raphael reminds Adam in line 501 to remain obedient to God, as he has been given the potential to both carry out this responsibility and to deviate it from it, which Indian readers of the poem could clearly read in terms of *dharma* (Milton 232). This event was an original creation of Milton's and was not present in the Bible, which is part of why *Paradise Lost* was often prioritized above the Bible itself as an example of Christian ideology. The ability of readers to view *Paradise Lost* in terms of local views of morality and responsibility.

The popularity of *Paradise Lost* in India's education system, and in particular, in Bengal, paved the

way for Milton's paradigm for the rewriting of religious material to be applied to Indian religious epics. Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote *The Slaying of Meghanada*, a Bengali poem that is simultaneously a rewriting of *The Ramayana* and *Paradise Lost*. Dutt exemplifies the notion of a colonial hybrid, as it was likely that he grew up hearing stories from the Indian epics, but it is also likely that as an upper class Bengali whose family is the product of the colonial education system, his first language might have been English (Seely 17). Dutt was a convert to Christianity, and considering the tactics of conversion that operated within the colonial education system, it was likely that he read *Paradise Lost* before his conversion during his youth. *The Slaying of Meghanada* was originally written in Bengali, and was both a tribute to *Paradise Lost*, and the rejection of the rhetoric of figures like Macaulay and Cameron, who articulated that Indian languages were incapable of producing literature that was comparable to English literature. By rewriting *The Ramayana* in Bengali, but using the paradigm set forward by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, Dutt clearly articulates the potential for Indian languages to rival the creations of the English language. Dutt's use of *Paradise Lost* demonstrates the influence of the poem, but it also demonstrates the potential for dismantling the English canon. John Marx writes of *The Slaying of Meghnada*, "Through [...] cutting and pasting, Dutt shows that to appropriate Western canonical literature one must first unwrite it, dismantle it, and come to see it less as an inviolate whole than as a collection of parts suitable for recycling (89). The use of *Paradise Lost* by a Christian convert to rewrite sacred material clearly demonstrates how strongly *Paradise Lost* was engrained into colonial Bengali culture.

The Slaying of Meghanada tells *The Ramayana* from Ravana's perspective, similarly to how Milton revises the role of Satan in the Genesis story. Ravana is often perceived as the villain of *The Ramayana*, as his kidnapping of Sita sets into motion Rama's war in Lanka. Dutt borrows Milton's technique of connecting Satan's existence to god by linking Ravana to the god Vishnu. In Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, Satan plans to fight the angel Gabriel, but a divine image of a scale in the heavens reminds him of the futility of this action and the fact that he is still part of God's universe, which is seemingly contradictory, as he opposes God (217). This reevaluation of Satan is replicated in Dutt's revision of Ravana and his Rakshasa clan, as these demons are transformed into Shiva and Vishnu *bhaktas*, or devotees, and are portrayed as deeply dedicated to these gods (Seely 49). This, like Satan's opposition to God in *Paradise Lost*, should be paradoxical, as Rama is an *avatar*, or incarnation of Vishnu, and thus Ravana is seemingly opposing the same divine figure that he derives his power from. It is clear that the institution of *Paradise Lost* into the colonial Bengali education system allowed for this rewriting, as the intellectual questions of Milton's rewriting of the Genesis tale are integrated into Dutt's rewriting of *The Ramayana*.

Dutt's rewriting of *The Ramayana* paved the way for future rewritings of the poem by Bengali authors, which also turned to *Paradise Lost* for thematic inspiration. Rabindranath Tagore, who is largely considered the most prolific and celebrated Bengali author, followed in Dutt's tradition to loosely adapt *The Ramayana* and thematically draw from *Paradise Lost*. Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* deals with a woman's growing involvement in the Indian independence movement in Bengal. Bimala is encouraged by her husband Nikhil to work with his friend Sandip, who is a nationalist leader. Tagore sets up the story as a loose retelling of *The Ramayana*, as Bimala is compared to Sita, Nikhil to Rama, and Sandip to Ravana. Bimala is drawn to Sandip, who frequently characterizes his relationship with Bimala in terms

of entrapment and directly likens himself to Ravana (Tagore 83). Throughout the story, Sandip praises Bimala for her intuitive views on independence, while Nikhil, in his quest to introduce his wife to modernity, relies only upon discursive reasoning. This gendering of these two types of reason is one of the most important aspects of *Paradise Lost*, and is clearly mirrored in this novel. In addition, Bimala's temptation to deviate from her marriage for Sandip eventually leads to the destruction of the idyllic marriage, a domestic fall that mirrors Adam and Eve's fall from paradise. The integration of these thematic aspects of *Paradise Lost* into this loose adaptation of *The Ramayana* follows Dutt's example. Tagore, like Dutt, was an educated Bengali who was product of the colonial education system that greatly valued *Paradise Lost*. In addition, Tagore was a colleague of Dutt who was also familiar with his views on writing and *Paradise Lost*. The insinuation of thematic material from *Paradise Lost* into this rewriting of Indian epic material suggests that Milton's project of rewriting religious material was so engrained into Bengali culture that it served as an important model for Bengali rewritings of the Indian epics.

The British colonial administration's establishment of English literary education in India was fundamental to the prominence of *Paradise Lost* in colonial Bengal. Colonial prioritization of English literature ensured that the British canon was taught in the colonial curriculum, and colonial ethnographic discourse argued that such education should be emphasized in the region of Bengal. The influence of missionaries on the colonial education system led to the rise of *Paradise Lost* in Bengali education. Thematic similarities between *Paradise Lost* and the Indian epics helped enforce the poem's popularity in Bengal, as Indian readers were able to find elements of their religion and epic traditions within Milton's poem. The popularity of *Paradise Lost* led to Bengali rewritings of the poem, which demonstrated how influential Milton was on this region of colonial India. Milton's transnational influence demonstrates that though Milton wrote about Christianity for a European audience, his writing can be successfully transplanted in other cultural contexts.

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Five Poems

By Christopher Mulrooney

menu

I present the bill
the standard bill
for the standard bill of fare
it computes in round numbers
to my liking always the same
always the same

the price of a ticket

School of Athens

it all comes out this way
says the major-domo

reporting on high
kicking teats and testicles

the fulminating rebuke
issued silently
and all but deadly

in the green park

extent

we leave the ruins
a tourist attraction

ignore the boulevard
a lacklustre harem

head for the hills
and the plains

as expected

collegium

we gather round the table
we gather

stubble ergot and merds
make our field

a plate or tray
at the symposium

disembowelment

cut the guts out
leave the rest
it's a tough bout
for the best

if you speak the lingo I'll tell you all about
the fairy evanishment
flowers and cream
from the cud

The Canadians (1961): No Singing Please

By Ron Smith

There was a time when Hollywood and some American filmmakers were infatuated with images of Canada and The Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Of course, for many cinephiles, Hunt Stromberg's 1935 wilderness operetta *Rose Marie* is the most recognizable—but there were many more. The genealogy of the cinematic Mountie can be traced, via literary antecedents, to Hollywood's production of 575 films set in Canada between 1907 and 1956, most of which portrayed Canada in a stereotypical fashion (Gittings 1998). In these films, Canada was basically about moose, Mounties, snow and muskeg. Hollywood director Burt Kennedy's first feature film might be considered as an extension of that sub-genre.

The Canadians (1961) is a film that seems at first glance to lack the usual Hollywood glitter. The opening sequence of Canadian landscapes and towns might suggest, to some, a National Film Board documentary. A low budget movie that loosely uses the background of the Cypress Hills massacre as its narrative foundation, Burt Kennedy's first feature length film (he wrote the story as well) is relatively short (under two hours), and with the exception of an aging Robert Ryan, has few name stars. What sets it apart from the usual Mountie fare is its effort at geographical authenticity and a link to an historical event that prompted the Canadian Government to provide a police mandate for the Mounties in the Canadian West. It suffers, as did other Mountie sub-genre films, from a somewhat pedestrian script and an inability to divorce itself completely from the stereotypical American Western. *The Canadians* did, however, get the geography right—the film's introduction notes that it was shot in the Cypress Hills of Southern Saskatchewan. Although the hats were questionable (the fur hats look as if they had been rented from the Paramount Costume Department—shades of *Northwest Mounted Police*, 1940), the low keyed deportment of the police force towards the indigenous North American tribes provided some historical validity not seen in the other films. In spite of these attempts to provide historical accuracy for the film, *The Canadians* is, in the end, a seriously flawed representation of the history of the Canadian West.

Because some of the film was being shot in Saskatchewan (which cost \$400,000), there was pressure from the federal and provincial governments to have the RCMP give it their tacit approval (Berton 185). Deputy Commissioner George McClellan, who was made a senior technical advisor on the film, later recalled that although the film was supposedly based on the Hills massacre "Twentieth Century Fox weren't satisfied with that alone. They had to get Sitting Bull into Canada with his several thousand warriors... Actually Sitting Bull didn't arrive until 1879 but for the purposes of this turkey of a picture, Twentieth Century-Fox

made them contemporary for each other. The result was an absolute mishmash of history” (Berton 185). McClellan seems to be mistaken about the date of Sitting Bull’s arrival, as both Robert Utley (1993) and Ian Anderson (2000) have the Sioux chief on Canadian soil in 1877.

To compensate for the questionable history shown in the film, Kennedy must have felt compelled to connect with his Canadian audiences. The musical introduction to the film, called “This is Canada”, might go down in the annals of film scores as the most preposterous piece of music ever foisted on film audiences. Dated film footage of the Canadian parliament buildings and other regional landscapes provided a visual curtain for Canadian opera star Teresa Stratus as she sings the rather bland “This is Canada.” The film’s story was questionable enough without this seemingly out-of-place musical sequence, but in retrospect, the lyrical introduction was more akin to a dirge than a film score. Stratus, who had a role in the film as a captured white woman living with the Sioux, blesses audiences with a “prairie aria” later in the film. It would be hard to imagine, with such melodic interludes during the film, that the Canadian West would ever be the same again.

Critics of the film have been hard on its lack of historical accuracy, and rightly so, but the film’s visual authenticity is in marked contrast to the other Mountie films. *Northwest Mounted Police* was filmed in Hollywood, *Saskatchewan* (1954) in Alberta’s foothills and mountains, and *Pony Soldier* (1952) in Arizona. *The Canadians*, on the other hand, provides one with an authentic representation of the geography of the region. In addition, Robert Ryan has the grizzled look of a frontier police officer challenged by the hardships of duty. In fact, Burt Kennedy mentioned that Ryan’s role was a composite of a well-respected Mountie Inspector, probably James Walsh (telephone interview, 2000). Compared to Rosenberg’s slanderous *Saskatchewan*, *The Canadians* provides audiences with a realistic view of the Canadian Prairies. But like its cinematic Mountie cousins of an earlier era, *The Canadians* ventures south of the medicine line (Canadian- American border) to borrow ingredients from the Western genre. The film was promoted in a “cowboys and Indians” fashion with posters proclaiming “The Human Stampede at Buffalo Cliffs” and “The Ambush of Death” (*The Canadians—The Mounted Giant*. 4).

The Canadians would be the last of the Mountie films to place the story in the late nineteenth century. The 1960s were challenging the traditional Western with a new type of frontier saga. The “Mountie Western,” which had been part of a film genre where the good guys wore white hats and the bad guys had a five o’clock shadow, was now on its way out as popular film entertainment. Films such as *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and *Soldier Blue* (1970) would be part of the new breed of Revisionist Westerns whose stories were more social commentaries about contemporary history than of the “Old West” (*Soldier Blue* has been viewed as an allegorical representation of the Mai Lai Massacre in Vietnam). One Mountie film managed to sneak into the Revisionist era, and it could not be classified as a Western. *Death Hunt* (1981) starring Lee Marvin and Charles Bronson was set in the Canadian North during the 1920s. Marvin’s character seemed more like a take on Clint Eastwood’s “Dirty Harry” than of a dashing Mountie. Will Chabun, a feature writer with the *Regina Leader-Post*, in a 1990 interview with the then curator of the RCMP museum in Regina, Malcolm Lake, noted “It took perverse liberties with the story of Albert Johnson, the ‘Mad Trapper’ of the Yukon”. In Lake’s opinion, it is “the worst Mountie movie ever made” (Chabun). In

this fantasy about the Force, the American producers, defying all historical evidence, turned Johnson into a sympathetic character, hounded by crazy Mounties (Chabun). There seemed little need or opportunity for the perpetuation of the Mounted Police stories and, given their track record as weak historical representations, it might have been time for a rest.

The fact that Mountie films made it out of Hollywood is interesting enough in itself. Selling stories about Canada to audiences in the United States and elsewhere was never easy. The key to their success was to have a strong American connection. Richard Attenborough's *Grey Owl*, released in 1999, is a good example of a film that failed to connect to audiences in the United States. Its limited release schedule and quick video distribution indicated that large scale cinematic productions with a Canadian theme do not play well in the United States market unless there is a strong American Connection (*The Hurricane* [1999] is a good example). *Grey Owl* was too Canadian (a story about an Englishman who takes on the persona of a Canadian Indian)—and Attenborough, perhaps, too honest an historian. Such cannot be said about Kennedy and his contemporaries—their tales about Canada were all too American.

Burt Kennedy would go on to become a very able film producer and screenwriter. His later films included *The Rounders* (1965), *Dirty Dingus Magee* (1970) and *The Train Robbers* (1973). Some of his earlier work included writing scripts for the popular 1960s television series *Combat*. His book *Hollywood Trail Boss* (1997) has received favourable reviews for its insights into the making of Hollywood Westerns, but Kennedy's notions about the Canadian West were on much shakier ground. Kennedy was candid about the legacy of *The Canadians* as film history. His story for the film took liberties with the historical time frame. Kennedy indicated that he had looked at two historical volumes (he could not recall the titles) on the Mounted Police to get some sense of the history of the period, but said that one of the major factors motivating him to do the film were the uniforms: "I liked those scarlet coats plus the fact there had been few major films about the Mounties" (telephone interview, 2000). Kennedy agreed that Pierre Berton's criticisms about the film were valid—the timing of the Sioux's arrival into Canada didn't mesh with the Cypress Hills Massacre upon which the film's story was loosely connected. Kennedy also supported Berton's accusation that RCMP officials were upset with a scene where the prisoners escape from Mountie custody. According to Berton, Mountie officials were upset with this episode in the film. Mounted Police spokespersons suggested it was ridiculous to think that the police would not have searched the prisoners gear for arms etc. Kennedy recalled that "Harvison's major concern about the picture was the hiding of the gun and the prisoners' escape" (telephone interview, 2000). Harvison, it seemed, wanted these scenes eliminated from the picture. Kennedy noted "his only objection was the gun and no singing" (telephone interview, 2000). The picture's final cut had both.

Kennedy admitted that he had little control over the film's production and the final cut of the movie. Berton notes in *Hollywood's Canada* that "Burt Kennedy, the director, tried to wiggle out of the responsibility for the deception in a letter to Commissioner Clifford Harvison in which he claimed that he did not have a chance to view the finished movie, as the major part of the technical work on the film was done in London" (185). The studio, he said, "had me pretty much between the devil and the deep blue sea on some story changes" (Bert185). Kennedy suggested that the criticisms were valid, adding "The film was subsidized

by the British under the E.D.Y. plan, and they insisted on a British crew, etc” (telephone interview, 2000). One of the positive outcomes of this association, according to Kennedy, was that it enabled him to work with cameraman Arthur Ibbetson, who later worked with David Lean on *Lawrence of Arabia* (telephone interview, 2000).

The Canadians was, according to Kennedy, a reasonably accurate representation of the late nineteenth century Canadian West, more so than some of the earlier Mountie films. He liked the fact that his film had a great deal of geographical authenticity given that it was filmed in Southern Saskatchewan and the Cypress Hills and, like other Mounted Police films, it was promoted as being based on a true story (the Cypress Hills Massacre). This connection, however, had been challenged by the RCMP technical advisor associated with the film, who had stated that the Sioux represented in the film had arrived in Canada about five years too early (the massacre took place in 1873). Kennedy noted that the historical time period was a composite of the late 1870s. He mused that the film was his first and stated that “if directors need to serve any sort of cinematic punishment for the lack of quality in their films, they should have to re-examine the first film that they ever made” (telephone interview, 2000).

Kennedy admitted that his first feature length film was not one of his most memorable cinematic efforts. In his book, *Hollywood Trail Boss*, Kennedy calls *The Canadians* a disaster (9). Kennedy noted in his interview that he was not about to do a remake of *Rose Marie's* singing Mounties (Commissioner Harvison had made it clear that he did not want to see another *Rose Marie*), stating that the idea to include the musical interludes provided by Teresa Stratus were not his. Stratus, according to Kennedy, was dating Spyros Skouras, head of Fox Studios at the time, and she had to be in the picture (telephone interview, 2000). Kennedy re-emphasised that this was his “first film,” implying that he might have done a better job and had more control with the picture had the film been made later on in his directorial career. “Good directors,” he said, “learn on the job” (telephone interview, 2000).

As with the other Mounted Police films, the representation of Canadian history and the Mounties never did quite measure up to the historical events as they had occurred. It is true that Sitting Bull fled across the medicine line to avoid being prosecuted by American authorities. It is true, to a degree, that the Mounted Police, particularly Inspector James Walsh, befriended the Sioux. But in the end, the historical dates and the claim that the film was based on true historical events were distorted. Kennedy, it must be said, does make a reasonably honest attempt to show the plight of the Sioux at the beginning of the picture. The Sioux Chief, Four Horns, states somewhat forcibly that Sioux women are tired, and the Sioux warriors are without bullets for hunting. It does not mask, however, the generally menacing demeanor of the Sioux. The violence in the film pays homage to the Western genre, and the inclusion of the out-of-date Cypress Hills massacre connection to the film story is the trigger that sets in motion the war-like posturing of the Sioux. Kennedy's use of this narrative device, while easily placed within traditional Western formulas, is historically out of place in Canada. Although Kennedy might have availed himself of historical information, the exploitation and promotional material for the film confirmed that the viewing public was being presented with a fictive account of the Mounties exploits. Much of that fiction involves the manner in which the Sioux were portrayed in the film.

The geographical credibility of the film could not hide the cultural and historical distortions in the plot. Twentieth Century Fox Exhibitor's Campaign Manual for 1960-61 promoted the film as "Here Come The Canadians...Flinging Their Fiery Challenge At The Sioux Nation Custer Couldn't Stop", but the story focuses more on the rampaging American ranchers than it does the Sioux (1). The poster ad also takes liberties with the geography stating "Filmed in the towering timberlands that saw it happen"—an assertion that is not quite true (1). Saskatchewan is mostly prairie and the Cypress Hills, while wooded in spots, could not accurately be described as "towering timberlands". Walsh's legendary exploits with the Mounted Police are not ignored, as the film's promotional synopsis states that Inspector William Gannon (Robert Ryan), portrayed in the film as a Walshesque historical composite, is to "select 2 men and intercept the Sioux and deliver an ultimatum. He is to tell them the Queen is happy that they have chosen to live in their land, and they will protect them from their enemies as long as they remain in peace. But, if they do not keep the peace they will be driven back to the U.S" (1). This historical representation is generally sound, but when one adds to this scenario the Montana ranchers (based on the American wolfers looking for stolen horses in 1873 that resulted in the Cypress Hills Massacre), the story is essentially five years out of sync. The promotional blurb mentions, "Frank Boone (John Dehner), a Montana rancher, accompanied by three gunhands (a connection to the traditional Western formula)... come in search of horses Boone believes were stolen from him by the Indians. They sight a small Indian camp and 7 loose horses. Boone and his men massacre the Indians and take the horses" (1). As Kennedy suggests, the film was based on a true historical account, but the history and the film advertising is subjected to some questionable fabrications.

The promotional literature for the film also subjected audiences to large doses of historical ethnocentrism. This would be no "revisionist" Western. One advertisement mentioned "Theirs [the Mounties'] Was The Courage That Stood Against The Killers Custer Couldn't Stop" (Theirs was the Courage 3). There was no mention that the Sioux were defending their traditional homeland and culture, nor the fact that Custer, Sheridan and some American government officials were bent on exterminating the Sioux and other Native American tribes. American historians such as Jeffry Wert (1996) and Stephen Ambrose (1975), in their biographies of Custer make, it clear that the American government's policies against the Sioux bordered on racism. The Native Americans portrayed in the film were tainted by the stereotypes of Indians seen in most traditional Westerns, more than by historical truth. That the promotional literature for the film constantly referred to the Sioux as "killers" suggested that the accuracy of the historical research was on shaky ground. Although historical sources for the period were pre-revisionist, they would have certainly presented Native Americans in a much more balanced historical context. Historians such as Raymond Billington (a student of Frederick Jackson Turner) and Walter Prescott Webb would have been available to Kennedy and others, yet were apparently ignored for a "dime novel" version of history.

The newspaper advance copy for the film didn't fare much better, and confirmed the somewhat dubious historical accuracy of the film, noting that "*The Canadians* is the true story of three gallant men of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, the way they confronted the dangerous leader of the Sioux nation who had just annihilated General Custer at the Battle of Bull Run, and made him obey the law of Canada" (Fast-paced 5). Not only was the claim a distortion, given the film's story (most of the film was about the

American rustlers), Sitting Bull and his fellow chiefs would have been surprised to know that they had just taken part in one of the major battles of the Civil War. Fox had not only failed to grasp Canadian history, they couldn't seem to get their own history correct either. With such questionable advance publicity, Kennedy was right to suspect that this film was going to be a cinematic disaster. The final blow to the film's historical credibility might have been the closing text of the Fox advance copy 'The fast-paced north country...' which served up another stereotype of Canada's geography and culture: "Filmed in the Frozen wastelands of Saskatchewan, Canada, in all kinds of weather, this brilliantly photographed Cinema-Scope Deluxe Color production was directed by Burt Kennedy, who also authorized the screenplay" (5). The promo concludes with "Producer Herman E. Webber overcame many physical and natural obstacles to bring this adventure to the screen. 'The Canadians' under his supervision emerges as one of the great outdoor pictures of the year" (5). What they could not overcome were the questionable historical representations.

The distortions were clear. The film story should have been set in 1877, but the Cypress Hills Massacre parallel, of course, spreads the story's events over a period of five years. Ryan's character, as Kennedy alluded, is a composite of Walsh, Irvine, and/or Macleod. Kennedy's script certainly attempted to convey the strength and integrity of a small detachment of Mounted Police. Ryan's instructions to the Sioux were historically accurate, but the placement of events and the Sioux's warlike posturing negated the "based on a true story" cinematic perspective. In actual fact, the Sioux's demeanor was anything but warlike. Earnest Chambers in his *The Royal Northwest Mounted Police: A Corps History* provides an interesting glimpse at the meetings of the NWMP and the Sioux. He notes that

On the morning of the 31st, the assistant Commissioner [Irvine] started for the camp...accompanied by Inspector Walsh and Sub-Inspectors Clark and Allen. Irvine was much impressed with Sitting Bull...Irvine addressing the Indians...remarked 'You need not be alarmed. The Americans cannot cross the line after you. You and your families can sleep sound and need not be afraid.' (50)

Walsh had informed Sitting Bull that Irvine was the highest representative of the Great Mother at present in the country. Chambers mentioned that Irvine was surprised later that night to receive a surprise visitor in his tent. Chambers mentioned that "He [Sitting Bull] sat on the Assistant Commissioner's bed until an early hour in the morning, telling him in a subdued tone his many grievances against the "Long Knives"(50). It would be hard to believe that these rather harried Sioux were "The Killers That Custer Couldn't Stop."

Kennedy's film, in particular, uses the image of a small band of Mounted officers confronting the warlike Sioux. All of these Mountie sagas set in The Canadian West had tended to portray the Sioux as invading warriors from the south. The truth was the exact opposite. Sitting Bull and the Sioux were on the run trying to avoid the U.S. Army. Their trek across the Northern Plains was made to avoid capture. By the time they crossed the medicine line into Canada, they were a rag-tag and starving nation. In *Northwest Mounted Police*, *Saskatchewan*, *Pony Soldier* and *The Canadians*, film audiences saw the Sioux and

Canadian Natives, for the most part, portrayed as war-like adversaries. In a broader cultural context, these representations reinforced the “legacy of conquest” theory that seemed to have influenced the study of Western American history, particularly of the frontier. It was a perspective that certainly had become entrenched within the Western genre. When the Mounted Police first came in contact with the Sioux, they were not confronted with an image of a Native people trying to overrun the Dominion. Frontier reporter John Finerty had noted the NWMP delivering food and clothing to Sitting Bull’s people at Fort Walsh (Anderson 221). A report in the *Chicago Times* about the Sioux’s plight in Canada did not mention that Sitting Bull’s warriors were overrunning Canada; rather, the report noted that “It was only the intense humanity of Major Walsh that kept the wretched people from eating their horses” (Anderson 221). Fox publicity material must have been in the form of “pulp fiction.” Promotional material for the film couldn’t seem to move beyond the dime novel images of the 1870s American West.

Utley’s account of Walsh’s meeting with the Sioux is at odds with the film’s depiction of Ryan’s Inspector Gannon and the Sioux chiefs. The film’s promotional material suggested that “He [Gannon] brought back the victory they said no man could win” (Here come. 1). If one adds to this the description of the Sioux chief, Four Horns, “[h]e spoke for the Sioux-and the white earth trembled”, it is clear that Kennedy and Fox were, cinematically, altering the peaceful relationship that existed between the Mounties and the Sioux (1). The “us versus them” mentality portrayed at times throughout the film could have been an episode from American frontier history. The Canadian West, however, had avoided the Washita Creek-like massacres that had occurred in the United States, actions initiated by the American government which would eventually precipitate Indian reprisals such as Custer’s defeat at the Little Big Horn. Yet Fox was firm in their assertion that *The Canadians* was based on a true story. Any thread of historical authenticity was quickly eliminated with exploitation copy such as “...white man pitted against Indian...This action packed drama will thrill you as three gallant men pit their wits against the entire Sioux nation and gain a tragic and stunning victory” (Outdoor lure 6). Kennedy was not clear on his historical sources for the film, but somewhere in his research, the Walsh story surfaced. Kennedy himself had stated that the Ryan character was based on this Mountie (he could recall the name of the officer specifically) whose exploits had become famous by his meetings with Sitting Bull. Written accounts of the Walsh-Sioux meeting put this friendship in a much clearer perspective (telephone interview, 2000). The charismatic James Morrow Walsh’s understanding relationship with Sitting Bull and the Sioux was the factual basis for the film’s claim to historical accuracy.

Spotted Eagle, one of Sitting Bull’s chiefs, noted to Walsh that they had been hounded by the Long Knives and that for the sake of the women and children they had no choice but to seek sanctuary in the far northland (Turner 78). The image of warlike natives in these films was way off the historical mark. The Canadian tribes had come to respect the Mounted Police and the Canadian government’s paternalism. The Sioux, according to Robert Utley, knew about the “Great White Mother” who governed in “benevolent and wise contrast to the Great Father in the United States” (184). Two written accounts point to Walsh’s first meeting with the Sioux leader, and they clearly convey the symbolism associated with the Force’s strength of character. To both the American and Canadian Natives, the Mounties symbolized bravery and trust, attributes which they greatly admired. Utley notes that Spotted Eagle, whose stature had come

to rival Crazy Horse's, spoke to the redcoats. According to Utley, Spotted Eagle mentioned, "They had arrived at the village of Sitting Bull...and never had white men dared approach this close, as if it did not exist" (185). Turner, in describing the same scene, mentions that Spotted Eagle had for the first time in his life "seen white men (soldiers or scouts) walk into Sitting Bull's circle and settle down with such lack of concern" (76).

These recorded accounts of this fearless action by the Mounties never translated into a specific story about Walsh's exploits. Walsh, himself, would have been an interesting character to portray, but Hollywood settled for a composite. Utley described him as a man of medium build with dark hair who displayed a character of vigor and flamboyance: "He struck some as another Custer" (186). Utley draws an interesting parallel:

Inclined like Custer to romanticism, Walsh nonetheless brought to his mission a more informed sympathetic view of Indians. He looked on Sitting Bull as grievously wronged by the United States government...In the first of many meetings, the Lakota chief and the Queen's police officer laid the groundwork for mutual trust and respect and finally true friendship. For the first time in his life, Sitting Bull met a white man he would come to appreciate, a sentiment that would be reciprocated. (186)

Robert Ryan, as Kennedy had implied, was playing the role of Walsh under an alias. Two earlier films had also drawn on Walsh-like attributes for their hero roles. Alan Ladd, for example, in *Saskatchewan* is a Mountie who understands the Native culture, and in *Pony Soldier* it is Tyrone Power's courage that impresses the Crees. Yet, little if anything in these films points to any concrete historical event as the basis for the film's story. It is not an historical event that they are chronicling but rather the qualities that have come to symbolize the Mounted Policeman. Utley, in describing such qualities, could have scripted them for the producers and directors of these films. He noted the characteristics that guided the Force in their duties: "fairness, justice, firmness, courage, tolerance, kindness, honesty, and, of great consequence in light of the record of U.S. officials, a resolve to make good on all promises" (189). It wasn't so much that the films "were based on a true story;" rather, they had come to represent or symbolize those virtues associated with "the true character of the Mounted Police." Kennedy's chronicling of historical events in the film can certainly be questioned, but his Inspector Gannon (Robert Ryan) might have been recognizable to Walsh's contemporaries.

One issue that these films ignored completely was the attitude of the American government towards Native Americans, particularly the Sioux. Those attitudes would be left for later revisionist films such as *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964) and *Little Big Man* (1970), stories that confronted the political and social issues affecting Native Americans. According to Utley, a pictograph made by the Sioux of the meeting between Walsh and an American contingent led by General Terry to discuss the status of Sitting Bull had found its way into the hands of one of the American government's chief architects of Indian Policy, General Sheridan, who endorsed the pictograph with the same sensitivity that had symbolized his understanding of his Sioux adversaries: "I attach no more interest to these than the drawings on a slate of a boy 12 years

old" (198).

The Canadians, interestingly enough, is a film that became part of the transitional phase between the stereotypical Western genre and the revisionist perspective of the West. In the decade that followed *The Canadians*, revisionist history would begin to question the "winning of the West" mentality that had influenced American frontier scholarship. Kennedy's later Western films displayed a keen sense of place; that is, they tended to create an environment that fit the story and the characters. His films showed the dust and the dirt of the prairie and American Southwest landscapes that formed the backgrounds for his stories. *The Canadians* captured that geographical sensitivity very well. It was, in fact, the film's major strength—the Southern Saskatchewan terrain was real and it provided a true historical backdrop for the unfolding of the story. Where the film goes awry is in its depiction of the Sioux. It is clear in the film that Kennedy attempted to put a more caring and more humane face on the character of the Sioux, but the war paint on the Sioux warriors could not hide his ties to the Western genre. In spite of Kennedy's attempts to feature Stratus as a white woman who has grown to accept the Sioux culture, Fox promoted her characterization in typical ethnocentric fashion noting "The White Squaw... torn between red man and white" (Theirs was the courage 3). Canadian historians have generally agreed that white people proved to be more troublesome than Natives were, and Kennedy's use of the Cypress Hills massacre as inspiration for the story reinforces this fact. The relationship between Mountie and Native was basically one of "paternalistic co-existence": all would live peacefully under the care of "The Great White Mother." In *The Canadians*, however, Kennedy could not completely move beyond the notion that Native Peoples were still adversaries.

Kennedy was able to temper the traditional Indian stereotype in the film (shown through the eyes of a white women captured by the Sioux), but in the end, he could have made better use of historical research for the film, particularly in showing the Sioux's desperation and anxiety over dwindling food and shelter. In the film the Sioux still gave the appearance of a nation that was defiant and unwilling to yield to authority. In actual fact, many Native American nations (such as the Cheyenne and Nez Perce) were attempting to find ways of adjusting to the settlement of the Plains and the Pacific Northwest. Sitting Bull, after the Little Big Horn, was trying to come to terms with this changing prairie landscape. The Sioux had fled to Canada to seek refuge, yet Kennedy in his film had them stalking the Mounties as if on the verge of a full-scale uprising. The location could have easily have been Monument Valley. Kennedy fell back on the formulas that had become standard fare within the Western film genre, which generally emphasized the conquest of the wilderness and the subordination of nature in the name of civilization. These plot lines had continued to be rather simple—good versus evil, rugged individualist versus the unknown, and settlers versus Native Americans, who were portrayed as inhuman savages. *The Canadians* would continue to be haunted by historical newspeak. A television promotion suggested that "This action-packed drama will thrill you as three gallant men pit their wills against the entire Sioux nation and gain a tragic and stunning victory" (Outdoor lure 6). This was Canadian history according to Hollywood.

Promoting the film to the public would continue a legacy of inane images about Canada and the Mounted Police. All Hollywood publicists for these Mounted Police epics must have been required to take "Images of Canada #101," for they all seemed to churn out the same type of advertising ideas. *The Canadians*

offered outdoorsy appeal that suggested hunting, camping, and kerosene lamps. One of the promotional tips offered: “Arrange a tie-in with stores that sell camping equipment outfits, and supply them with stills and posters of *The Canadians*” (Promotion tips offer 6). The “Indian trinket” syndrome was also part of Fox’s campaign alerting promoters to “contact your local jewelry outlets and have them arrange during your playdates to promote Indian type pins, rings, along with pictures and posters of *The Canadians*” (Promotion tips offer 6). One promotion was on dangerous ground. Fox suggested that an essay contest be tied in with local schools using Canada and its history as the subject. The follow up was to invite teachers and special groups to a film screening. Fox might have had an awful lot of explaining to do about their interpretation of Canadian history.

Kennedy, in the end, sensed that his film was in the same class as the earlier Mounted Police films that were made. He had implied that his film was a studio picture over which he had little or no control. Kennedy could be criticized for a rather suspect historical script, but the final film editing and promotion had fallen to others. *The Canadians* was not a new breed of Mountie story; it was a continuation of the same type of questionable historical representation of the Canadian West. But perhaps that should not have been all that surprising. Kennedy had viewed a number of the earlier Mountie films noting “I liked *Northwest Mounted Police* although the story was a bit hokey. *Pony Soldier* was a studio picture with a phony story, but *Power* was very good” (telephone interview, 2000). As for *Saskatchewan*, Kennedy stated “It didn’t impress me; it was an awfully weak story” (telephone interview, 2000). Kennedy could take some satisfaction that his film, from a geographical perspective, was sound. His story would be no Mountie epic filmed on the golf course at the Banff Springs Hotel. Kennedy had been awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart for his war exploits in the South Pacific, and his Westerns reflected a self deprecating humor, best exemplified in *Dirty Dingus McGee*’s “Code of the West” satire. His Westerns were as much about Kennedy, the person, as they were about the “Wild West.” Kennedy’s first film experience, however, lacked that familiarity and comfort. His screenplay of *The Canadians* suggested someone who was an historical and cultural spectator. *The Canadians* did what *Northwest Mounted Police* and the others did not do—Kennedy managed to film his story on Canadian soil. But his tale, like the others did not resonate historically with the period. The Cypress Hills Massacre, the Sioux arrival, and the apparent exploits of James Morrow Walsh all come together in a single story. Kennedy’s film runs well under two hours. Given the timelines for the so-called history in this picture, the film should have required at least three intermissions. The cinematic heritage of the earlier Mountie films might have served as an omen that *The Canadians* was doomed to failure.

Try as Kennedy did to give the film some sense of historical authenticity, his portrayal of the Sioux seemed to lack the type of understanding that Kevin Costner would later capture in *Dances With Wolves*. Kennedy had captured the spirit and qualities of the Force, but he could not quite overcome the Indian stereotype. Utley and others have made clear from their research that Native American and First Nation’s peoples had endearing qualities too. They were eloquent, humorous, and intelligent, but those qualities were rarely displayed in these films. *The Canadians* as well as the other Mounted Police stories provided few insights about the Native psyche. It would have been refreshing to see the character of an “Old Lodgeskins” from *Little Big Man* or a Graham Greene’s “Kicking Bird” in Costner’s prairie epic featured in these stories

about the Mounted Police. Instead, audiences got a steady dose of white actors masquerading as screaming savages. The history of the American West was still being presented as victory and conquest. Ronald Wright's *Stolen Continents* (1992) had yet to challenge such ethnocentric perspectives. In the end the film could not make a complete break from the stereotypical Western genre, and Kennedy would be governed by such traditional thinking. Kennedy would go on to become a rather beloved director of some very popular Westerns—*The Canadians*, as Kennedy himself and most critics agreed, wasn't one of them.

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Why the Google Generation Will Not Speak: The Invention of Digital Natives.

By Tara Brabazon, Zanna Dear, Grantley Greene and Abigail Purdy

Searing social criticism is diverting, even ideologically titillating, but it frequently turns out to be sloppy social science, leaving us unprepared to reckon with some of the changes now upon us.¹

Grant McCracken

Popular cultural intellectuals have not served us well in this decade of user-generated content, blogs, podcasts, citizen journalists and Google. Indeed, while Grant McCracken critiqued Neil Postman, doubting the efficacy of ‘searing social criticism,’ he validated the work of pseudo-intellectual-journalist-experts-commentators like Stephen Johnson and soundbite phrases like ‘the long tail.’ While social criticism may not always cause change in consciousness or culture, the chances are that it is more effectively theorized than the work of those commentators currently enthused by the supposedly enabling relationship between technology and democracy.

This paper is not framed by social science, sloppy or rigorous. Neither is it aimed at preparing corporations, schools or universities with ‘managing change.’ Instead this collaborative article is a snapshot, a dialogue, and an exploration of the perils and problems of summoning an authentic voice of ‘youth,’ the ‘Google Generation’ or the ‘Digital Natives.’

The reason for this discussion hovers around this photograph.



The four writers of this article had the opportunity to speak at Gartner’s *Portals, Content and Collaboration Summit*, held in September 2008. Tara Brabazon delivered a keynote address. Grantley Greene, Abigail Purdy and Zanna Dear were asked to ‘represent’ their age group and speak as ‘Digital Natives.’ In other words, Brabazon – as a 39 year old Generation Xer – was granted authority to speak as a scholar, representing more than her age. Greene, Purdy and Dear were selected to speak about their age. Certainly the event was positive and Gartner was correct to target this technological / generational issue as worthy of discussion; visions and sounds are proliferated through blogs, MySpace, YouTube and podcasts. A Daily Mail headline shrieks “Social websites harm a child’s brain.”² Yet such neo-Lombrosian arguments are presented as fact. There is a marginalization of information literacy.

This panel was important, and perhaps not for the reasons considered by Gartner. It captured the gaps in social science and research and development. The last ten years has seen one more generation of young people who have been taken to represent a wider societal fear. One problem is youth is an invention, a category that is empty of definitive meanings and interpretations. It can be filled with the required agendas and discourses of a time. There are many organizations and individuals who are empowered through either demonizing or celebrating ‘young people.’ There are also many organizations that either demonize or celebrate ‘technology.’ Combining these two dynamic social variables and sign systems for social change and agency creates confusion. Debates erupt about citizenship, education, knowledge and politics. As Douglas Kellner suggests,

Modern education, in short, emphasizes submission to authority, rote memorization, and what

Freire called the ‘banking concept’ of education, in which learned teachers deposit knowledge into passive students, inculcating conformity, subordination, and normalization. Today these traits are somewhat undercut in certain sections of the global postindustrial and networked society, with its demands for new skills for the workplace, participation in emergent social and political environs, and interaction within novel forms of culture and everyday life.³

Kellner entwines progress with technological advancement, overlaying social and political participation through this transformation. Such a stark passage between ideas and historical periods is part of what Gartner was hoping to trace in their panel with ‘Digital Natives.’ But what if we unsettle such readings of the past and present?

What is required are careful studies of information seeking behaviour from all groups in our schools, universities and societies, not simply one group clumped together as a generation. A recent “Generations Online in 2009” data memo from the Pew Internet and American Life found that

Contrary to the image of Generation Y as the ‘Net Generation,’ internet users in their 20s do not dominate every aspect of online life. Generation X is the most likely group to bank, shop, and look for health information online. Boomers are just as likely as Generation Y to make travel reservations online. And even Silent Generation internet users are competitive when it comes to email (although teens might point out that this is proof that email is for old people).⁴

Strong research studies are emerging that cut through the hyperbole and spin about ‘the Google Generation’ and ‘Digital Natives.’ Kirsty Williamson, Vivienne Bernath, Steven Wright and Jen Sullivan instigated a small study of “Research students in the electronic age.”⁵ Their investigation of fifteen research students at an Australian university examined the ways in which an information source was selected from the glut of electronic resources. The value of the study involved asking the research students how they knew when to stop data collection amid the array of information. The researchers argued that there has never been a more important time for academic librarians to shape, direct and guide this current cohort of research students. This paper therefore investigates the phrases ‘Google Generation’ and ‘Digital Natives’ and the impact of using these phrases on three students who would be included in such categories.

The Google Generation?

Assumptions are always made about youth, particularly when the people making the assumptions are not young.⁶ The “generation gap” was invented to express a loss in traditional authority structures. Clothes, rock music and long hair⁷ connoted not only difference or radicalism, but the building blocks of revolution.⁸ This sweeping statement of difference on the basis of age since the 1960s has had many consequences. Firstly, and perhaps most significantly, the focus on age has meant that other social variables – particularly race, class,⁹ gender,¹⁰ and religion – have been under-discussed. Secondly, alongside this simplification

of identity is an absence of history. One cultural formation – music, fashion, hair, the web - is taken to be much more significant than it actually is. Thirdly, the writers extolling youthful difference invariably regard young people as a force of change, defiance, crisis and threat.¹¹ This revolution through youth continues until the moment they enter adulthood.¹² Then the next group of 13-19 year olds – Generation X,¹³ Generation Y, the Nintendo Generation, the Google Generation - is scanned for their threat, promise, challenge and transformation.

These assumptions about youth often block actual research into behaviour, history and context, damaging schools, universities and libraries.¹⁴ This flaw in analysis has existed since the 1960s with the mods and their amphetamines and scooters, the skinheads with their boots, violence and racism, the punks with their safety pins, slashed clothes and mohawks.¹⁵ Now that music and fashion are no longer battlegrounds between generations,¹⁶ the talk of radical generational change and threat has moved to technology.

Instead of mods, skins, rockers, punks and Goths, the new group of threat and opportunity has been labelled Digital Natives. This phrase was first used in 2001 by Marc Prensky. A management consultant, he used the term to demonstrate that, “today’s students think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors.”¹⁷ Once more the young ones are restless and the older generation does not understand them. But true to the pattern, Prensky has:

1. diagnosed a moment of revolutionary change,
2. invented a social crisis and failure in education resulting from it and
3. transformed himself into a consultant uniquely qualified to fix it.

The term “generation” is too blunt a sociological instrument to accurately describe social, economic and political change. It always has been. It is far too vague a description to understand an age group and how ‘they’ deploy ‘technology.’ But in his affirmation of modernity, it is not surprising that Prensky deploys reified, positivist science: “it is very likely that our students’ brains have physically changed – and are different from ours – as a result of how they grew up.”¹⁸ Besides simplifying how ‘a generation’ engages with information, he has also hypothesized a physiological transformation of the human brain.

His argument becomes more damning when describing those ‘older people’ who, as Digital Immigrants, doubt the scale of this change (and his argument). Seemingly, in a post-multicultural era, being an immigrant is a problem because they keep a “foot in the past.”¹⁹ For Prensky, this group is technologically inhibited; they use the internet after other media platforms when searching for information and supposedly print emails. No ethnography or participation observation data is cited to verify these claims. Prensky seemingly forgets that the platforms, data and information being processed at multi-tasking speed by the ‘natives’ were created by ‘immigrants’ like Bill Gates, Serge Brin and Chad Hurley. Prensky also neglects to mention that ‘immigrants’ know more than ‘natives.’ In less xenophobic times, such a statement would be self evident, even at the level of analogy or metaphor. Immigrants have lived in different ways, in at

least two places and must manage the trauma of movement, translation and change. Immigrants are flexible because they have to be. They know how to engage with information quickly or slowly, understanding when superficial reading and data mining will suffice and when a line by line, page by page, chapter by chapter deep involvement with an intricate text is required. But Prensky is intellectually invested in the generational premise and must therefore preach crisis and endless change:

If Digital Immigrant educators really want to reach Digital natives – i.e. all their students – they will have to change. It's high time for them to stop their grouching and, as the Nike motto of the Digital native generation says, 'Just do it!'²⁰

A bit of history is required at this point. 'Just do it' was a Nike slogan introduced in 1988, before the digital natives were born, which fact clearly does not get in the way of Prensky's 'theory' of generation. Prensky runs a consultancy business that designs games, which he describes as "the best opportunity we have to engage our kids in real learning."²¹ When reading his articles, such as "Digital game-based learning", which appeared in *ACM Computers in Entertainment* in 2003, his 'research' features two references, one of which comes from his own book.²² Significantly, he also forgets about the thousands of scholars returning to education. Our students are diverse in age, race, class and religion.

An important work on the debate encircling Prensky's work emerged in 2008, written by Sue Bennett, Karl Maton and Lisa Kervin and published in *The British Journal of Educational Technology*.²³ These scholars saw the 'digital native' discussion as a form of 'moral panic,' one of many that have branded with the tag 'youth.' Less emphasised by Bennett, Maton and Kervin was Prensky's astonishingly narrow discussion of content and curriculum. He stated, "students should be learning 21st century subject matter, such as nanotechnology, bioethics, genetic medicine, and neuroscience."²⁴ Everything else is "legacy knowledge."²⁵ This 'legacy' (or in effect redundant) subject matter includes language education, history and geography.

It is no surprise that the humanities have been dismissed so easily. For the last ten years, good teaching has been defined as the innovative use of digitally convergent platforms. The consequence of this inelegant and inaccurate relationship between 'new technology' and 'good teaching' is that curriculum development has suffered.²⁶ The focus is on process and tools, not literacies and knowledge. Under-reported in the literature is the high drop out rate from online courses,²⁷ 'gaming behaviour' from normally civilized students who flame their colleagues with racist, sexist or homophobic abuse,²⁸ poor attendance in class²⁹ and low levels of reading on or off screen.³⁰

How did we end up here, confusing 'the new' with 'the effective'? It is much easier to locate a moment of change than to recognize continuities between past and present. Particularly at moments when media platforms change, it is very easy to infer or assume a series of social changes following it. But in the social sciences, causality is very difficult to prove because of the complexity in isolating two social variables and forging a direct and linear link between them. What we require are less assumptions of change and more research monitoring behaviour and practices on and offline. The *PEW Internet and American Life*³¹ longitudinal studies have contributed enormously to the sociology of the web, as have Ofcom's studies of

adult and child literacy.³² It is easy – too easy – to assume that “generation” is a useful variable to understand digitized platforms.

In January 2008, an important report emerged from the JISC, the Joint Information Systems Committee. The report was titled the *Information behaviour of the researcher of the future*, better known as the Google Generation Report.³³ Significantly, the research team tracked the reading behaviour of both students and teachers. The findings of the report were startling and offer the clearest critique to glib phrases like the Google Generation, digital natives and digital immigrants.

1. There are very few – too few – controlled studies of information seeking behaviour that is able to isolate age as a variable.³⁴
2. Speculation and ‘mis-information’ has been perpetrated about how young people behave in online environments.³⁵
3. All researchers – not only ‘young people’ are skim-reading research, reading abstracts rather than drilling deeper into the paper.
4. Young people are not ‘dumbing down.’ Society is ‘dumbing down.’
5. “The information literacy of young people, has not improved with the widening access to technology: in fact, their apparent facility with computers disguises some worrying problems.”³⁶
6. “Young scholars are using tools that require little skill: they appear satisfied with a very simple or basic form of searching.”³⁷
7. “Digital literacies and information literacies do not go hand in hand.”³⁸

The lack of ethnography, participant observation and teacher-led research over the last decade has had an impact. Policy and funding decisions have been poorly informed. The key finding of the Google Generation Report remains that assumptions about computer literacy are masking educational problems. The conversational phrasing that is deployed in the Google Search engine is capping information expectations, rather than enabling the movement to other search engines and directories such as Google Scholar³⁹ or the Directory of Open Access Journals.⁴⁰ In other words, our inexperienced students are satisfied with the low skill base, and perhaps they do not even know that they are restricting themselves to low-level competencies. Because of the supposition that ‘new technology’ must be difficult and digital immigrants cannot manage it, we have neglected building the relationship between information seeking skills and the development of knowledge.⁴¹

This JISC report confirmed that it is un(der)researched theories about the online environment and students that threatens to damage the research(ers) of the future. Statements can be made about ‘the Google

Generation,' 'young people' and their use of technology. Many of these beliefs are incorrect or unproven and when decisions about schools, universities, curricula and libraries are made on the basis of these theories, we are heading into dangerous terrain. The simple fact that a media platform is available does not mean that it is used or used well.

The 'Google Generation' as a phrase must transform from a supposedly neutral description to a springboard of change in teaching and learning. It is easy to argue that one platform or technological intervention shatters the windows of our world. But web 2.0 is best understood as a challenge not a unilateral force of change. Best practice in such an environment does not stop with a diagnosis. Leadership commences at this point. The remainder of this paper offers a series of questions and answers between the authors, probing not only phrases like digital natives and the Google Generation, but the consequences of these labels on contemporary students.

Dialogues through Digitization

TB: How did it feel to be on a Digital Native panel for Gartner?

ZD: I felt incredibly privileged to be asked to speak for Gartner and the whole experience was utterly incredible not to mention good for my CV. However being a 'Digital Native' for Gartner was at first a different matter. Before actually meeting the analysts and speaking in front of the audience I felt completely inadequate and unqualified to speak as a 'Digital Native'. First off I'm nearly 25 and can remember life before computers became all pervasive, and I'm hardly the world's most digi-friendly soul. I also am fairly far from wizz kid status when it comes to navigating software programs. However once I was speaking I realized it is essential that anyone expecting the young adults entering the work force to be completely fluent in all things digital needs a sharp awakening. The reality is that this upcoming workforce has just as varied capabilities and interests as those that have preceded it; the main difference is the type of tools available - not the type of worker.

AP: The Gartner panel experience was a great insight into a large corporation which would be, or be similar to, those we as a workforce would be involved in. I feel as though it is significant that such established companies are looking at mass changes in the coming years. The main issue that I felt uncomfortable with is the fact that so much is expected of us as a new generation; as far as I am aware we have little new skills to contribute to the existing workers.

GG: Being a digital native was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I loved being on the panel being able to express my views in front of successful businessmen and some millionaires. It was an unforgettable experience and I am so happy I had the opportunity because I know people would dream of having a chance like I had. I am very thankful for my teacher for choosing me to be on the panel.

TB: A series of journalists and writers have used phrases like the Google Generation and Digital Natives to describe your age group. Why do you think that is? What do you think are the differences between you and your parents and teachers? Do you see any problems with a label like ‘Google Generation’?

ZD: Labels are useful for generalising age groups, and journalists use them to do just that, and there is little difference between past phrases like ‘Generation X’ and ‘Babyboomer’ to those used today, except of course the passage of time and the narratives currently offered to distinguish contemporary youth. Digital technology has been present in our lives since birth in one form or another, so phrases like ‘Digital Native’ are inevitable if not unsurprising. In the same sense the phrase ‘Google Generation’ merely reflects the extremely successful diffusion of a particular computer technology in our highly computer dependent lives. However the phrase does also hold more negative connotations, suggesting our generation is failing to gain sufficient research skills. Though I do feel the proliferation of the phrase has initiated public discussion of the issues surrounding digital technologies and education and has even encouraged our generation to defend its abilities.

AP: The notions of ‘Google Generation’ and ‘Digital Natives’ are in themselves not derogatory, The generalisations that accompany them are what cause the problems. To assume skills and weakness to a generation neglects to look upon individual characteristics that an employee can offer. What are the technical skills without the personal communication techniques that allow for them to be conveyed to non-members of the ‘Generation’? Technology undeniably features highly in future developments, but other components need to be considered. We may have more competent technical abilities but do we as the ‘Google Generations’ lack in imagination and creativity?

GG: Journalists and writers have used phrases like the Google generation and digital natives to describe my generation because my generation has grown up using Google and digital technology and to a large extent relying on this technology to find information and provide entertainment. The difference between me and my parents is that I grew up using technology both at home and at school so I was taught how to use technology whereas my parents had to teach themselves. This contributes to the fact that they are not as capable, able or willing to use technology as much I am. I do not see a problem being branded the Google Generation. I feel that it is justified; as the label is simply showing that people my age have grown up with Google in our lives. The fact that I used Google from an early age and still use it to this day further supports this label.

TB: What are your attitudes towards new technology? What technology do you carry around with you? What social networking sites do you use? How and why do you use Facebook?

ZD: I'm fairly easy going towards new technology, I'm neither a leader nor a luddite. I use whatever I need to achieve my goals, mostly the internet, databases, catalogues and lots of word processing too. A fair amount of e-mailing of course and moderate Facebook usage daily as well. I always carry my (very old hand me down) phone that I use to tell the time with more than anything else. I own two iPods (both gifts) that I rarely have with me because I can't be bothered to upload new stuff onto them (I think itunes is a god awful program and long for the days when something supersedes it). I do also have a Macbook (another gift) that joins me on my commute when essay deadlines loom. So to summarise, I never seem to pay for my techno devices or even use them much...maybe I am a bit of a luddite! I use Facebook very stealthily (I'm not searchable) and only to communicate with a very select group of family and friends (15 to be precise).

AP: We have grown up with emerging technologies at our grasp. We are capable and much more willing to incorporate new structures into our lives, but at the same time, this makes competition in the market fierce. We will experiment with the new and improved, but also dismiss what we don't want, need or feel is adequate: we can always demand more and will expect the best. My mobile phone also has a camera and mp3 player; I carry this one device for all my needs. Could I have a better phone, mp3 and camera separately? Probably. But it is the convenience that means it is easy for me.

Facebook plays a dominant role in my everyday life. I use it to contact friends, friends I haven't seen in months, friends I only saw a few hours ago. Many times I spend my time doing other activities just while it's running, just in case I miss out on something, or miss someone. When I am in a position where I can't access Facebook the first few hours, days, feel like I have been cut off from the whole world. After the initial 'withdrawal' I feel a lot better. Tragic I know. The less I use, the less I feel the need.

GG: I love new technology I find it exciting when something which has not been made, seen or thought of is created. I always have technology on my person, normally my mobile phone and MP3 player. For long trips I bring a portable games console. I would not leave the house without at least one of these items. The social networking site which I use is Facebook. I use Facebook to communicate with friends and upload pictures which is a source of entertainment as well as a way to keep in contact with friends.

TB: We should talk about technologies and education. How old were you when you first used a computer? Can you remember what you did with a computer? How were computers used in your school?

ZD: I think I was probably 4 or 5 when I first used a computer, I remember it (yes just the one) arriving at my primary school and my teachers taking weeks to figure out how to use it. When they eventually did, we would play a 'snap' type game, where you match the images to each other. Computers were

always used as 'fun' educational devices (lots of maths games) up until secondary school, where there was one room full of computers and you only used them if you took 'computer tech' or 'business studies'. They weren't online.

AP: The most significant thing that I can remember about computers when I was in primary school was that they were a treat. We were allowed to use them once a week in a designated computer room. Each class room had a computer, a dusty old pc in the corner. They were rarely used. The computer lessons consisted of us being able to play on programs such as 'paint' or 'word'. The projects were basic, the point being that we were simply to be privileged because we were using such technologies.

GG: I was thirteen when I first used a computer. I remember using excel a lot inputting data, creating bar and pie charts. I used Microsoft word processor for typing essays. The main use of the computers in my school was to do research and to type up work using the Microsoft Word. Any form of entertainment that my school knew about would be filtered out.

TB: What are your opinions about the software and hardware that is used in contemporary universities. Should universities change - or change more - to 'keep up' with you and / or 'the Google Generation'? Should lectures and seminars be replaced for more 'modern' styles of teaching?

ZD: I think Brighton Uni's computer suite actually does a really good job at keeping the hardware and software updated. I think technologies like OHPs and PowerPoint are used well to good effect in lectures and seminars generally and I don't really think there is a need to add any more technologies to the lecture environment. I can't imagine a better way of teaching except ... Except maybe a cattle prod for the inconsiderate bastards who don't shut up when the lecturer is talking!! DON'T PRINT THAT! Actually do print that.

AP: The technologies used in university seem to meet all our needs, (so far). That said there are areas that could be updated to improve performance. There is little point pumping money into more computers if there are still people who do not know how to use them to full capability. The money would be better off invested in the knowledge.

Lectures could be improved but are at present adequate. Personally I feel that the most important aspect in these one hour slots is not the technology used to convey the knowledge to use, but the enthusiasm of the people projecting them. Lectures may sometimes appear bland, the same routine many times a week. The problem is not that the PowerPoint is dull or the overheads too basic, it is simply that the people teaching appear uninterested.

GG: The software and hardware in my university is quite up to date. With relatively new computers, word processing software, picture editing and cameras. Universities should update their software

and hardware every few years so that they do not fall behind the times. I do not believe that lectures and seminars should be replaced as they are insightful, inform and probe arguments that I and fellow scholars would not think of which contributes to the quality of our education.

TB: Explain how you conduct your research. Say you are given a topic - considering you are from the University of Brighton - on Brighton popular music. How would research that topic? Tell us the process.

ZD: Research always has several key ports of call for me, Google and Google Scholar – for cursory information and key terms, Brighton Uni Library and Hampshire Library services (and their online catalogues) for relevant hard copy publications and any accessible online database lists for useful electronic publications. I would not use Wikipedia for academic research – too risky. For Brighton popular music, I would type that or other relevant search terms and phrases into Google, the library catalogues and the online database lists to garner relevant publications from which to gather, read and take notes.

AP: My first port of call would be Tara's Readers [collection of readings]. They not only equip us with the knowledge, it is consistently informative. You could argue that this process was lazy but in truth, they encourage me to read more. To be thrown into a topic you have no prior knowledge of can be daunting, to be able to read a basis, knowing that what you are reading is relevant is inspiring and helps and encourages. Yes, I could just read those items and not conduct other research, but I do also know that there are other texts that are relevant, I personally feel happier doing it with a basis of knowledge. To do this further research, I would look to two sources, the library and 'Google Scholar'. With the help of 'talis pilgrim' I would search for books with key words to the title, the same process would apply to 'Google scholar', and I would imagine, to the rest of my year group.

GG: I would go the library get a few books on popular music/culture to help create a definition of popular music and get some academic theories and opinions. I would now have the foundation of my answer.

I would buy a few music magazines to look at charts and reviews of popular music. Then I would Google popular music in Brighton. Find out quantitative information about these events like the attendance. Then with this information construct an argument.

TB: Would that process change if you were given another topic, such as terrorism or the role of the media in the 'credit crunch'?

ZD: Yes. For a nationally and internationally topical subject areas my research would almost certainly

begin with, if not include, online news media such as Guardian unlimited, Times Online, bbc.co.uk, Reuters and Al Jazeera.

AP: The only part of the process I would change is the reference to the journals from Tara. Personally I find that the problems with our education system are that we are taught what are taught but not taught how to learn. Our research skills suffer because we have a set curriculum and need to attain good grades, yet still adhere to the aims of the module. We do not learn how to learn, just to absorb.

GG: The process would be more or less the same for any topic. I would find out the history behind the topic, and then use academic theories from books. In addition I would use online news articles to search for any useful up to date facts and figures. Since being at university I have learned not to use Google for research so now I rarely use it.

TB: Abby and Zanna, you have been on work placements in your degree. What did you think about how technologies were being used in the modern work place? Did you feel out of your depth, or quite comfortable in the digitized working environment?

ZD: Well database wise my work placement had very slow and outdated systems so in that sense I felt a little ahead of my game there. However the software programs they used for marketing were very new to me. I didn't feel incapable of grasping them given adequate time and instruction to do so, however. I really enjoyed using them actually and never felt out of my depth.

AP: During my work placement I used many technologies that I was already familiar with, Microsoft Word and Excel and Internet Explorer. These basic programmes formed the basis of the workplace. The other primary programme I was required to use was 'Mediatlas' an online database. Navigating this site was relatively simple after brief instructions. If Mediatlas did not work, the simple answer was to 'Google it'. My only problem in this work environment was not the technology, but the practicalities of working in the media, we had (and still haven't) received any guidance on writing for journalism placements or in this case (for PR) press releases. This was the aspect that my employers were most surprised at. In terms of technology, although I did not struggle with the processes, I had nothing additional to bring to these people a decade older than me, not what you would expect from a 'digital native'.

TB: A recent research report released in January 2008 was called *Information behaviour of the researcher of the future*. Most people call it the Google Generation Report. It was stated in this report that "the information literacy of young people has not improved with the widening access to technology: in fact, their apparent facility with computers disguises some worrying

problems.” What do you think these ‘worrying problems’ with information literacy may be in ‘the Google Generation’? How do you define information literacy?

ZD: I think without doubt the worrying problems will be to do with our ability to locate information from reliable sources. The sheer volume of available information on the internet is often endorsed as a positive feature of internet access, yet it cloaks the need for information to be dependable. Information literacy is about sourcing information and deciphering its meaning and relevance. I believe it is possible to have higher and lower levels of information literacy and that the ability to support information belongs to those with high literacy skills.

AP: We are, in wide comparisons, a generation who are technologically capable. We have access to the internet, we are on the better side of the so called digital divide, growing in a developed country and we have more access to the internet than many others. The majority of us have access to the internet at home, in university, and for many in the palm of our hands on our mobile phones. I would agree with the findings in that we are not more efficient because we have more technologies, if anything we are less so. We are navigators of the internet who can find information in just a few clicks, we can make films and videos and have them distributed, make web pages seen by hundreds, we are part of the technology but we are not building them, we are using.

I would say that ‘information literacy’ is to define those capable of using and navigating technology for their own gratification. Those who are information literate will have basic knowledge of common information programmes and processes, those that are widely used among the population: email, Google, word processing and data basis. Programmes and applications that without the knowledge of how to use them, they would be left out of the ‘loop’.

GG: I would agree with the statement “the information literacy of young people has not improved with the widening access to technology”. The literacy of my generation has not improved in some cases. I would say that there are students with low or high levels of literacy capabilities. Many students do not want to use differing research methods and would prefer to rely on portals like Google which restricts the amount of knowledge you can learn. The problem which my generation has with the widening access to technology is that they now have a huge reliance on Google finding or helping them with what they need. As Google provides quick and easy access to information, many students feel as though there is no requirement to use other sources of information.

TB: Another finding from this report was that “young scholars are using tools that require little skill: they appear satisfied with a very simple or basic form of searching.” Do you agree? Is Google the best way to find all information? What other methods or strategies can you think of to find other sorts of information?

ZD: University has successfully instilled in me a deep fear of citing unreliable sources and taught me that it is far from enough to just 'google it'. Uni has shown me better methods of searching for dependable information which I have adopted and outlined in other parts of this article.

AP: If I was asked to research a topic, and a fellow student was asked the same, there would be massive similarities. The likelihood being that we would look for the same things in the same places. We are all taught the same, the only thing that will keep us distinguishable is our own individual desire to learn and acquire knowledge. At the end of my final year, nearly 100 students will graduate with the same degree, having done the same modules and most probably after all reading the same limited texts. What will separate one from the other?

I am no different from the mass. I will have read the same books from the university library, searched the same key words on Google Scholar and learned my basic knowledge from Wikipedia. New forms of teaching need to be put in place to allow us to learn how to learn, rather than just absorb.

GG: To be honest I would agree that the majority of scholars are happy using simple tools that require little skill as it makes their lives a whole lot easier. However there are still scholars who do more in depth searches through the use of books, magazines critical articles and documentaries to name a few. The more determined, motivated, committed scholars will not settle for the easy option and would prefer to use more challenging research methods. Google is not the best way to find what you need to get the highest grades or to provide you with a creative argument. This I have been taught at university.

TB: Look forward a decade. You are thirty. How do you think your relationship with technology would have changed? If you were to predict the next 'big thing' after Google, Facebook and the iPod - what would it be?

ZD: I expect my relationship with technology to grow ever more dependent if nothing else, though reluctantly of course. As far as predicting the next big thing I simply can't imagine. I hope there will be a really effective book technology and I'd like journal databases to become more accessible. If I could have only one techno-wish granted though it would definitely be for headphones to stop spilling out tinny surplus sound thus ending the near suicidal/homicidal thoughts that take over one's mind during journeys on public transport.

AP: I feel as though there are limits to the amount of technology we are willing to adopt. We want things that will make our life easier not harder, technologies that require huge amounts of our time will not be incorporated. As new workers entering the workforce we will be required to work long hours in a competitive market. We will have less time and gladly accept technologies that save precious time, whether personal or professional. We want our music to travel with us, we want our friends to

always be a click away and we want constant and efficient internet access. Now we have had such advanced and innovative technologies we are becoming ever more scrupulous as to what we will uptake, the technologies that become a part of our lives will be those that we demand and require.

GG: When I am thirty I would say that my relationship with technology will be even stronger than it is now. If I was to predict the next big thing I would say that it would be a device that incorporates the computer, the internet and the mobile phone with all of its features.

Statements about ‘Digital Natives’ and the Google Generation impede the scale, scope and depth of the conversations required about learning, teaching, researching and writing. Good teaching and librarianship are required, yet the credibility of both professions is low. The difficulty is that information – through Google – is seen to be both abundant and cheap. Actually, the abilities required to assess information are complex and costly. Students require time, care, energy and good assessment to improve their digital academic research. Teachers require professional development in library studies, internet studies and literacy theory to create a worthwhile intellectual journey through this new research landscape. Yet while the simplistic categorization of ‘generation’ is used, the more considered sociology of digital education is silenced. A Google Generation cannot speak, but all of us can listen, read, write and think with greater intellectual generosity and a consideration of cultural difference.

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